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# TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY

What would be the content and form of a psychology capable of learning from the experiences and understandings presented in the Blue Pearl narrative? What are the implications of autobiographical accounts of spiritual evolution? What are the goals, methods, and assumptions that define the field of transpersonal psychology? These are the primary questions to which I turn in this final chapter.

Transpersonal psychology, as I see it, is defined by the primary place it gives to the concept of the absolute in its analysis of human life. This commitment to honoring the reality of the absolute should not be confused with a commitment to any specific imagery, formulation, or spiritual practice. Transpersonal psychology will perform a much needed function if it serves all the diverse systems of worship and scriptural narrative by providing each a place within its perimeter. If it can develop analytic categories that permit us to see the commonalities as well as the divergencies among the many ways of approaching the absolute, it will have greatly enriched the human community. Its task is not to amalgamate the systems of thought and practice that it explores but to create a common language for respectful inquiry and mutual appreciation.

Some people will choose to become or remain members, devotees, or practitioners of a specific spiritual tradition. Others will locate themselves only within the common ground created by transpersonal psychology: exploring, assessing the appeal of various teachings, or

becoming more open to the many narratives of direct experience. Transpersonal psychology cannot achieve the internal consistency and powerful symbolism of any single spiritual path, but it can provide a series of bridges between superficially different accounts or world views. The challenge is to develop a conceptual scheme that, on the one hand, is informed by and open to an immense diversity of form and, on the other hand, yields an abstracted version of any specific tradition that the devotee would find to be a fair and acceptable version of his chosen path.

I propose to use the substance and implications of the Blue Pearl narrative to sketch out a version of transpersonal psychology. The place to start is with the absolute. Whereas scientific and clinical psychology deliberately and, it could be argued, wisely limit their concepts to what I label the relative domain, transpersonal psychology conceives of a reality that includes both relative and absolute. We shall see whether this two-category model of reality is transpersonal psychology's final word on the subject. For a start, however, there is no more essential assertion than that reality includes more than the temporary, conditional, causal universe.

This essay in the theory of transpersonal psychology begins with a review of some of the experiences and the intuitive formulations that lead human beings to include the absolute in their scheme of reality. We cannot proceed very far along this line before we must examine and question the way we think about the relative domain. It may be that the paradigm guiding our conception of physical and psychic reality is limiting our understanding of the role of the absolute in our daily lives. Only after reformulating our fundamental assumptions concerning observable reality can we develop a transpersonal psychology that appreciates both being and becoming, both the unchanging and the endless processes of transformation. Following this, we may explore transpersonal psychology's use of text in the service of self-awareness. Finally, we may extend the discussion of the absolute and the relative by considering how the domains of traditional and transpersonal psychology are related to one another. Perhaps the sense of duality and schism between these approaches to psychology can yield to a far more delicious intellectual outcome, the sense of paradox.

### *The Absolute as Image*

The most unmistakable representations of the absolute are the personified characters in mythic and scriptural literature. We meet a god or goddess whose role is fundamentally different from any mortal also included in the story.

In the Blue Pearl narrative we enter a world that includes, among others, the Goddess Kundalinī, the indwelling Lord revealed as the Blue Person, and the primal source of all manifestation, the blue-throated Shiva. Muktananda's account of his spiritual journey proceeds with these focal characters either appearing in visual form or emerging as the inferred causes of numerous otherwise inexplicable developments. What this or any such account does is present us with *images of the absolute*.

When we are confronted by another person's system of images and stories, we are faced with some important choices. We can enter the symbolic, expressive world of the narrative and incorporate the images and symbols as part of our personal repertoire; we move thereby toward adopting a specific religion or spiritual path. We can make an internal translation of the image that permits us to resonate to the understanding that the imagery encodes. Or, finally, we can reject both the image and the understanding. Transpersonal psychology is primarily the result of the second of these three options. It is congruent neither with the world of the devotee who revels in the particular set of imagery and makes it his own nor with the parsimonious world of academic and clinical psychology in which such images of the absolute may not be invoked without violating the rules of the game. Transpersonal psychology attempts to appreciate the insightful expressiveness of any image of the absolute without thereby making normative the cast of characters created by a particular tradition or visionary leader.

In the case of Muktananda's narrative, our assignment is to see how well we have heard him tell his story. We can enjoy the imagery and then adopt it or not, as we see fit. In either case, we can extract from it the conception of reality that it conveyed to him and might also convey to us.

What I learn about the absolute from the Blue Pearl narrative is not one single understanding; it is a conglomerate of understandings that open up one aspect after another of the nature and

function of the absolute. The three themes, or coherent subclasses of imagery, point to three distinguishably different systems of experiencing and discussing the absolute. The first revolves around issues of purification and power. The absolute, often personified as the Goddess Kundalinī, is seen as the continuous source of a process of individual purification that leads, if the individual cooperates, to liberation. Muktananda invokes the Goddess as his way of representing the power or energy behind all the spontaneous physical and visionary experiences that were leading him to an irreversible freedom from the past and the future. One implication is made clear in numerous ways: This transformation is not something that one can do for oneself. It requires the intelligence, the power, and the clarity of purpose that reside only in the absolute. They are inherent properties of the Goddess. This is the first image, and it is associated particularly with the path of power and purification.

The second image is found in the passages that deal with the Blue Person. The welling up of devotion, the experience of awe, and the response of surrender all convey an aspect of the absolute. Love is the very nature of the absolute. The absolute is thus the source and dispenser of grace. The devotee's response of love is but a flourishing in the devotee's heart of the unforced, unconditional absolute. All these images convey the life-sustaining, connection-making aspect of reality that is, in this view, an essential attribute of the absolute. A direct encounter with the personified absolute brings into form an awareness that the Other exists. In such moments, the Other, however imagined, *is* the absolute, so every feature, every word becomes a revelation of the nature and teaching of the divine.

The third set of imagery, then, whether it be the dazzling Light, the serene Shiva, or the vision of universes being created from the sacred Center, turns us to a third understanding of reality. It is an understanding of Being, of unity and equality, and it is personified in the form of Shiva. It is Shiva's state, primarily, and the state of the human teacher, Nityananda, that are suggested by the complex imagery. Through seeing the Blue Pearl in each person he met, Muktananda's awareness of the absolute expanded to the eventual climax of final realization. Distinctions between God, guru, and oneself, or between this person and another, were dissolved into the more fundamental perception of equality and identity. Central to

this image stands the personified Shiva whose state entails a constant appreciation of the underlying unity of all things because he is aware of their common origin and essence which is Himself, his one pure Consciousness.

The Blue Pearl narrative thus presents us with three images of the absolute that convey their interpenetrating but distinct constructions of reality. How can we register them in the common understanding of transpersonal psychology without doing violence to their integrity?

There are those, including perhaps all of us at one point or another in our lives, who have become allergic to any mention of specific imagery, naming, or personification of the absolute. I need not catalog the reasons why such allergies develop. At issue is whether, in turning away from the forms contained in such imagery, we need thereby reject or exclude all mention of the absolute. In the Blue Pearl narrative, Muktananda shares one vivid image after another, but I doubt that he is trying thereby to increase our storehouse of visualizations. Rather, he is trying to affect our understanding, particularly our understanding of the absolute.

### *The Absolute as Principle*

The task before us is to look beyond the image to the understandings which any narrative also contains. The spiritual autobiographies and scriptural accounts that transpersonal psychology may draw upon contain their own internal translations, linking the imagery with formulations of *the absolute as principle*.

The three sets of images presented in the three previous chapters convey a threefold formulation concerning the nature of the absolute as principle. In the first, the absolute is of the nature of freedom; all of existence is guided by a principle or power that moves it toward the state of ultimate freedom or liberation. The contrast is clear: the principle of liberation versus the principle behind ordinary life in which limitation and impurity, compounded by a lack of self-control, lead to a life of desire and pain. In the second, the absolute is of the nature of love. Love is God; God is love, manifesting as salvation, grace, guidance, and forgiveness. Love stands in contradistinction to the principle of ordinary life that

manifests as pride, separateness, or unresponsiveness to life and joy. Finally, the third principle is awareness or consciousness, the basis of reality's oneness and sheer existence or Being. This intuition forms in contrast to the ordinary principle behind the sense of endlessly proliferating fragmentation, meaninglessness, and an eventual decay and death of all things.

Three principles are thus suggested throughout the Blue Pearl narrative: freedom, love, and consciousness. Each brings into words, with help from a particular scriptural and poetic tradition, the direct experiences that form the basis of Muktananda's teachings. The Upanishads, Kashmir Shaivism, and the Maharashtran poet-saints all lend a hand in giving form to his experiences and their implications. He translates the visions into understandings of the nature of the absolute, as do virtually all such texts. The absolute is something "experienced" as imagery and "known" as intuition. The image and the intuition are the means by which one is transformed and the fruit of one's prior spiritual development. Whether personified as the supreme actor in our human drama or inferred as a governing principle of the universe, representations of the absolute form a model of reality.

The fundamental assertion of any world view that includes the absolute is that reality can be divided, at least provisionally, for the purpose of analysis, into two orders: the relative and the absolute. In the world of the relative we find a symmetry of mutual interactions: Nothing influences something else without itself being altered, however slightly. In addition, we find or assume that each effect can be traced back to proximal and distal causes in a unbroken chain of cause and effect connections. In the world that contains both relative and absolute, however, we find asymmetries: Effects are attributed to absolute causes without implying that the absolute is thereby altered in any way. To construe the absolute as a cause is to construe a chain of causal connections that ends with the absolute. One need look no further, imagining that the absolute must also have its antecedent conditions. The absolute creates and continually modifies the realm of the relative, but remains itself unchanged, perfect. The implicit assumption that the relation between the absolute and the relative is asymmetrical is easiest to discern when the narrative includes a personified image of the absolute.

A god or a goddess is known by his or her ability to influence us mortals without being reciprocally influenced by us. Many of the words that have been applied to god-figures testify to this asymmetry: free, independent, self-born, unconditioned, pure, and untainted.

Let us briefly recall some of the ways the Blue Pearl narrative portrays the asymmetrical relationships between such images and the human seeker, Muktananda. The Goddess Kundalinī is in control of Muktananda's spiritual evolution. She knows the goal and the route thereto. His account leaves no doubt that her power and intelligence are totally independent of humanity. It is unthinkable to imagine the Goddess learning from or draining energy from any or all seekers. Whether they persist or quit, reach the liberated state or not, the Goddess remains the same. Imperviousness to reciprocal influence is one of the defining characteristics of an image of the absolute. It is similarly unthinkable to imagine that the love radiating from the Blue Person would wax or wane as a result of the devotion or rejection he might receive from Muktananda or any human figure in such a drama. Humans become discouraged when their love is not returned or upset when their beloved turns away, but god-figures do not, by definition. As well, the constantly blazing Light and the fully expanded Consciousness that are the very nature of the personified Shiva are not diminished by the presence, in the human realm, of darkness, ignorance, and forgetfulness.

The same issue of symmetry or asymmetry that we found in personified images of the absolute persists when we turn to the absolute as principle. In a world view that includes only the relative, love, freedom, or conscious awareness are treated as themselves derivatives of human growth and interactions. In a view that includes both absolute and relative, these same principles tend to be treated as prior, independent, and unaffected by any human event. From this perspective Truth is spoken of as something that exists, in its own order of reality, and functions as an active force that influences, asymmetrically, the course of human thought. Beauty is not treated as a descriptive attribute that humans create and apply, with shifting criteria, but as a preexistent source of inspiration that can neither be perfected nor spoiled by human effort. Love, as a principle, is understood to play upon the range of human interaction, but it can be neither forced nor depleted.

