

Chapter Twenty-Three

HIGHER CONSCIOUSNESS II

*“Suddenly I found myself in the position of the Prince in the ‘Sleeping Princess.’
Everyone around me was asleep. It was an indubitable and distinct sensation.”*

Gurdjieff/Ouspensky, *In Search of the Miraculous.*

*We are not defined by who knows us and remembers us, but by how we greet and
celebrate each fleeting moment.*

LU



SL

Affirmation, the Great Yes

I love the wisdom you have gleaned from your garden: "Hey, you, open your eyes and look at this!"

That's the secret, you know. Forget about meaning "out there." Meaning comes from within yourself. Affirmation, the Great Yes, generates it. The crisp apple, the juicy tomato, the sweet pear, the gorgeous flowers, the vast sky above (with or without clouds).

It's all magnificent. It is all you. And you are it.

When you find the ramblings of your mind separating you from the glories of existence, take a deep breath, come to the present. Look, listen, be aware. See and hear consciously. And once again wake up to the wonder and splendor of this astonishing mystery we call life.

"Hey, you," those roses and irises sing to you. "Look at us — and you are just as beautiful!"

You're right, of course, that even as the flowers fade, so will we. But that poignant realization has its value, too, you know?

There are very few Immortals, and even they are dead. Only a handful remain in humanity's memory. How many Shakespeares or Goethes, Tolstoys, Chopins, or Bachs have trod the earth? Only a few. As Woody Allen once said, "I don't want to achieve immortality through my work — I want to achieve it through not dying."

So, what's to worry about? If you're dead, do you think you will weep because in a few years the people who knew and remembered you are dead too? And now nobody remains? And what a relief to have it all over and done with: no regrets (because there is no longer a remembered past) and no anxiety (because there is no longer a projected future). Absolute peace. Absolute security. And you and I are not the only ones who will not be remembered. Virtually *nobody* is remembered: how many kings, emperors, teachers, saviors, and imagined gods have trod humanity's roads? And how many does anybody recall?

Back in the Eighth Century AD in China there lived a hermit named Han-Shan, one

of my favorite poets. He lived on a mountain called Cold Mountain and with charcoal scribbled his brief poems on the walls of his hand-built lean to, on the sides of bamboo plants, on fallen logs, sometimes on the sides of buildings in a small village he occasionally visited. He walked everywhere he went, although in one of my favorite poems of his (translated by poet Gary Snyder in a book of his and Han-Shan's poetry entitled *Riprap and Cold Mountain Poems*), Han-Shan mentions riding a horse. In this poem he touches on life's impermanence:

I spur my horse through the wrecked town,
The wrecked town sinks my spirit.
High, low, old parapet-walls
Big, small, the aging tombs.
I waggle my shadow, all alone;
Not even the crack of a shrinking coffin is heard.
I pity all these ordinary bones.
In the books of the Immortals they are nameless.

And of course your own Percy Shelley wrote one of the most famous poems ever written about this subject, "Ozymandias" —

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,

The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed.
And on the pedestal these words appear:
'My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings:
Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

Buddha is great for a multitude of reasons, but one stands out: He said one of the ways in which we cause our own grief and create our own suffering has to do with trying to stop this eternal process of change: we cling to things we like and love, while attempting to reject things that cause us pain. But all things pass, phasing continually from one state into another state, never remaining fixed. *Only flux exists.* The only thing that does not change is change itself. And so our temples crumble into "lone and level sands that stretch far away." And all those "mighty works" disappear. This is simply the way it is.

Some forms of art remain, but eventually even those settle back into the distant pages of history and prehistory. Who remembers the thousands of individuals who inhabited the Mesopotamian Valley between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers? Who remembers anything about the people who inhabited Egypt and built the pyramids? The pyramids remain, but even those are crumbling and will eventually phase into sand. Even stars in the heavens flame out and disappear.

When we refuse to acknowledge and accept this reality, we cause ourselves unnecessary misery, do we not? Our egos want continuation in the afterlife. They

want duration — and so we create religions, with afterlives, heavens, hells, gods, justice, harps and all the rest of it. Good grief, what a waste of time — precious time, at that! Most of humanity remains at a stage of arrested development, fearful, childish, hoping against hope that this "god" we insert into the eternal mystery, and these places we envision "somewhere" in outer space, will give us life and consciousness throughout endless time.

And what is the fear? As Woody Allen said, “There are worse things in life than death. Have you ever spent an evening with an insurance salesman?”