*The Relative Domain*

Before undertaking a fuller discussion of the absolute, we need to explore the world of the relative, particularly as defined by the field of psychology. Traditional academic psychology derives from the atomistic world view first developed by the Greek materialists, Democritus and others. In this view, what we can measure and compare—the observable universe—emerges from a substratum composed of small, primal elements or building blocks. In psychology's version of atomism the building block is the elemental habit or the firing of a neuron and its inhibition. From these primary elements and the primary relations among them psychology has tried to construct a model to explain the proliferated variety of human thought and action.

Newton's laws of thermodynamics are a masterful demonstration of the power and usefulness of this world view. Psychology's yearning for an equally powerful and useful perspective led it to behaviorism and the search for an elemental unit, be it habit or response. The search for a common explanatory system recurs throughout the range of the field's concerns. The complex is to be understood in terms of the simple. The lawful permutations and combinations of constituent parts create the emergent hierarchy of larger and larger wholes, and the occurrence of an intricate event may be traced back, or "reduced," to its component parts and their rudimentary interactions. The complex mental experience, for example, may be traced to muscular or neurochemical components. In all these ways, reductionism holds out the promise of explaining an event by tracing it back to lower and more primary causal factors.

How satisfactory is this reductionistic, deterministic approach to human events? As with Newtonian physics, one can see areas of enormous success, predictions confirmed and new research unfolding, but one can also detect limits beyond which the underlying paradigm breaks down. The empirical evidence of quantum physics marks the outer limit of the usefulness of Newtonian physics. The old order's analysis of the material world has not been overthrown, but it has been found to be limited. I suspect that when the limits of deterministic psychology are finally acknowledged, the data found to be beyond its capacity will turn out not to be new data at all but, rather, modern demonstrations of age-old capacities and potentials.

The phenomenon of remote viewing is but one small part of the data that will eventually force us to expand our fundamental perspectives.

There are important parallels between the implications of remote viewing for psychology and the impact of the evidence from quantum physics on the classical view of Newtonian physics. These parallels will be clearer if we review, briefly, some important developments in the field of theoretical physics.

As summarized by David Bohm, a quantum theorist with a strong interest in the development of models of reality, the situation is this. The classical view holds that matter is analyzable into elements that are entirely outside of each other and that influence each other only when they are contiguous; causality thus rests upon the principle of locality. Any demonstration, therefore, that shows events in one area to be correlated with events in an area "spatially separated" from the first presents us with data beyond the range of the classical view. Spatial separation between areas is defined by the impossibility of any known form of intercommunication between them, given the upper limit imposed by the speed of light. Precisely such a demonstration is found in the results of a hypothetical experiment proposed by Einstein, Podolsky, and Rosen, later reframed in a parallel form by Bohm, and recently found to be empirically grounded by the laboratory studies of Freedman and Clauser.<sup>1</sup> The problematic situation, as described by Bohm, is as follows:

Consider a molecule of zero total spin, consisting of two atoms of spin,  $\hbar/2$ . Let this molecule be disintegrated by a method not influencing the spin of either atom. The total spin then remains zero, even while the atoms are flying apart and have ceased to interact appreciably.

Now, if any component of the spin of one of the atoms (say A) is measured, then because the total spin is zero, we can immediately conclude that this component of the spin of the other atom (B) is precisely opposite. Thus, by measuring any component of the spin of atom A, we can obtain this component of the spin of atom B, *without interacting with atom B in any way . . .*

... The problem is made even more difficult if we consider that, while the atoms are still in flight, we are free to re-orientate the observing apparatus arbitrarily, and in this way to measure the spin of atom A in some other direction. This change is somehow transmitted *immediately* to atom B, which responds accordingly. Thus, we are led to contradict one of the basic principles of the theory of relativity, which states that no physical influences can be propagated faster than light.<sup>2</sup>

If we join Bohm in ruling out the possibility of a signal passing from atom A to atom B, we cannot comprehend their correlated states without turning to a radically different model of reality, a model positing not a fundamental level of separately analyzable elements but, rather, a fundamental "undivided wholeness," to use Bohm's term. Quantum theory's three major assertions all challenge the atomic, mechanistic model of reality: 1) movement is discontinuous; 2) the observed property of an entity (e.g., its registering as a wave or a particle) depends on the experimental situation in which it is observed; and 3) entities can be related to one another through non-local, non-causal connections. Each assertion helps to build the case that a model of reality wherein undivided wholeness is primary is consistent with data that cannot be understood within the classical Newtonian model. As Bohm puts it, "... the entire universe has to be thought of as an unbroken whole."<sup>3</sup>

What is needed is a model of reality that takes into account not only the obvious evidence of separateness provided by some experiences and some laboratory experiments but, as well, the unbroken wholeness revealed by other experiences and other laboratory evidence. Bohm names his version of such a model *the implicate order*.

Bohm's model, on the one hand, draws from and is directed toward the limited range of purely physical events. It is meant to stand or fall according to whether it makes sense of otherwise disorienting experimental evidence at that one level of observation. On the other hand, it is a model of reality that also provides ample room for speculation and further model-building. It is open to speculation about wholeness in the realm of human consciousness, and it is open to model-building that includes the absolute as a fundamental category of reality.<sup>4</sup>

In place of the fundamental, separately analyzable element, Bohm speaks of a fundamental wholeness. Within that wholeness, he distinguishes between the *explicate order*, which is the world of at least temporarily stable, observable matter or thought, and the *implicate order*, which is the vast ocean of unmanifest reality upon which the explicate rests, from which it emerges, and back to which it returns. The explicate is the gross and the implicate is the subtle version of the relative universe. Explicate is manifest; implicate is unmanifest. At least for the purpose of discussion, he proposes to make this distinction and explore how the unbroken wholeness of the implicate order emerges into or explicates as the world of discernable form and apparent separateness.

Bohm inverts the traditional atomistic assertion of what is primary; interconnectedness is taken as given. Unconnectedness and the sense of separateness are what need explanation, since it is they that are secondary and emergent phenomena. This stands in sharp contrast to the classical view in which the problem is how interdependence and mutuality can overcome the fragmentation that is presumed to be primary in nature. For Bohm's version of the Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen experiment the question "How can atom A possibly communicate with atom B?" loses its hold on us and is replaced by such questions as "How does the one underlying implicate order of reality manifest, in the explicate order, as two atoms, A and B, whose spin remains correlated even though they are flying apart from each other?" Bohm's model of reality moves even closer to home for me, however, if I turn from the two atoms, A and B, to the remote viewing pair, the subject and the outbound experimenter introduced in the second chapter.

If we ask how the outbound experimenter's experience of the playing field or the bowling alley can possibly affect the subject as he sits in the basement lab, it matters greatly what we are assuming when we ask our question. Are we assuming that the pair of people involved are ultimately separate from one another or ultimately manifestations of a larger whole, a deeper reality? The assumption of separateness makes remote viewing seem impossible. The interconnectedness that is revealed in such phenomena seems too far removed from the natural human condition of mutual isolation. In contrast, to invoke the implicate order model is to assume that it is dividing lines that are ephemeral, and separation is the state

that needs to be constantly reestablished by maintaining barriers and boundaries.

The implicate order and the explicate order are mutually defining. The atom or the thought that emerges from the implicate order is but the "unfolding" of the then current totality of all matter or all thought. The explicate order is a "manifestation" of that larger order of reality, and when it, in its turn, destabilizes and is enfolded back into the unmanifest, implicate state, the implicate is thereby altered. It is, in Bohm's view, all one system in interaction. The implicate and the explicate are mutually interpenetrating aspects of the relative domain, and, therefore, it would be inappropriate to suggest that the implicate order plays the role of the absolute as discussed earlier in this chapter. The implicate order is not God by some other name, or even the realm of Platonic ideals. It is the residue and source of manifest reality. Its properties afford a much needed expansion of the ways we think about the world of matter and consciousness, but it is not a euphemism for the divine, the sacred, or the Other.

Bohm does allow for the possibility of an interplay between an "active intelligence" and the relative world of thought and matter. The role he assigns to "insight" as an active process beyond thought is left necessarily imprecise, but its effects are precisely those I attribute to the absolute as principle. I return to the conjunction of the relative and the absolute, but, for now, our questions center on the relative domain and how best to understand events at that level.<sup>5</sup>

How I "knew" that the outbound experimenter was in a bowling alley can be more comfortably discussed from the perspective of the implicate order, for the same reason that we can more comfortably discuss how atom B "knew" that atom A had had its spin changed. The unbounded wholeness is fully represented in each of the apparently separate entities into which it manifests, and each part is affected by every other part of the whole. Bohm, Pribram, and others have drawn analogies between this implicate order model and holographic photography.<sup>6</sup> In this lensless procedure the representation of the larger whole in each piece produced by slicing the film into separate parts seems a shocking violation of what common sense and the paradigm of classical physics lead us to expect. The implication of this analogy for remote viewing would be that the presence of veridical information in the subject's consciousness depends not on communication between the outbound experimenter and the subject

but on having the subject gain access to the undivided wholeness of human consciousness already present within his apparently separate state. Since that wholeness contains—in an implicate form, Bohm might add—the registered experience of the outbound experimenter, the question becomes, "Under what conditions will the subject be open to that wholeness?" or "How or when does the implicate order unfold into a specific instance of remote viewing?"

How shall we think about the interplay of the implicate and the explicate order? How can we form a useful set of images to help us recall and apply the central assertions of this model of reality? Bohm has tried several ways of representing his model, and each one adds to our understanding. He likens the implicate to a flowing stream within which forms, for a while, a discernible whirlpool, here likened to an event in the explicate order. The whirlpool is not independent of the stream. They are as one, but the relatively stable pattern of the whirlpool makes it stand out as figure against the ground of the larger whole. Soon, however, the whirlpool loses its coherence and fades back into the undivided flow of the current.

Some of the model's assertions are more clearly captured in his image of the ocean. Bohm refers to the explicate as a wave that forms, temporarily, on the surface of the ocean's vast depths, and elsewhere he uses the analogy of the ocean in other ways that are particularly helpful. I will modify some of these images in order to capture some important characteristics of the model.

Imagine that the act of allowing a thought to register in our awareness is like the act of dipping a ladle into the ocean of all consciousness. The specific content of one moment's thought (an event in the explicate order) is thus derived from sampling the then current residue of the history of all human thought (the implicate order). Before long, this thought, as well, will dissolve and enter, as the effluent of this one moment, the thus altered ocean which will be sampled again in the next moment. If we see ourselves as the solitary crew in a vast flotilla of identical vessels, it is obvious that, in sampling the ocean on which we ride, we usually dip our ladle very close to the side of the ship. In general, the best predictor of what we will think one moment is what we were thinking just one moment before. There is a powerful redundancy, sometimes very useful and sometimes very discouraging, to the thought content of adjacent moments.



Psychology's study of the lawful relations between past and present or between individuals and their human context is, in this analogy, the study of where we dip our ladle other than right by the side of the boat. Sometimes we retrieve and declare ourselves affected by such ancient effluents as childhood memories or old grudges. Sometimes the ladle seems to be on the end of a short pole, sometimes one that is very long. At times, we retrieve and discover we are affected by the effluent of other members of our flotilla. In some of these instances we seem to have reached out to have our neighbor fill our ladle; the communication is direct and intended. However, this does not exhaust the possibilities.

The transfer into our consciousness of content that can be traced to our flotilla-mates' effluent may not be subject to observation. It may result from nonordinary retrievals of information, not through manifest communication but through the medium of the undivided ocean of human consciousness to which we have total access. We are, in this view, capable of being influenced by events in remote places and times, events beyond the possibility of any contiguous or local connection to our current situation, simply because all such events inevitably enter the wholeness of which our awareness is but a sample. The so-called psychic powers revealed in remote viewing are testimony to the unbroken wholeness, the ocean of consciousness, and not merely to the unique mental capacity of a successful subject.

### *The Relative and the Absolute*

Bohm's paradigm of the implicate and explicate order offers us something far more important than one possible explanation for events in the relative domain. His model provides an opening for radically new ways to think about the role of the absolute.

When I recall the years just before I stopped entertaining any notion of the absolute whatever, I can easily spot the difficulty I was having with the concept. I couldn't think of a single plausible way that the absolute, which I then called God, could have any effect on the world. The idea of God helping push footballs over goal lines or win wars for our side had run its course and become untenable. My next image, of a powerful but utterly remote God, seemed irrelevant to any physical or mental event in the everyday world. At most,

the category "God" provided a convenient bin in which to store my current conception of the highest qualities toward which human life might aspire. The absolute, as image, faded away, and the absolute as principle seemed an unnecessary gloss on the discussion of human values.

Now, as I review the personal experiences and trusted texts that have reopened the category of the absolute, I need above all to be clear how I would bring together the absolute and the relative as the dual aspects of reality. When Bohm proposes a paradigm shift that views the relative domain in terms of implicate and explicate orders, his model suggests a satisfying way to see how, at least potentially, the relative is capable of being modified by the existence of the absolute.

Bohm follows a slightly different route than I would follow. He refers to what I call the absolute as principle when he discusses insight and active intelligence. More recently, he has proposed seeing the implicate order, the wholeness of thought and matter, as itself ordered by a "super-implicate." This concept leads him to conclusions I would also endorse, but I find it comfortable to start my exploration by thinking about the absolute as image.<sup>7</sup>

Two images of the absolute recur in the Blue Pearl narrative. Taken together, they form a powerful model for considering the role of the absolute in the world of relative events. One suggests the ground of all existence, pure consciousness, the unmoving and the eternal. It is the image of unmanifest Being, the Sphere of unmanifest Light. It is Shiva. But this image is never far removed from images of the absolute as an active force, the source of all blessings, transformation, and grace. Shakti, the Goddess, appears throughout Muktananda's account as the agent behind one amazing, growth-producing event after another.

We could preserve these images, or we could see them in their equivalent form, as principles. Every attribute of the absolute as image, every registry of the nature of the absolute as form, is, in effect, a proposal for what some of those absolute principles might be. Accounts that personify the absolute as god-figure and explore how such a figure affects human beings through its actions and teachings capture the variety of insights into the workings of reality beyond those commonly thought to be merely natural processes of cause and effect. As Bohm points out, "... people had insight in the past



about a form of intelligence that organized the universe and they personalized it and called it God. A similar insight can prevail today without personalizing it and without calling it a personal God.<sup>8</sup> Whether he or any of us prefers to personalize the principles is a matter of choice. The fact remains that we may use any account, whether personalized or not, as we attempt to list the properties of the absolute.

### *The Absolute as Tendency*

Through image and principle, we are constantly struggling to capture an implication of our experience that, if unnamed, seems to slip through the filters of our awareness. All our words and stories, and even direct experiences, represent our effort to preserve the awesome inference that there is more than the relative order of reality.

What might be some of the absolute principles revealed by the process of our evolving lives? Our assignment is to discern *the absolute as tendency*. If we restrict ourselves to the realm of human consciousness, we may see that we attribute to the absolute three quite different processes: 1) the tendency to transform the contents of our consciousness so as to remove all sense of limitation and to maximize fearlessness, transcendence of desire, and attainment of liberation; 2) the tendency to overcome the imagined obstacles that divide us from each other and block the natural state of love; and 3) the tendency to alter our awareness so that we realize the unity of all things and recognize our inherent nature as, for example, pure consciousness.

We can notice the tendencies in operation only by noting a change in our state or in the state of someone whose evolution we can observe. Whether we do so through the image of the Goddess, Shakti, or through the principle or tendency underlying human transformation, we can record our sense of the asymmetrical operation of the absolute upon the relative. Something or some entity, as it were, seems to be guiding us, propelling us in magnificent directions. But how? At what point does this "intervention" occur?

I must return to the model of the implicate and explicate order to fashion my answer. The absolute, I would propose, is "built in" to the endless series of explications by which the unmanifest wholeness takes form. Just as the laws of thermodynamics refer to one set of

tendencies, the absolute refers to a quite different set of tendencies reflected in the process of explication.

What we may call the absolute is not the only tendency in the system. Visions, miracles, ecstatic moments, and profound understandings happen to some people more than others and more at some times than at others. As with the case of remote viewing, the question of why such things happen can be paired with the question of why they do not.

The implicate order is the unmanifest wholeness of all thought, but, somehow, from that totality we retrieve, or are handed, a particular thought. On what basis? Why this thought and not that, or any other?

One basis suggests the operation of constancies. We see "the same thing," even if our angle changes or someone actually substitutes something slightly different in its place. Constancies are one sort of tendency affecting explication. Another basis determining what manifests suggests a gradual decay into randomness. We can't remember whole stanzas of our college anthem the way we once could. Some entropic process seems to disorder our efforts to recall past events. But there is another basis, another lawful process that operates and is noticed, sometimes. It is the process reflected in movement from one moment to another, or from one decade to another, movement toward greater freedom, love, and understanding.

Some people attribute these changes to "natural causes." Some feel they have been blessed. Important as these *post hoc* explanations are, what matters more is the change itself. A quantum jump from one level of freedom to another, one level of love to another, one experience of beauty or understanding to another—these shifts are the primary data of transpersonal psychology. Whether the shift is apparent in the flash of a moment's revelation or is incremental and seen only as a life project, what matters is the shift itself.

Each such confirmation of the existence and role of the absolute permits us to speculate further and more firmly about how it could be that reality tends inherently to further these tendencies toward freedom, love, and consciousness. To take but one example, what I learned from the experience of being a subject in the remote viewing experiment was that I am not as limited by space and time as I once thought. I am far more interconnected with people than I had imagined. To take the major case presented in this exploration,

what Muktananda's experiences of the Blue Pearl showed him was the transforming power leading him to liberation, to the love that comes from the Other and yet is his own Self, and to his full identity with the very principle of Consciousness.

My inference that the absolute plays on the explicating form of our inner awareness is but one way to translate the experiences and understandings revealed in the Blue Pearl narrative. The source of the tendency toward liberation, love, and self-realization can be located, as Muktananda does, in the personified images of the absolute, but his purpose in recording his spiritual experiences would not be thwarted by proposing, more impersonally, that these tendencies are at work constantly in the undivided wholeness that manifests as our every thought and action. These tendencies are the very nature of the absolute.<sup>9</sup>

### *The Turn toward the Absolute*

If our thoughts and actions of any given moment are the resultant of two sets of tendencies, which we may call the absolute and the relative, an important question that arises is, "How can we increase the role of the absolute in our lives?" In asking the question we may have in mind one or another aspect of the absolute. We may be wondering, for example, how we can accelerate the process of inner purification in order to gain power and freedom, including that freedom from the weight of the past and the allure of the future that is called liberation. We may be wondering how we can be more receptive to the tendency we call love, in whatever form or aspect. Or we may be wondering how the peace of mind that comes from directly experiencing the unity and equality of all being can replace the distracted, fragmented thinking we usually encounter within our awareness. We may be wondering, in effect, whether there is anything we can do to influence, or least not to impede, the tendencies of freedom, love, and consciousness that we wish were more evident in our lives.

Muktananda's narrative documents one way to intensify the role of the absolute. He approached and accepted Nityananda as his guru, and the end of his searching was to recognize the absolute as his Self. His final realization of the identity between God, Guru, and Self can be expanded into three statements. Gods exists. The Guru

is God. I am God. These three statements can be examined in the context of this discussion of the absolute as tendency.

That "God exists" can be known if one senses the tendency toward freedom, love, and enlightenment playing in one's life. The statement locates the source of the transformative tendency as the absolute. That "The Guru is God" can be known if one experiences the operation of that tendency especially when one is in the presence of the guru, thinking of him, or carrying out his suggestions. The identity of God and Guru is inferred by Muktananda because no useful boundary could be preserved between the effect of the Goddess and the effect of the guru. Their impact was identical; hence the conclusion that the Goddess was taking the form of Nityananda. That "I am God" merely continues the erosion of illusory boundaries. The transforming tendency is located "within." The Center as sacred source, experienced as the Self, is no less the agent of the transforming events. Turning within is the same as being in the guru's presence. The climactic vision merges all three images—Shiva, Nityananda, and Muktananda. These names and forms become interchangeable representations of the same inherent tendency of all reality, the tendency toward the ultimate realization.

The image of the active Goddess represents the tendency toward the goal. The image of Shiva represents the goal. The goal and the path to the goal are inseparably joined into one complex unity. The goal is reached when one enters the state of Shiva. At that point, the paradoxes enunciated by the Blue Person take hold. It is a state of being here and everywhere. It is a state of perfect stillness and, no less, spontaneous and appropriate action. The tendencies by which the Goddess alters the manifest content of thought and action are also at play in the guru, as both a source of his own delight and a source of the transformation of those who come in contact with him. For Muktananda, his guru, Nityananda, was the manifestation in form of Shiva and of Shakti, the goal and the means.

One way to think further about this question is to return to the distinction between ego and Self. Some people think about the Self as if they had in mind an image of the absolute, while others consider it as if it were a principle. The two modes are not fundamentally different, and it is common to find that one shifts back and forth between the two ways of talking about the Self. However, when it comes to wondering what one can do to change one's life, it matters

how one conceives of the Self. For those who see the Self in image form, as what might even seem to be an inner Other, the goals of the spiritual quest involve "getting in touch with the Self" or "letting the Self take over." The image is of an inner entity we are having a hard time contacting, and this, in turn, raises questions about what layers of non-Self may be obscuring easy contact or what "noise in the system" is garbling the signal from the inner Self. However, all constructions of the Self as image have their counterpart in the alternative way of talking about the Self, as principle.

The Self as principle can be understood both in terms of the goal and the process that moves us toward the goal. We can think about the goal states of freedom, love, or pure consciousness as the nature of the Self, but we can also see all the forces that move us toward those goals as the absolute tendencies of the Self that move in the universe. The question becomes: "What impedes or weakens the operation of these tendencies?"

The Self as tendency can be seen in relation to the other class of tendencies organized under the label of "ego." The ego is the source of all the tendencies that derive from the sense of separateness and our preoccupation with gain or loss or with satiation or pain, as experienced by the isolated individual we construe ourselves to be. The ego is the inferred tendency behind our preoccupation with "I and mine." However, it is a matter of choice whether we consider the ego as principle or imagine, instead, a devious internal character named "The Ego" who plays an obstructive role in the drama of our spiritual development. It is not mere carelessness of thinking that leads us, at times, to fashion such elaborate constructions as "The ego wouldn't let go" or "The ego is our worst enemy." The fact that we speak in such dramatic language is evidence of how vividly we experience the operation of egoic tendencies within our thinking and action.

### *Meditation and the Teacher*

However we conceive of them, the question remains, "How can the balance between ego and Self be altered in the direction of the Self?" Every spiritual tradition organizes its answers to this question by providing a set of methods or techniques for the seeker. Each tradition suggests the kinds of austerities, practices, prayers,

uplifting stories, and forms of contemplation that have worked and will, hopefully, work again to maximize the tendencies of the Self. The Blue Pearl narrative points us toward two methods for courting the transformative process. Muktananda's experiences and teachings flow directly from the practice of meditation under the guidance of an accomplished teacher.