How much better, happier, healthier, and wiser it is to stand in the garden, fully aware of universal impermanence, and look upon the beauties that surround us, affirming every rose, savoring every cucumber, treasuring every spider, cricket and bird — and loving and appreciating our wondrous selves. Again like Woody Allen, we can even do it with a sense of humor. “As the poet said, ‘Only God can make a tree’ — probably because it’s so hard to figure out how to get the bark on.”

Yes, all of us are but "ordinary bones," but these ordinary bones are extraordinary! You are unique. You are one of the great creations of existence. You are absolutely beautiful and special. Never can you be copied. You are part of this amazing process of never-ending creativity in which nothing whatsoever is duplicated, in which everything emerges out of the cosmic silence, everything dances its unique dance to its own unique music, everything celebrates itself and existence as well as it can, and everything then softly folds back into existence.

How joyous to neither cling nor reject, but to affirm everything that we are,

everything that we create to express ourselves, and everything that befalls us. We are not defined by who knows us and remembers us, but by how we greet and celebrate each fleeting moment. This is affirmation. This is the Great Yes!

JK More Than Legality: Love, Clarity, Transpersonal Awareness

We do not have to remain locked in a mind that torments us and thereby gives us a sense of martyred superiority — look at me, look how much I hurt, look how good and noble I am, look how much I have endured for the sake of others.

It is not that I do not feel compassion for you. I do. In fact, it is out of compassion that I say to you that we do not have to remain locked in our conditioned mind with its miseries. We do not have to remain in love with suffering.

There is that in us which is not made of thought, not conditioned, not measurable, not part of time. It is not knowledge, which is the past, and dead. It is not an entity (such as your Christian "soul," itself a word, a concept, an abstract product of thought). And it has nothing to do with personal emotions, tastes, preferences, shoulds, likes, dislikes and so forth. It can be known, but not reduced to knowledge. It can be sensed, but not defined. It is there when the artificial "I" is *not* there. When we are not, it is. It exists only in the present, as *the living, shining present itself*.

Moses was not concerned with this when he conceived the Ten Commandments and hundreds of other laws as well. He was concerned with uniting disparate tribes, creating a united society out of conflicting parts, formulating laws, rules and regulations to guide social conduct. By giving laws to human beings, he hoped to

change individual and tribal behavior for the better. He gave us rules for behavior in an effort to help us live together peacefully and productively in a unified social context. Before Moses, all was an utter chaos of separate, competing, warring, vengeful tribes. After Moses, there was Israel, one country, with (more or less) cooperating states. Earlier, Manu did a similar thing in India. Later, Confucius did much the same thing in China.

In our Western world, Jesus then came along and said, in effect, "Commandments help. Laws help. Externally imposed regulations help as well. But clearly they have not solved the problem. We have society, but we are still insane as human beings. We need something *more than legality*. Forcing behavior into patterns of conformity doesn't deal with the roots of the problems, only their symptoms. We need to transform consciousness in such a way that we don't even need laws, rules, regulations.

“What is it we need? We need love.

“With love, mind is transformed. With love, the urge to kill, steal, rape, murder, covet, envy and hate disappears. With love, we transcend the madness of mind. With love, we do not need law. Therefore, love: and do what you will.”

He spent the whole of his brief three-year career trying to teach us how to attain that love. His method revolved about the word "Watch." That is, observe, be aware, be conscious — and you will come to love.

How does this tie in with you and me and what I was saying?

Our mind is the human mind. We are subject to its fantasies, needs, reactions, distortions, projections, and all of its socially conditioned movements based on years of pleasure and pain, reward and punishment, hopeful anticipation and bitter disappointment — an endless parade of fragmented, conflicting images that we call "self."

The *authentic self*, the higher reality that Jesus and other enlightened masters around the world in all eras have talked about, is in that realm of love, which transcends thought even while including thought. If we lose ourselves in love — in any creative activity, such as writing, drawing, painting, music — or in gardening, taking care of children, helping a friend make it through the night — we find ourselves. *If we disappear as egos*, that which remains is the love Jesus was talking about, the Tao that Lao Tzu was talking about, the Truth that Osho and others talked about, the compassion Buddha talked about, the benediction Krishnamurti talked about — and on and on it goes.

There is a realm or dimension of being which is filled with joy, light, love, bliss. It is a dimension within ourselves — or, more accurately, it IS our being — that brings life alive. Then even the little things of life sparkle with color. And life is little things, is it not? The big things are easy. It's the little things of daily life that constitute the content of our days and nights. These little things — a cup of tea, the planting of a flower, the look of a child, the touch of a lover, a glance out the window when light changes — these little things become transformed when we ourselves transform.

When we see with the eyes of love and clarity and transpersonal awareness, then the

As for moving to Suffolk, I'm sorry that the recent madness there has put you off so much that you "can never live there now." Too bad. I understand. But if I might, let me suggest something.