"What is meditation?" and "What is the role of the teacher?" are the two questions we may explore next. In doing so, we need to be aware of the commonalities that exist between Muktananda's approach to the Self and the wide range of apparently dissimilar methods used by other spiritual traditions.

Meditation is designed to help us move beyond the confines of the ego and move toward realizing the Self. It is also a technique for altering our usual way of retrieving memory and information from the implicate order, the ocean of human consciousness. These two descriptions of the purpose and consequences of meditation are not identical, however. The former suggests an infusion of the absolute into our consciousness; the latter suggests merely a nonordinary perception of the contents of the relative domain in all its wholeness. It may be useful to explore some of the implications of this latter effect of meditation. Meditation entails a gradual stilling of the mind's internal chatter and buzz. Under these conditions, we may retrieve many old memories; we may even experience directly the thoughts and perceptions of other people, as in remote viewing.

The evidence suggests that those who have meditated for years or who have just finished a period of meditation succeed better at remote viewing and similar tasks than those who have never meditated. In the short run, the practice of meditation seems to allow us to expand our boundary, partly through stilling recursive private thoughts and sensory input. In the long run, some may use the practice as part of a genuine movement toward the Self, while others will only have their ego strengthened by becoming pridefully attached to their great powers.

Spiritual teachers regularly warn against the temptation of confusing psychic powers with the working of the absolute. As Muktananda put it to a group of researchers, "These petty miracles are very ordinary." He then went on to suggest that remote viewing was inherently no more wonderful than any perceptual ability; in fact, it tempts one, as does all outward turning of one's consciousness, to

neglect the goal of realizing the Self.<sup>10</sup> Without an understanding of the nature of Self, the ego can become more rather than less entrenched following the experience of remote viewing. If this is so, then it follows that it is not the phenomenon of remote viewing, *per se*, that shows the operation of the absolute but, rather, the altered understanding of reality sometimes produced by such experiences. The warnings of the spiritual teachers are all the more urgent because the move toward liberation, which entails a radical revision of one's self-image in the direction of freedom, may result in having all the so-called psychic powers come to one "unbidden." The task of accepting such increases in "personal power" without thereby jeopardizing the understandings that lead to liberation is a notoriously difficult one.

The technique of meditation is a spiritual practice which is designed to loosen the hold of the egoic patterns that determine how we describe ourselves and how we view others. It does this by generating the optimum conditions for the mind to register something beyond its usual tendencies and assumptions. Reduce the input of sensory data, invoke the Other's presence and guidance, affirm through a mantra or some other device one's inner nature as divine, witness nonjudgmentally the ensuing flow of consciousness, and what then transpires may be the representation of all the tendencies that lead beyond the ego. The body seems to be moved, purified; the imagery has an unfamiliar and awesome clarity; the spontaneous registry of what one's life and current experiences all imply at their core may take the form of searing insights. Even the stillness comes as a blessing and a discovery. Whatever happens, it continues to suggest a shift in the inner structure of one's consciousness, a shift from ego to Self.

There are, however, many pitfalls to this process of meditation. The Blue Pearl narrative documents one pitfall most poignantly. Muktananda had fallen into the trap of pride, the trap of prematurely considering that his yogic attainments signaled the completion of his spiritual journey. Therefore, his narrative attests the twofold nature of the method that succeeded for him: meditation *and* the guidance of the teacher. It is the teacher and the corrective power of scripture that operate in tandem with meditation, each complementing the other, counter-balancing experience and guidance. Muktananda's teacher sent him back to his meditation hut, and the process continued. Direct guidance is only one aspect of the teacher's role. Beyond the

puncturing of inflated conclusions about one's attainment, beyond specifying appropriate techniques, and beyond the confirmation of significant, even ultimate, progress, the teacher-disciple bond, as revealed throughout the Blue Pearl narrative, entails the most profound of human connections.

Muktananda's experiences convinced him that he was receiving the contents of his meditative experience directly from the accumulated awareness and imagery of his accomplished teacher. The bond that unites teacher and disciple goes beyond manifest, observable communication. Not all traditions construe the teacher's role in this way, just as they may not employ meditation as a formal practice, but the Blue Pearl narrative suggests that the living teacher may be seen as the personification of the absolute. The teacher is the source of the transforming tendencies that lead the seeker toward freedom, love, and consciousness. The teacher represents and leads the disciple toward the Self. Muktananda's explanation of the transformative experiences he presents in the narrative is never far from the assertion that his teacher was "doing everything." From the day of his initiation to the climax of self-realization, the teacher "gives" Muktananda the imagery, the awareness, the fearlessness, and whatever else it takes to accomplish full realization of the Self. However, these asymmetrical images of receiving from the Other are permitted to coexist with the superficially contradictory awareness that there is no Other, that the teacher and disciple are one.

The visual imagery of Muktananda's final realization preserves not only the devotee's stance of surrender and gratitude but the realized being's stance of full equality with the absolute, as represented through the forms of his teacher and Lord Shiva and through the formless reality of pure Consciousness. His teacher gave him that state, but it was no less true that the state was, and always had been, his own nature that he could now, finally, recognize and affirm.

One implication of this understanding of the role of the teacher is that the teacher cannot teach what he has not attained. The balance between ego and Self in the teacher sets a probable limit for the disciple's transformation. This is made all the more plausible if we realize that the process of teaching takes place not only at the level of guidance and verbal communication but by direct transmission.

The closer the bond between the seeker and teacher, the more the seeker's meditation will entail receiving directly what the teacher

has to teach. Physical separation is not an insurmountable barrier, nor, if we take seriously the evidence from the world's great religions, does the teacher need to be alive or be, as some would put it, "in his body." If the implicate order contains all the enfolded residue of the past, then it is theoretically possible to retrieve the presence, the teaching, and the state of a teacher from any age or culture. The focal point of one's meditation may thus range from a specific teacher to the history of one's people to the nearly universal archetypes that move us toward freedom, love, and pure consciousness. The images or the events that we recall are not, in and of themselves, the sacred, but they play a crucial role in the transformative process that reveals the absolute in our lives. The Blue Pearl is one recorded image of the absolute, and it is worth recalling the many ways that Muktananda used this vision to move toward realization of the Self. The sum total of all his meditative experiences led him "beyond the Blue Pearl," to an intuition of the formless absolute, but this in no way negates the fact that the image was a perfect vehicle for his evolving spiritual development.

### *The Practice of Transpersonal Psychology*

The Blue Pearl narrative reveals the effects of two techniques available to anyone exploring transpersonal psychology—meditation and the guidance of a spiritual teacher. It also contains many examples of the practice I have employed in the present project: working with text. The list of potential practices is very long, but their goal always includes our own transformation. Transpersonal psychology requires us to examine ourselves and acknowledge our yearning, our attainment, and the impediments to further growth. We are the primary case of our own research. The purpose of an ongoing practice is to manifest those tendencies that we may call the Self and to diminish the strength of those we may call the ego.

How then does one become an effective transpersonal psychologist? What does it take to recognize and learn from the data offered us by the human record of seeking, attaining, backsliding from, rediscovering, and irreversibly realizing the absolute? My conclusion is that we can only learn from others to the extent that we are learning for ourselves. Our direct experience and our understanding

must be expanding if we hope to make full use of the data offered us by others.

Only in transpersonal psychology do we encounter so inescapably the idea that we could, even should, learn about the author of our chosen text by becoming, in our unique way, as much like that person as possible. Scientists have followed a different strategy and have constructed apparatus or trained observers to be objective, to yield the same results as the adjacent apparatus or observer. Their strategy fits well their goal of determining the lawful relations among observed objects. Transpersonal psychology, however, needs a different strategy since it aims at a different conclusion altogether.

I have come to understand the goal of transpersonal psychology as the bringing together of the diverse human techniques, experiences, and understandings in order that any person, including especially the transpersonal psychologist, may realize the role of the absolute in human life. This task forces us to take stock of what we know on the basis of our direct experience. We cannot be increasingly open to scriptural and autobiographical accounts unless we have an ongoing practice and a growing set of self-evident understandings. Our capacity for empathic and accurate accounts of what others are saying depends on the depth, complexity, and availability of our own inner understandings. How do these understandings develop?

Many of the things that psychologists already do are directed to the goals of deepening experience, sifting its subtle meanings, and enhancing personal growth. The purposes, even if unacknowledged, of therapy often include the goal of knowing the ultimate layer of self. Psychologists not only recommend but also employ on themselves the valuable techniques of dream analysis, keeping a careful diary, and various forms of meditation. Efforts at self-development and efforts to become a more effective researcher in the realm of transpersonal psychology cannot be easily divided from each other; each augments the other. The goal of transpersonal psychology is both private and collective. We can only learn these things one by one, in our own way and our own good time, but, still, we can be helpful by encouraging each other, sharing our progress reports, and building a common language for communication.

The question of how we can assess the progress we are making toward understanding the absolute leads in several directions. One line of inquiry starts with our experience, another with the way we

frame our understandings, and a third with how we live our lives as an expression of what we understand.

Direct evidence, especially when tested and validated by one's teacher or scriptural reference points, is the most useful indication of the transformative process. We can use our power, our joy, and our sense of unity with all being to measure our appreciation of the absolute. The distance between our lives and the lives of those in whom the absolute as principle is fully flowering can be narrowed. However, transpersonal psychology is concerned with more than the experience of freedom, love, and awareness; it is concerned, as well, with what we do to block these states, since how we view ourselves has a great impact upon our maturing understanding of the absolute.

A sharpened sense of how the ego operates is as much a part of spiritual development as the growing perception of the absolute. As we come to know how pervasive, how subtle, and how powerful are the effects of the egoic assumption system, we can become more conscious of the choices we are making and more able to recognize the play of the many tendencies within us. As this insight develops, so too does the capacity to form and sustain the self-understanding that facilitates the workings of the Self.

The interplay of experience and understanding is what sustains the process of transformation. More than any single experience or formulation, what impresses me about the life story of those who have reached the goal of realizing the Self is their capacity to construct and preserve complex, paradoxical systems of understandings. The Blue Pearl narrative shows how easily Muktananda moves among events and verbal statements that would impel most of us to resist the implicit paradoxes and ask, "Which is it?" Does the divine exist in form or is the formless absolute the only reality? Did God create us or did we create God? Is there an Other or only the one Self?

We ask all these questions because we have not had the experiences necessary to embrace both alternatives at once. Our experiences will not sustain answers of such paradoxical complexity as "Yes, both are true." I can only surmise how it might feel to attain such a state, but it appears that the ability to encompass, simultaneously, both or all parts of a paradoxical understanding is built on a wealth of experience. One essential part of Muktananda's experience was that visions which one might imagine would jar against one another did not in fact do so. Muktananda remained

unswervingly loyal to the validity of his experience. To break the paradox and settle for only one component of his understanding would be to disaffirm the wholeness of his meditative visions, and that he would not do. There were moments of encountering the Other and moments of realizing that the Other and he were but various guises of the one Self. The paradox is sustained by the diversity of his direct experience.

One way to pursue the issue of paradox is to scan our conceptual system for the either/or's that seem a bit too well established. Distinctions that are maintained with a special fervor or defensiveness sometimes indicate an unnecessary polarization. One such distinction just may be the absolute vs. the relative.

We create the split when we slide from saying that the spontaneous tendency toward freedom, love, and understanding suggests the absolute to saying that the absolute is defined by only such marvelous tendencies. Similarly, when we slide from acknowledging the absolute in the form of the inner Self to excluding the ego from the realm of the absolute, we may go on to despise the very existence of the ego. The temptation to move from asserting the existence of the absolute to limiting it only to that which is good and lovely inverts our initial predicament. Where before we were enjoined to deny or ignore the absolute, we are soon urging ourselves and others to ignore or disparage the relative. Nothing could be farther from the teachings of the Blue Pearl narrative.

From the perspective of one who can fully recognize the absolute, the so-called relative is just another form that the absolute may take. Some tendencies lead us toward remembrance of our essential Self, and some do not. But even these latter are the workings of the absolute. They deserve another label by which to mark their function. If we prefer to think of the absolute as image, we may dwell, as did St. John of the Cross, on the divine intention that gives rise to even "the dark night of the soul," the intense suffering of ego death preceding liberation. For what purpose do these torments occur? As a test, as a purification, and as a teaching. If, on the other hand, we prefer to think of the absolute as principle, we may conclude, as Kashmir Shaivism does, that the absolute functions not only through grace but through concealment. The universe, in this view, is a play of both concealment *and* revelation or grace. There is creation, but there is also destruction. There is illumination but also ignorance.

The teacher's categories, "absolute" and "relative," were meant to awaken us and expand our narrow vision, but once grasped they are shown to be serving the teacher's larger task of conveying a radical but paradoxical vision of reality. Our initial model of reality that excluded the absolute can yield to a second, dichotomous model that encompasses both absolute and relative. This second model, in its turn, can yield to a third model that distinguishes between motion toward and motion away from the light but concludes that all motion reveals equally the one process of evolution toward self-realization.

At one stage in our development, we need to be introduced to the reality of the absolute that shines through the illusory appearances in which we have become enmeshed. But then there comes a time when the distinction between absolute and relative needs to be dissolved into a nondualistic understanding that there is only one reality, whether it be called God, Consciousness, the Tao, or Being.

The tension of paradox grows when, as these models shift back and forth in my mind, I find myself entertaining two deeply held convictions that I can neither reconcile nor negate. There are miles to go. There is nothing to do.

We can sense that there is no separation between the absolute and the relative without losing the additional sense of being on a long journey. It is thus that I come to wonder how this vehicle—this psyche of mine—came to have the strengths and weaknesses that it has. The findings of traditional psychology are certainly relevant to any effort to understand why the journey can often be so difficult.

Transpersonal psychology's role is to enlarge how we study and think about human life, not to eliminate the old concerns from psychology's agenda. Looked at in the light of a larger synthesis of transpersonal and traditional psychology, much of what has already been done in traditional psychology provides essential information on how the ego develops, works, and thwarts its own transcendence. Psychology's documentation of human functioning yields an important but partial portrait of the full range of our possible development. Few of our pathetically self-serving and small-minded inclinations have gone unnoticed. Psychology's assessment may not grasp all that we are, but it is often valid as far as it goes. We can only gain from seeing that, Yes, we do think like this, harbor these drives, seek these advantages, and resist our further growth in many ways. A

psychology that can integrate consideration of the negative and positive features will be in the strongest possible position to understand our lives, and there is no need to locate transpersonal psychology in an either/or relation to all that psychology has contained over the past hundred years.

From one, final perspective, what matters is neither experience nor understanding, but how these, together, transform our lives and relations with the rest of the world. In the case of Swami Muktananda, his meditative visions and his understanding of the absolute in the form of the Goddess Kundalinī sustained not only the process of his purification but also his attainment of the state of liberation. This in turn led to his power to guide and validate the same purificatory process in others. He became a teacher capable of awakening an awareness of the absolute within a person and then guiding the person to the final goal. His visions of the personified, indwelling Lord led directly to the fact that he was able to teach, by his example, how to welcome others with love and respect. He was truly available, in a spirit of total acceptance, because he saw and was therefore impelled to worship each person as a direct manifestation of the divine. Finally, as a result of his visionary experience of his and everyone's identity with the divine, he was able to impart his state of unity awareness to others, through their vision of the Blue Pearl or through their sense of a fundamental oneness.

To the extent that our experiences and understandings are teaching us about the absolute, we can expect profound changes in how we relate to ourselves and to others. We can expect profound changes, as well, in the effectiveness and certainty with which we utilize our capacities in the everyday world. The promise entails more than hearing about someone else's freedom or capacity for love. The promise is that, in one way or another, we will see our lives change. If studying the lives of remarkable beings and struggling to understand the implications of their experiences and teachings can contribute to this transformation of lives, then transpersonal psychology has an honorable role to play in human development.



## GLOSSARY

*āp* in Hindi, the second person pronoun, used to express respect or deference, as distinct from *tum* and *tū* used in more familiar contexts

*abhangā* a metrical form used in the devotional poetry of many Maharashtran poet-saints

*Advaita* (lit. not two) a nondualistic school of monistic idealism, such as Vedānta, which infers from direct experience the one eternal Self, the Witness of all knowledge

*ahamkāra* (*ahamkāra*) the ego, one aspect of the four-fold psychic instrument described by Patanjali, is defined by the tendency to create a bounded sense of "me" and "mine" and to view everything from that egoic point of reference

*Airavata* (*Airāvata*) an elephant in the heaven-world of Indra

*ājñā* (*ājñā*) (lit. order, command) the *ājñā chakra* refers to the plexus of subtle connections associated physically with the area between the eyebrows and understood experientially as the inner seat of "the other" (*itara*), in the form of Paramashiva or the primal Guru

*ākāśa* (*ākāśa*) the subtle inner space or ether

*Arjuna* the human figure whose dialogue with Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita* presents a series of teachings on selfless action, duty, devotion, and the supreme nondual reality

- āsana* a yogic posture designed to increase the body's capacity for natural stability and balance
- āshram* (*āśrama*) a setting for spiritual practices, usually under the direction of a teacher or master of *yoga*
- ātman* the Self, absolute reality, pure being
- Aum* the three component letters of the mystical syllable, *OM*, the primal sound as described in the *Mandukya Upanishad*
- Baba* (lit. Father) a term of affection and respect for a father, a relative, or a holy man
- Bhagavān* the Lord, giver of blessings; also, a traditional term of honor for a holy person
- Bhagavad-Gītā* the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna which was incorporated into the text of the epic *Mahabharata* toward the end of the pre-Christian era
- bhakti* the practice and experience of devotion; hence *bhakta*, one whose spiritual orientation is primarily devotional
- Bhavānī* the supreme conscious creative power, depicted as the Goddess in the *Vijnanabhairava bindu* (lit. drop) the primal form, a compacted sphere of all potential, emerging into actuality, sometimes experienced via an intense visual representation, e.g., the Blue Pearl
- Brahmā* the power and tendency to create, sometimes personified, together with Vishnu and Shiva, as part of the Hindu trinity
- Brahman* supreme reality, sometimes identified, as in the Upanishadic texts, with the threefold experience of existence, consciousness, and bliss; hence, the compound name for *Brahman*: *Satchidananda brahmarandhra* (lit. the hole of Brahman) the topmost spiritual center, a localization of pure consciousness at or just above the top of the head, also known as the *sahasrara*
- buddhi* the intellect, one of the fourfold aspects of the psychic instrument described by Patanjali, whereby the individual consciousness reflects the light of the absolute, or the Self, and is able to discriminate between what is real and what is illusion
- chakra* (*cakra*) one of a system of latent or potential subtle energies which form centers (lit. circles) of energy at six major locations in the subtle body; it is through these centers that the ascending energy of *kundalinī* moves, purifying them and removing blockages
- Chiti* (*Citi*) the conscious, creative aspect of the supreme reality, often identified with the active, Goddess figure

- Chitshakti* (*Citśakti*) the creative power of I-consciousness or self-awareness
- darshan* (*darśana*) (lit. viewing) seeing or being in the presence of a revered person or sacred place; also, a system of philosophic affirmations and understandings
- dhām* (lit. abode)
- dīkshā* (*dīkṣā*) initiation, as in the imparting of a sacred mantra or the awakening of the aspirant's latent *kundalinī* energy through *shaktipāt*
- ekāgratā* concentration upon a single object; a pivotal technique in the yogic practice outlined by Patanjali, involving control of sense data and internal thought processes through a series of interrelated restraints and disciplines
- Ganeshpuri* a town fifty miles east of Bombay where Bhagavan Nityananda settled; the site of *Gurudev Siddha Peeth*, Swami Muktananda's main ashram
- Gāudevī* one form of the Goddess, a representation of the creative, conscious aspect of supreme reality
- gopī* in the scriptural stories of young Krishna, the *gopīs* were the milkmaids of Vrindavan who formed intense devotional relationships with the Lord
- Govinda* a name for Krishna, especially the young cowherd of Vrindavan
- guna* (*guṇa*) one of the three modalities or qualities of all creation which permute and combine to create the observable mixtures of luminosity or intelligence (*sattva*), activity (*rajas*), and ignorance or inertia (*tamas*)
- guru* a master of spiritual initiation and guidance, whose cosmic function is identified in Kashmir Shaivism with the grace-bestowing power of God
- Gurudev* (lit. guru, Lord) a traditional term of address and reverence for one's guru
- gurukripā* (*gurukṛpā*) (lit. guru's grace) the transformative energy bestowed on a seeker by the guru, especially as in the process of initiation
- hamsah* (*hamsah*) (lit. I am That) a sacred mantra from the Vedas uniting and affirming the identity of the limited, bound self and the supreme reality; also, in Kashmir Shaivism, the natural, breath-linked mantra which is always being repeated by all persons

- Īshwara* (*Īśvara*) the Lord; the immanent aspect of supreme reality as it manifests with attributes and functions
- jīvanmukti* the state of the *jīvanmukta*, one who is liberated from the limitations of ego-consciousness while still remaining in the physical body; one traditional definition of the goal of *yoga*
- jnāna* (*jñāna*) the path of knowledge that is directed to the ultimate realities, to the highest understandings; hence, *jnānī* one who pursues the ultimate through the path of discriminating what is real from what is illusory and thereby forms the basis of a stable unity awareness
- Jnaneshwar* (*Jnāneśvara*) a thirteenth century Maharashtran poet-saint
- karma* (lit. action, work) actions and the consequences of one's prior actions; hence, destiny
- khecharī mudrā* (*khecarī mudrā*) a yogic and tantric practice, involving blockage of the air passages by turning the tongue back into the cavum
- koān* a consciousness-expanding question (e.g., "What is the sound of one hand clapping?") or object of contemplation (e.g., Mu), used as a teaching technique in Zen schools of Buddhism
- Krishna* (*Kṛṣṇa*) a human representation of the divine, an avatar or incarnation of the Lord, whose life story is depicted in the *Srimad Bhagavatam* and the *Mahabharata*
- kriyā* physical or mental purificatory movement of the awakened *kundalinī*
- kumbhaka* (*kumbhaka*) voluntary or involuntary retention of breath
- kumkum* red-colored powder made from turmeric, used for putting a mark of worship between the eyebrows
- kundalinī* (*kuṇḍalinī*) (lit. coiled one) the primal energy of the universe, some part of which is understood to be lying, coiled in a potential form, at the base of the spine and to be capable of being awakened and serving as the basis of spiritual evolution leading toward final union or realization
- lungi* an article of clothing commonly worn by men in India, a piece of cloth tied around the waist
- Mahābhārata* an epic compiled in the sixth and fifth centuries B.C., to which were added numerous other texts including the *Bhagavad Gita*
- Mahāmāyā* (lit. the great illusion) a name for Shakti, the creative conscious energy of the universe