Perhaps thinking in longer time spans might help. That river and its countryside has seen horrors for thousands of years. It has also seen love and beauty and triumphs and the lives and deaths of hundreds of thousands of human beings. And yet the Orwell River has continued to wend its way to the sea. It is the living equanimity of nature itself. No matter what happens, good or bad, sorrowfully or joyfully, the river passes through it and remains unsullied. It is a cleansing, healing presence. All things come. All things go. The river continues to flow, and yet remains forever itself. It remains always there, yet never the same. It is new each moment, and eternal in its essence. To live there would be to participate in its ever-flowing healing and cleansing presence.

All things come, all things go, and the river remains. You and J can enter this beautiful, vast, poignant, uplifting timestream yourselves. The river is time in motion. Simultaneously, it is timeless peacefulness. It sees and hears all things — from anguish to laughter — and absorbs all things — from death, to birth, to life's endless dances — and passes on, joining the sea and timelessness — even as we do. What a companion, what a friend, what a healing presence. All things swoon into it and find rest and peace and silent bliss.

You can sit beside it, or walk its paths, and immerse yourself in its presence. You can remember all who have sat in those same places and walked those same paths beside the river. You can feel the healing energies that have seen all of life's trails and traumas and all of its tears and conversations, and all of its wishes, disappointments and hopes and dreams, even while absorbing all and everything into itself, remaining forever spiritually clean, pure and tranquil. Material water suffers man's ravages; but spiritual waters, like life's indomitable spirit, remain

serene and untouched.

Should you venture there and participate in its timeless presence, all time past and all time future will disappear. All regret, anger, outrage and sorrow will be washed away. The lives and injustices done to all peoples and animals and plants that have lived and died there and been absorbed into the soil and into time will rise in a cloud of singing voices, for they too dance in the timeless serenity of the eternal moment — the herenow that never comes and never goes.

These things the river has done for humanity ever since the first human being camped beside those waters, raised a family, and passed into timelessness even as others arrived and did the same. They lived and died in time, even as we do. And yet they knew the bliss of participating in the river's timelessness. You can do this too. It may take time to spread your wings and rise into the river's timelessness, but when you do it, time disappears, as do all sorrows.

Hopefully, some of these words will soothe, and some will suggest, and some will let you know I share your heartsong every way it sings.

JS Three Things to Mull Over

Three things you might want to mull over —

The "at-one" experience, in which ego disappears (and is not simply lulled into a consoling sense of self-deceiving, somnambulant comfort), is at the heart of realization in every land in every time and place; a major part of the journey is coming to understand the difference between those two states of being — a sleeping ego vs. "at-one-with."

There is no "Satan," other than a mental concept in the mythological mind. Intelligence is vastly different from intellect or intellectualizing, and sometimes it takes a while to be able to discern the differences.

I wish you well in your continuing body/mind/spirit travels. Along the way, maybe consider that on the inner journey, freedom and the resultant realization depend, not upon learning and acquiring information and beliefs that strengthen ego and supply the illusion of egoic continuity and duration after death, but on *unlearning the past* and unburdening one's self from conditioned perceptions and responses. As Ken Wilber put it in *A Brief History of Everything*, "The finite self is going to die — magic will not save it, mythic gods will not save it, rational science will not save it — and facing that cutting fact is part of becoming authentic."

Freedom is not freedom *for* the self, but freedom FROM the self. Each journey to the top of the mountain takes a different route, but the mountain top itself is one and the same. Jesus, Buddha, Krishnamurti, Osho and other enlightened masters share the same level of consciousness. If we listen to them, they can help us.

I recently cut my hair and trimmed my beard. I identify with no cause, time or place. Feels great. I'm at home everywhere. At this altitude there are no divisions. Down in samsara's valley, they're having a hell of a time. But that's okay. They love their misery and their struggles. They say they don't, but they do. I wish them well.

Soon,
Best,
L

JB On the Other Hand, One Job: Change the World

“We can't change what we do until we change what we are.”

LU

I found myself noting that "the world mess" you speak of has been with us for millennia, as have the multitudes of causes that we are free to defend or oppose. We all do the best we can with whatever we have, and, indeed, it's a good thing to support whichever cause contributes to liberation — women's rights, human rights, animal rights, anti-war protests, local and global environmental concerns, etc.

However, I can't help noticing that defenses and attacks tend to further division, amplify conflicts, and generate more madness, destruction, chaos — in other words, the "messy" world we live in now is very often a product of people who give their loyalty to causes — perhaps especially religious or political causes — while refusing to look at themselves and take responsibility for their individual quality and level of consciousness.