- Mahārāj* (lit. great ruler) a term of respect used generally for highly esteemed persons
- Maharashtra* a state in the middle section of the Western coast of India, in which are located Bombay and Ganeshpuri
- mahāvākya* (lit. the great statement) one of the four central proclamations of the Upanishadic tradition, as synthesized by Shankarāchārya: Brahman is consciousness; the Atman is Brahman; I am Brahman; and Thou art That; together these affirm that the Supreme Reality (Brahman) is the Self of all, the supreme "I" and ground of existence
- mandir* (lit. temple)
- Mangalore* a state on the West coast of India, south of Maharashtra, the birthplace of Swami Muktananda
- mantra* (lit. that which protects) mystical sounds or phonemes, discovered in states of deep meditation, which are understood to express and be one with the underlying or primal levels of reality; therefore, in repeating such a mantra, one can contact the consciousness of those teachers whose lineage has adopted the mantra as a form of initiation and transformation
- mārga* (lit. path)
- māyā* (from the root *mā*, to measure) that which does not exist; therefore, illusory; also, the finitizing or limiting principle
- moksha* (*mokṣa*) liberation from the sense of duality and limitation
- mudrā* in *yoga*, a psychophysical process of sealing up energy and attention; also, a pose conveying emotions or blessings
- mūlādhāra* in yogic anatomy, the first psychic center or *chakra*, located at the base of the spine, which is the seat of the *kundalinī* power
- nāda* (lit. sound)
- nādī* (*nāḍī*) in yogic anatomy, any pathway or channel
- Namah Shivāya* (*Namah Śivāya*) (lit. salutations to Shiva) the five-syllable Vedic mantra, meaning "I honor my Inner Self"
- Nārada* a sage who expounded the path of divine love or *bhakti*
- neela* (*nīla*) (lit. blue)
- neela bindu* (*nīlabindu*) (lit. the blue point) the Blue Pearl
- Neelakantha* (*Nīlakaṇṭha*) (lit. the blue-throated one) a designation of Shiva
- nirvikalpa* the thought-free state
- Nityananda* (lit. the bliss of eternity) Swami Muktananda's guru

- Nivrittināth* (*Nivṛttinātha*) the older brother and guru of the poet-saint Jnaneshwar
- OM* a representation of the fundamental creative impulse of the Supreme; the basis of all mantras
- Parabrahman* the Absolute; Paramashiva
- paramahansa* (*paramahansa*) *hansa* is the individual soul which reflects the cosmic polarity of *ham* (the self) and *sa* (the other); a *paramahansa* is thus one who has resolved this polarity through self-realization
- Paramashiva* (*Paramaśiva*) the Absolute; also, *Parāshiva* *Paramātmā* the Lord
- Paramātmāśakti* (*Paramātmāśakti*) the conscious, creative power of the Absolute; also, *Parāśakti*
- Pārvatī* the supreme, conscious creative power, depicted as a Goddess; in mythology, the wife of Shiva
- Patanjali* (*Patañjali*) the author of the Yoga Sutras
- prājña* (*prājña*) the third body or the third state of consciousness, the causal state; also, in Vedānta, the intellectual sheath
- prāṇa* (*prāṇa*) a generic name for the vital force of all living beings and the entire cosmos; sometimes refers specifically to the breath
- prāṇaśakti* (*prāṇaśakti*) the power of prana
- prāṇāyāma* (*prāṇāyāma*) (lit. regulation of prana) the practices or phenomena of the regulation of the vital force
- Pratyabhijnāhridayam* (*Pratyabhijñāhṛdayam*) (lit. the heart of recognition) the summarized text, by Kṣemarāja, of the *Pratyabhijña* philosophy which holds that to experience one's essential divinity one has only to recognize it
- Purāṇa* the collected corpus of Indian mythology
- puruṣa* (*puruṣa*) the individual experiencer or person; the subjective pole of differentiated consciousness
- Rāma* a name of God; an incarnation who is the hero of the epic *Ramayana*
- Ramakrishna* a nineteenth century Bengali saint who worshipped the divine in the form of the Mother
- rudrāksha* (*rudrākṣa*) rosary beads made from *Elaeocarpus Ganitrus*, a fruit with medicinal powers
- Sadguru* (lit. the true guru); and *Sadgurunath* (lit. the Lord sadguru)

- sādhana* (lit. effort or means) refers to the efforts made by a seeker; also the means or path used for spiritual attainment; thus, *sādhaka*, one who has consciously embarked upon a spiritual path
- sādhū* a term of respect, especially for holy men
- saguna* (*saguṇa*) having a form
- sahaj* (*sahaja*) (lit. easy, spontaneous)
- sahajāvasthā* the sahaj state; the experience of the natural state of the Self which results when all obstacles to such experience are removed
- sahasrāra* (lit. one thousand petalled) the goal of the ascent of the *kundalinī* power, an ecstatic union of the Shiva-Shakti polarity depicted in yogic anatomy as a blazing thousand-petalled lotus in the cranial region
- Saī* (*svāmī*) (lit. master) a term of honor and respect
- samādhi* in *yoga*, a state of absorption of the mind; also, the tomb of a yogi or saint
- sannyāsin* one who has renounced the world and taken the vows of a monk
- Sanskrit* (*saṃskṛta*) (lit. complete) the language of the ancient Indian texts
- saptāh* (lit. seven days or a week) observances or celebrations, e.g., long chants
- Sarasvatī* the aspect of the divine relating to the arts, philosophy, and oratory, depicted as the Goddess
- Sarvajñaloka* *Sarvajñaloka* (lit. the region of omniscience) the state of omniscience
- Satchidānanda* (*saccidānanda*) (lit. absolute existence, consciousness, and bliss) the three indivisible categories used to describe the experience of the absolute
- Shaivism* the system of practices and understandings that center on Shiva as the representative of the supreme absolute; hence, a Shaivite, a follower of the path of Shaivism
- Shakti* (*Śakti*) (lit. power) the conscious creative power which becomes everything in the universe; the dynamic pole of the Shiva-Shakti polarity in all existence
- shaktipāt* (*śaktipāta*) (lit. the descent of power) the bestowal of grace; in Shaivism, a necessary precondition to spiritual advancement through the awakening of the *kundalinī* energy

- shāmbhavī* (*śāmbhavī*) a state of inner absorption with eyes half closed
- Shankarāchārya* an Indian philosopher-mystic who expounded the nondualistic teachings of Advaita Vedānta
- Shirdi* a village in Maharashtra made famous by the great Siddha, Sai Baba, who settled there in the late nineteenth century
- Shiva* (*Śiva*) the basis of the entire cosmos; the underlying reality, sometimes depicted as the primal Lord
- shivo'ham* (*śivo'ham*) (lit. I am Shiva) a description of the unitive experience; also, a mantra which affirms that unity
- Shree* (*Śrī*) a term of respect
- Siddha* (lit. complete, perfect) an adept, one who has completed the spiritual journey
- Siddhaloka* (lit. the world of Siddhas)
- siddhi* (lit. attainment or mastery) sometimes used to refer to occult powers
- so'ham* (lit. He am I) a description of the state of unification with the divine; also, a mantra affirming that identity
- Sufi* a mystic in the Islamic tradition
- Suki* a village close to Ganeshpuri where Muktananda was sent by his guru to meditate and where the Blue Pearl experiences took place
- supracausal* the fourth or *turīya* state, in which the unity of all form is experienced, as in the vision of the Blue Pearl
- sushumnā* (*suṣumnā*) in yogic anatomy one of the central channels in the subtle body through which the *kundalinī* power ascends when awakened
- sushupti* (*suṣupti*) the third state of consciousness, characterized by dreamless sleep
- sūtra* an aphoristic statement in a philosophic text
- swāmi* (*svāmi*) (lit. master) a monastic title
- tandrā* as used in Muktananda's *Play of Consciousness*, a visionary, meditative state; therefore, *tandrāloka*, the state of tandra
- tantra* scriptures attributed to a revelation by Lord Shiva, emphasizing the techniques and direct experiences associated with a nondualistic understanding of reality
- tapas* (lit. heat) the intensity generated by spiritual practice or austerities; therefore, *tapasya*, the practice of austerities

- Trika* (lit. threefold) the North Indian school of monistic Shaivism which analyzes the spiritual truths in terms of triads, one of which describes the spiritual process via the triad of the seeker, the sense of bondage, and the ultimate goal of unity consciousness
- Tukāram* a seventeenth century Maharashtran poet-saint who worshipped the Lord in the form of Vitthal
- turīya* (lit. the fourth) the fourth state of consciousness which is characterized by a sense of witnessing the experiences of the other three states
- turiyātīta* (lit. beyond the fourth) the final spiritual experience, characterized by an absence of any fundamental sense of difference; unity awareness
- Umā* (lit. the splendor of Shiva) the supreme power of the Lord, depicted as his consort
- Upanishad* (*Upaniṣad*) (lit. to sit down near) secret mystical knowledge imparted through the oral tradition; the latter part of each *Veda*
- Vasugupta* a Shaivite sage of Northern India who lived in the eighth or ninth century A.D.; he is credited with recording the revelation called the Shiva Sutras
- Veda* ancient sacred scriptures of India
- Vedānta* (lit. the end of the *Veda*) the mystical teachings drawn from the Upanishads; one of the six major Indian philosophies
- veena* (*vīnā*) a lute with a long stem and a gourd on each end
- Vishnu* (*Viṣṇu*) the sustaining aspect of supreme reality, personified as one of the three divine figures, together with Brahma and Shiva
- yoga* realization of the unity of the individual and the divine; also, practices leading to this realization; hence, *yogī*, one who practices *yoga*
- yoginī*, a female *yogī*

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## NOTES

In preparing the text of the manuscript and notes, I have developed a system of diacritical marks that strikes a balance between several considerations. On the one hand, I have written the Romanized version of some Sanskrit words to indicate how they are pronounced. For example, Śakti is written as *Shakti* and cit as *chit* because, otherwise, anyone unfamiliar with the Sanskrit diacritical marks would be either confused or misled by the traditional way of writing such words. On the other hand, I have included all macrons, the bars over some vowels, because omitting them would sometimes lead to ambiguity and error. For example, *sādhana* and *sādhanā*, which have rather different meanings, would be indistinguishable if the macrons were not shown. Furthermore, it is helpful for pronunciation to know that the macron indicates a long vowel. All diacritical marks other than the macron have been omitted, except that I have preserved whatever diacritical system is used in the titles of works cited and in the excerpts drawn from *Play of Consciousness* and other sources. One misleading way of transposing Marathi into Roman script that recurs throughout *Play of Consciousness* has been altered to a more customary procedure; it involves using an "l" instead of an "r", thus bringing several key words in line with the Sanskrit terms that they parallel (for example, *nīṛa* becomes *nīḷa*). In the Glossary, I present in parentheses the Sanskrit version of each entry with all diacritical marks included when that differs from how the entry appears throughout the manuscript.

## PREFACE

- 1 Swami Muktananda, *Play of Consciousness* (Chitshakti Vilas), 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978). All page references to *Play of Consciousness* refer to this edition.
- 2 The most comprehensive introduction to transpersonal psychology can be found in the work of Ken Wilber. His first book, *Spectrum of Consciousness*, develops a hierarchical model for human awareness and integrates contemporary psychological commentary with traditional Eastern formulations of higher states of consciousness. His next book, *No Boundary*, is an effort to present this model in a more popular form and apply it to the procedures and goals of therapeutic techniques. *The Atman Project* traces individual development from birth to enlightenment, showing the oscillation between approach and resistance to the ultimate. In *Up from Eden* Wilber examines cultural and societal evolution from prehistory to the present and concludes that they demonstrate a gradually rising level of awareness for both the geniuses of a culture and, several levels lower, the bulk of humanity. Two collections, edited by Wilber, contain some of his most important essays: *The Holographic Paradigm* and *Eye to Eye*. A compelling and personal narrative of Wilber's development is found in his article, "Odyssey."

In addition to *Re-Vision*, a journal edited by Wilber, the major sources for articles on transpersonal psychology are *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, and *Parabola*. A professional society, The Association for Transpersonal Psychology, holds annual meetings, publishes a journal, and keeps track of the slowly growing opportunities for undergraduate and graduate work in this area. The address for the Association is P.O. Box 3049, Stanford, California 94305. Another professional society with highly congruent interests is the Association for Humanistic Psychology, located at 325 Ninth Street, San Francisco, California 94103.

## CHAPTER TWO: Images of Power and Purification

- 1 Shree Gurudev Ashram, "Baba with Physicists," p. 11.
- 2 *Bindu* literally means "point" or "drop." In the Shaivite texts, it is understood to be the compacted sphere of all potential. (See Raghava Bhatta's fifteenth century commentary on the *Shāradā Tilak*, an eleventh century text by Lakshmanacharya, as cited in Woodroffe, *The Garland of Letters*, p. 132, and in Avalon, *Shakti and Shākta*, chap. 19. See also *Parātrimshikā*, as cited in Jaideva Singh, *Pratyabhijñāhṛdayam*, p. 7.) The absolute, *Paramashiva*, through polarization into Shiva-Shakti or *prakāsha-vimarsha* starts the process of manifestation or *ābhāsa*. This manifestation is the objective pole and is called the Shakti or the power of the absolute. This objectivization occurs within supreme consciousness or *chit*, but, to the polarized consciousness, it seems

to occur outside. (See Singh, *Pratyabhijñāhṛdayam*, Sutra 2, and also Singh's citation of *Īshvara pratyabhijñā*, p. 19.) At the same time, the subjective pole, Shiva, is defined, through a process of self-limitation, into the limited human consciousness. (For his commentary on Sutra 9 of *Pratyabhijñāhṛdayam*, see Swami Muktananda, *Siddha Meditation* and see also *Tattvasandoha*, as cited in Woodroffe, *Garland*, chap. 15.)

The polarization starts as an impulse (*spanda*) to become this and all other worlds. This impulse, in turn, generates the necessary creative stress (*nāda*). This creative stress gathers as a point which contains in it the germ of all possibilities. (See *Tattvasandoha*, as cited in Woodroffe, *Garland*, p. 109.) This point is the *bindu*. It is not a point in time and space. It is the point at which the objective pole of creative consciousness, or *Chitshakti*, has become clear, and it is likened to an artist's conception of what he is about to paint. This conception is perceived as a "something" within supreme consciousness and hence this level is also characterized by a sense of "this," or *idam*. Like an artist who knows what his creation is going to be, Shiva knows perfectly what he is going to manifest. Hence, this stage of creation is dominated by *jñāna shakti* or the power of perfect knowing. (See Rajanaka Ananda, in his *Vivaraṇa*, as cited in Singh, *Pratyabhijñāhṛdayam*, p. 11.) Finally, because creation is taking shape within it, the *bindu* is also called *ghanibhūta Shakti* or the *Shakti* becoming "dense." (See *Prapañcasāra Tantra*, as cited in Woodroffe, *Garland*, p. 132.)

Beyond this stage, as the experience crystallizes within supreme consciousness, the sense of otherness becomes more and more defined (*sphuta*) until, as in the limited human experience, the subject feels distinct from and unrelated to the contents of consciousness. (See Woodroffe, *Garland*, chap. 10, and see also *Īshvara Pratyabhijñā*, as cited in Woodroffe, *Garland*, p. 172). Creation is not a one-time process. It is continuous, but this in no way detracts from the essential unity of all consciousness. Shiva, the cosmic artist, is constantly creating from his own being, without losing his identity. (See Muktananda's commentary on the *Īshvara Pratyabhijñā* 11/12 in his *Siddha Meditation*, p. 71.) Shiva conceives the universe within himself through his own power or Shakti. This very act of conception is sufficient to create everything; it is the creative act (*srishti-kalpanā*) whose result (*parināma*) is what we consider the world. (See Woodroffe, *Garland*, pp. 22-23.) This conception is an ecstatic outburst of creativity (See Kshemaraja, as cited in Singh, *Pratyabhijñāhṛdayam*, p. 10) or a surveying of his own splendor. (See Maheshvarananda's *Mahārthmañjarī*, as cited in Singh, *Pratyabhijñāhṛdayam*, p. 9.)

The *bindu*, though a unitary experience within supreme consciousness, appears at the individual level for each meditator until there arises the realization that there is only the one supreme consciousness. Hence the Shaivite saying: "As here, so there." (*Śiva Sūtras* 3.14) (For two

complementary perspectives on this aphorism, see Kshemarāja's commentary on Sutra 4, as cited in Singh *Pratyabhijñāhṛdayam*, p. 56, and *Vishvasāra Tantra*, as cited in Woodroffe, *Garland*, p. 94.) We re-enact the cosmic processes individually. (See Muktananda's commentary on Sutra 10 of *Pratyabhijñāhṛdayam* in his *Siddha Meditation*). However, as when seeing one object reflected in a hall of mirrors, we fail to comprehend that we are looking at the multiple reflections of the one supreme actor.

- 3 Muktananda, *Play of Consciousness*, p. 28.
- 4 Mircea Eliade, *Yoga*, p. 4.
- 5 Reiner Schürmann, *Meister Eckhart*, pp. 114-121, 159-163.
- 6 John B Chethimattam, *Consciousness and Reality*, pp. 172-181.
- 7 *Yoga* comes from the Sanskrit root *yuj* which means "to yoke" or "to join." It refers to the joining of the individual soul (*jīvātman*) and the universal soul (*paramātman*). (See Avalon, *Tantra of the Great Liberation* 14.123.) As used in most contexts, *yoga* could refer to (a) the practices which effect this union of *jīvātman* and *paramātman*; (b) the phenomena, experiences, and powers (*siddhis*) occurring as a result of yogic practices, or (c) the goal of *yoga*, which is liberation, (*jīvanmukti* or *moksha*).

*Yoga* is also considered to be a *darshana*, one of the six classical views of reality in Indian philosophy. (See Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Charles A. Moore, *A Source Book in Indian Philosophy*, chap. 13.) Sometimes *bhakti* (devotion), *karma* (selfless service), and *jñāna* (knowledge) are also referred to as forms of *yoga*; however, even though these three are complete spiritual paths in themselves, they are not technically *yoga* in the restricted sense used here. (See Mircea Eliade, *Yoga*, for further discussion on the yogic tradition.)

The three major forms of *yoga* referred to in this volume are: Patanjali's *yoga*, a version emphasizing yogic anatomy and subtle energies, and Muktananda's synthesis, which he calls Siddha Yoga. The first of these, the classical system described in Patanjali's *Yoga Sūtras*, is based on Sāṃkhya philosophy. (See Hariharananda, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*.) Also called *ashtāṅga* (eight-limbed) *yoga*, it has eight major steps in its practice: moral observances (do's and don'ts), cleansing and strengthening practices, and absorption (*samādhi*), culminating in freedom or *kaivalya*.

The second version of *yoga* is described in the Upanishads (particularly *Yogatattva*, *Dhyānabindu*, and *Nāḍabindu*). (See Aiyar, *Thirty Minor Upanishads*.) It is also found in such other texts as *Śiva Samhitā*, *Hathayoga Pradīpikā*, *Gheranda Samhitā*, and *Ṣaṭ-Cakra-Nirūpana* (Avalon, *Serpent Power*). One distinguishing characteristic of this approach is its emphasis on subtle yogic anatomy (*chakra* and *nāḍī*) and the *kundalinī* power in the subtle body. *Yoga* practice, in this tradition, seeks to unite the polarized energies in the body-mind complex. A preliminary goal is to awaken the *kundalinī* energy, and this, in turn, leads to

the union or *yoga* of the Shiva-Shakti polarity. The guru and, in some texts, the *mantra* play an essential role in these developments. (See Avalon, *Principles of Tantra*, Part 2, pp. 66-78.)

The third approach to *yoga*, described by Muktananda as Siddha Yoga, subsumes many of the features of the first two approaches. However, the distinguishing feature of this *yoga* is the overriding importance of the Siddha guru and the guru-disciple relationship. (See *Guru Gita* 76; also see Muktananda, *The Perfect Relationship*, pp. 1-7 and his *Play of Consciousness*, pp. 101-115.) Spiritual initiation (*dīkshā*) starts with the descent of *shakti* (*shaktipāt*) which is a form of the guru's grace (*gurukripā*). *Shaktipāt* awakens the *kundalinī* energy. (See Swami Vishnu Tirth, *Devatma Sakti*, chap. 9.) The resulting process (*sādhana*) is both purificatory and expanding. Each ensuing experience (*kriyā*) occurs under the influence of the awakened *kundalinī* and is not brought about by any specific practices. (See Muktananda, *Play of Consciousness*, pp. 101-115.) The *kundalinī* is experienced as the inner guide, indistinguishably one's own Self and the divine. Nurturing this relationship culminates in final realization and perfection (Siddhahood). (See Muktananda, *Play of Consciousness*, pp. 182-194, and see also his commentary on *Śiva Sūtra* 3.13 in *Siddha Meditation*, pp. 61-62.) This state is a total encompassing (*vyāpti*) of supreme consciousness (*Paramashiva*) and engages both the immanent and transcendent aspects of the absolute. (See Muktananda's commentary on *Spanda Kārikā* in *Siddha Meditation*, pp. 85-86.)

- 8 Yogic anatomy refers to the traditional yogic description of the physical and subtle bodies and their role in the process of purification. The primary locus of the yogic work is in the subtle body (*sūkshma sharīra*), which is understood to be a coherent organization of thoughts, emotions, and conscious energy (*prāṇa*) flowing through a complex of channels (*nāḍīs*). These channels interconnect at junctions that, to the inner yogic vision, resemble wheels (*chakras*) or lotuses (*padmas*) of light. The subtle body and the physical body are understood to be interpenetrating, so that changes in one produce corresponding changes in the other. The source of the energy is a condensed center of partially active, but mainly dormant, power (*shakti*) called *kundalinī* (the coiled one). The psycho-physical functions of the human being are maintained by this partially active power. The *kundalinī* is the cosmic, intelligent energy, but in a human being *kundalinī* has three aspects of increasing subtlety, located at the base of the spine, the heart, and the top of the head. (See Muktananda, *Secret of the Siddhas*, p. 9.)

When, through grace and yogic practice, the *kundalinī* is uncoiled or awakened, the consciousness (*chitta*), vital force (*prāṇa*), and generative force (*bindu*) are channeled upward along the central *nāḍī* called the *sushumnā*. (See Sinh, *The Hatha Yoga Pradīpika* 3.1 and 4.10; see also *Śiva Samhitā* 4.12-14.) As this proceeds, the energies are transmuted, and the six major *chakras* along the path of the *sushumnā* are

"pierced" by the ascending *kundalinī* (*chakra bheda*). A gradual purification (*shuddhi*) of all levels of the seeker's consciousness is accompanied by a loosening of egocentric human consciousness until it expands into supreme consciousness (*Paramashiva*) when the *kundalinī* finally stabilizes at the *sahasrāra* (thousand petalled center) at the top of the head. (See Muktananda, *Kundalini*.) An excellent reference for yogic anatomy is the *Ṣaṭ-Cakra-Nirūpana*, available in English as Avalon, *The Serpent Power*.

- 9 Swami Muktananda, "Guru, Kundalini, and the Inner Experience," p. 9.
- 10 Muktananda, "Guru, Kundalini, and the Inner Experience," p. 14.
- 11 Harold Puthoff and Russell Targ, "Psychic Research and Modern Physics," pp. 524-542; Russell Targ and Harold Puthoff, *Mind-Reach*.
- 12 Joseph Chilton Pearce, *The Bond of Power*, p. 34.
- 13 Ken Wilber, *The Atman Project*, pp. 40-42.
- 14 Muktananda, "Guru, Kundalini, and the Inner Experience," p. 13.
- 15 Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* pp. 119-140.
- 16 Matthew Fox, *Breakthrough*, pp. 23-42.
- 17 Two accounts by the same author, one formal and the other personal, provide an excellent introduction to the diverse Hindu and Buddhist forms of *tantra*. See Agehananda Bharati, *The Tantric Tradition and The Light at the Center*.

### CHAPTER THREE: Images of Devotion

- 1 Shree Gurudev Ashram, "A Conversation with Baba," p. 7.
- 2 Shree Gurudev Ashram, "A Conversation with Baba," p. 7.
- 3 Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patanjali*, pp. 262-263; for an interesting discussion of the most relevant of Patanjali's *Yoga-sutras*, 3.11 and 3.12, see Mircea Eliade, *Yoga*, pp. 47-52.
- 4 *Bhakti* is devotion and surrender to a spiritual ideal; the spiritual ideal can be a teacher, a chosen deity, or anyone who is, to the devotee, a manifestation of the divine. The *bhakti* literature refers to different kinds of devotion; the higher kind (*mukhyā*) is its own reward and is both a means to and the goal of spirituality. (See *Narada Sutras* 26 and 30.) *Bhakti* covers the entire range of human emotions, from the pain of separation to the rapturous delights of direct encounter (*darshana*) to the ineffable experience of blissful union. In *bhakti*, every human emotion can be, and traditionally has been, directed toward the chosen deity. (See *Narada Sutras* 65, 82.) The practice of *bhakti* does not have any prerequisites; everyone is qualified. (See *Narada Sutras* 72-73 and *The Bhagavad Gita* 9.26-32.) In *bhakti* all paths lead to the truth, and the truth assumes whatever form is dear to the devotee. (See *The Bhagavad Gita* 4.11 and 7.21-22 and also *Śiva-Mahimnah Stotram* 7.) The practice of *bhakti* includes associating with saints and other devotees (*satsanga*), chanting and reciting sacred texts as a form of

self-study (*svādhyāya*), and ritual worship. (See *Narada Sutras* 36-37, 67-68.)

The easiest and most effective means for experiencing divine love is through the grace of the saints. (See *Narada Sutras* 38-39.) *Bhakti* texts point out that through devotion to the guru, who is, in essence, the supreme Self, the benefits of both *yoga* and *jnāna* are realized. (See *Guru Gita* 9, 21, 53, 69, 81, 98 and Muktananda, *Play of Consciousness* pp. 17-26.) As Patanjali recommends, it becomes possible to transcend human limitations by contemplating one who is beyond them. (See Sutra 1.37. in Hariharananda, *Yoga Philosophy*.)

The life of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is a valuable record of the process and transformative power of *bhakti*. (See A. C. Bhaktivedanta, *Śrī Caitanya-Caritāmṛta*.) His state or feeling (*bhāva*) ranged from intense yearning for and adoration of Krishna to exalted, unitive states in which he displayed Krishna-like characteristics. Since *bhakti* draws on emotions that are experienced by the devotee, *bhakti* is usually taken to be more accessible and easier than the practices of *jnāna*. (See *The Bhagavad Gita* 12.5.) In the end, the devotee comes to realize that all, including himself, are expressions of the one truth. (See *The Bhagavad Gita* 6.29-30.) Thus, the goal of *bhakti* is identical to the goal of *jnāna*. At this level, *bhakti* is called *parābhakti* (transcendental devotion), as portrayed vividly by the *gopis'* all consuming love for Krishna in the *Srimad Bhagavatam*. Similarly, Muktananda's invocation to his guru in *Play of Consciousness* and his essay on the nectar of Guru's love (*gurupremāmṛita*) are both examples of *parābhakti*. (See Muktananda, *Play of Consciousness*, pp. xxxi-xxxii and *Light on the Path*, pp. 59-68.) The *Shiva Manasa Puja*, written by Shankarāchārya, who is generally remembered for his intellectual contributions in the formulation of Vedānta, is a noteworthy example of *bhakti* literature. The *Srimad Bhagavatam* and the *Ramayana* are sources of many traditional *bhakti* themes. (See especially the Tulsidas version in W. Douglas P. Hill, *The Holy Lake of the Acts of Rāma*.) Among more contemporary spiritual figures, the devotion of Ramakrishna Paramahansa for the divine Mother is a particularly rich example of *bhakti*. (See M., *The Gospel of Ramakrishna*.)

- 5 Muktananda, *Play of Consciousness*, p. 64.
- 6 Muktananda, *Play of Consciousness*, p. 65.
- 7 Muktananda, *Play of Consciousness*, pp. 65-7.
- 8 Muktananda, *Play of Consciousness*, pp. 175-176.

### CHAPTER FOUR: Images of Understanding

- 1 Muktananda, *Mystery of the Mind*, p. 9.
- 2 *Jnāna* means knowledge. A *jñānī* is one who knows. As used here, *jnāna* refers to the knowledge of the supreme reality, which is identical to the Self. (See *Chāndogya Upanishad* 6.8.7; all references to the

Upanishads in this note are to Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upanishads*.) Sometimes the supreme *jnāna* is referred to as *ātmavidyā* (self-knowledge), *parāvidyā* (transcendental knowledge), or *aparoksha jnāna* (direct knowledge) to differentiate it from empirical knowledge which can be binding. (See *Mundaka Upanishad* 1.1.4; *Kena Upanishad* 1.4-9 and 2.1-5; and *Śiva Sūtras* 1.2.)

*Jnāna* is a spiritual attainment in the sense that it is the culmination of the spiritual search. In another sense, *jnāna* is the process that leads to the supreme *jnāna*, and this process could take many forms, such as self-searching (*vicāra*) and contemplative thought (*tarka*). (See Shankarāchārya, *Aparokṣānubhūti* 11-12 and *Maitrī Upanishad* 6.20.)

The supreme *jnāna* is a recognition (*pratyabhijñā*) of one's true nature. (See *Īshvara-pratyabhijñā-vimarśinī* 1.1.1 and *Śiva Sūtras* 1.1). This knowledge is liberating and a state of complete identity with bliss-consciousness (*chidānanda*). (See *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad* 5.13 and *Pratyabhijñāhṛdayam* 16.) In fact, liberation (*moksha*) is defined as direct knowledge of one's divine nature. (See *Tantrāloka* 1.156.) This experience is also described as existence-consciousness-bliss absolute (*saccidānanda*). (See *Ātmabodha* 56.) It is an experience of perfect unity in the midst of apparent diversity. (See *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad* 3.1) It is perfect joy (*ānanda*) and fullness (*pūrnatva*). (See *Taittirīya Upanishad* 2.7 and also Sharma, *Kashmir Śaivism*, chap. 10.)

Through grace (*anugraha*), which is the divine power of self-revelation, *jnāna* arises spontaneously. (See Muktananda, *Secret of the Siddhas*, p. 193.) This is possible through the agency of a true guru (*sadguru*). (See Muktananda's commentary on *Śhiva Sūtra* 2.6, "*guru-rupaya*," in *Siddha Meditation*, p. 54.)

Sometimes *bhakti*, *jnāna*, and *yoga* are considered separate, even mutually exclusive paths. From Muktananda's point of view, however, they not only lead to the same goal but, through the descent of grace on the seeker (*shaktipāt*), these three blend and mutually reinforce each other. (See Muktananda, *Kundalini* and *Play of Consciousness*.) Muktananda's writing on *jnāna* draws from two main traditions: Vedānta and Kashmir Śaivism. Standard texts in English for Vedānta are three works of Śhankarāchārya, *Ātmabodha*, *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, and *Aparokṣānubhūti*, as well as the major Upanishads. Standard texts on Kashmir Śaivism are *Pratyabhijñāhṛdayam*, *Śiva Sūtras*, and *Spanda Kārikās*.

## CHAPTER FIVE: Transpersonal Psychology

- 1 See A. Einstein, B. Podolsky, and N. Rosen, "Can Quantum-Mechanical Description of Physical Reality Be Considered Complete?" pp. 777-78; David Bohm, *Quantum Theory*, pp. 611-623; and Stuart Freedman and John Clauser, "Experimental Test of Local Hidden Variable Theories," pp. 938-941.

- 2 David Bohm, "Hidden Variables in the Quantum Theory," pp. 71-72.
- 3 David Bohm, "The Enfolding-Unfolding Universe and Consciousness," p. 175.
- 4 Wilber is correct in reminding us that, for Bohm, "... there is nothing mystical or transcendental about the implicate order." See Ken Wilber, "Physics, Mysticism, and the New Holographic Paradigm," pp. 168-179. However, the breadth of Bohm's interests and the power of the thinking he shares with the Indian teacher, Krishnamurti, make it inappropriate to limit his purview by insisting on a restricted portrait of his model's inspiration and potential applications.
- 5 Renée Weber, "The Enfolding-Unfolding Universe: A Conversation with David Bohm," pp. 62-68.
- 6 See David Bohm, "Quantum Theory as an Indication of a New Order in Physics," pp. 140-157; Karl Pribram, "What the Fuss is All About," pp. 27-34.
- 7 David Bohm and Renée Weber, "Of Matter and Meaning," p. 40.
- 8 David Bohm and Renée Weber, "Of Matter and Meaning," p. 44.
- 9 To conclude, as I do here, that the absolute is best understood as the inherent tendency or principle of reality that manifests in and as the processes of purification, love, and understanding is to identify the absolute with what Kashmir Shaivism calls *anugraha* or grace. Shaivism, as Coomaraswamy spells out in "The Dance of Shiva," pp. 70-77, takes note of Shiva's five cosmic actions, the *pancakṛitya*: creation, preservation, destruction, concealment, and grace. Kashmir Shaivism, however, places particular emphasis on the latter two as evidence of the pure will of the Lord, expressing itself in a playful, bipolar sport of self-revelation and illusion or self-obscuration. See J. Rudrappa, *Kashmir Shaivism*, pp. 101-103 and 118-134 and Kanti Chandra Pandey, *Abhinavagupta*, pp. 442-443. Their discussion makes it clear that concealment (*tirodhāna*), no less than grace, is an inherent tendency and mode of manifestation of the absolute. I can appreciate such a position, but I prefer to dwell primarily on the function of grace that Muktananda identifies as the *gurutattva* or guru principle. Here, *tattva* refers to the inherent tendency or principle inferred from the processes of transformation; see Kanti Chandra Pandey, *Abhinavagupta*, pp. 357-358. It is thus the built-in "suchness" (or, literally, "that-ness") of all reality. The *gurutattva* is referred to in Kashmir Shaivism as the highest principle; see *Guru Gita*: 8, 74 and the *Kulārṇava Tantra* 3:113 (see M. P. Pandit, *Kulārṇava Tantra*, p. 46). Muktananda, in his discussion of the *gurutattva*, assimilates all five cosmic actions within the grace-bestowing power of God, as manifesting through the guru; see his *Siddha Meditation*, pp. 54 and 110. Thus, my discussion of the absolute reflects my inclination to see the guru principle as the clearest and most useful indication of the reality of the absolute in our daily life and its transformation.
- 10 Swami Muktananda, *In the Company of a Siddha*, pp. 141-146.