Maybe that can't be helped. We do whatever we can with whatever we have, and maybe supporting this or that cause against other causes gives a sense of relief, a sense of participation, a sense of egoic power, or perhaps a sense of doing at least something to help the causes we believe in against the causes somebody else believes in. But maybe we should not only support causes which liberate consciousness in a multiplicity of forms — the liberation of slaves, gays, women, blacks, Jews and other oppressed minority groups — but should also be paying equal attention to inner development. It's *this* dimension that I see sadly lacking, and it's *this* dimension which seems crucial to me in terms of accomplishing in fact what conflicting causes wish to accomplish in principle.

It's wonderful to have "members of world choruses" "speaking out, singing out" for causes — but has that "singing out" made even a single change for the better? I'm not sure. This is not to attack you or your view. It's simply looking into the question.

There is lots of noise, that's for sure, and lots of cathartic sound and fury, but has that noise lifted the "veil" that has covered your life since your "first cognitive lights" flashed on? Maybe it has, and maybe it has in numerous socio-political instances as well, including an end to institutional slavery, as I suggested, the right to vote, women's liberation, on-going emancipation of oppressed minorities of all sorts, help for animals, forests, ocean, air, etc.

But masses of people "singing out" doesn't seem to me to deal with the *root* of the issues, with the fundamental dynamics of practical change. The herd is rarely right about anything, and the herd mentality constitutes little more than a faceless, violent mob.

In themselves, politics divide and destroy. Conflicts remain, and they multiply. The "mess" gets worse and worse, does it not? It seems to me that *there must be a significant developmental alteration of human consciousness* — the ways in which we think, feel, perceive and evaluate things from inside out, from internal perception to external action. Otherwise, can we expect the wars of causes to cease? Until we attain Unity Consciousness, universal compassion and pragmatic cooperation among individuals in significant numbers, can we attain unity itself? I don't know. I don't think so.

It seems to me each one of us has a job: to change the world. And we can do that effectively only by transforming unconsciousness into consciousness, conditioned thinking into selfless nonegoic choices. We do that, not by complaining, protesting, and then overthrowing old governments in favor of new governments, or old institutions for new ones, but by starting from within, with ourselves. The change must come about from *within*, from an evolutionary developmental ascension of increasing unfolding of expanding embrace from me, to we, to All.

I guess there are hoards of "donkeys carrying loads of books" out there, if by that you mean scholars, technicians and others who read merely for information or

pleasure or power, but not for personal transformation, and priests carting backbreaking loads of scriptures and traditions on their shoulders while remaining self-serving power-hungry hypocrites.

But there are other people who read in order to connect deeply with the buddhas of humanity. Seems to me the alteration of consciousness depends upon what we look at, whom we allow into our minds and hearts, the quality of mind and soul we incorporate into the depths and heights of our own being, and our willingness to emancipate ourselves from history, personal conditioning, and fear of the new.

Except for books and the arts, where can we go to find Buddha, Osho, Krishnamurti, Ken Wilber, Han Shan, Jesus, Socrates, Lao Tzu and others who have invited us to rise out of the misery, darkness, madness, pain and confusion of the valleys in which we are raised, conditioned, programmed and usually terminally imprisoned?

Is it better to "climb down" rather than "climb up" to the top of the psycho-spiritual mountain? Seems to me nearly everybody is in love with the descent into degradation, conflict, neurosis, psychosis. They absolutely *love* suffering and misery — look at the horrors we see every day on TV and in films, newspapers, and magazines. If people truly did not want war, they would give it up. They say they do not like it, but they love it, even as they love every form of horridous violence, every form of colorfully exploding bombs, every form of noise, torture, and sado-masochistic degradation.

Is it better to jump into the "world mess" and take sides and scream and fight and criticize and condemn and thereby contribute to the madness, rather than look deeply into our own psyches and souls and evolve to a level and quality of consciousness that speaks from the heart of love, compassion, and perhaps above all, wisdom? That takes a lot of work, time, dedication, fortitude, and courage. Who is willing to do that? The buddhas are, and they urge us to do the same.

Until we have courage enough to look deeply and honestly into ourselves and face ourselves directly and penetrate those conditionings we cling to so desperately, how can we hope to add something to the world that alters it for the better, however simply or mightily? Liberating political causes, yes, and external socio-economic progress help, but they do not transform. They just rearrange the furniture on the Titanic. How about personal, direct, immediate, on-going evolution up the spectrum of consciousness? On a practical level, bedrock action, *we can't change what we do until we change what we are.*

Maybe the buddhas speak from “bully pulpits” atop the Mounts, ordering people to “do as I say” as you suggested. And indeed, some may turn out to be hypocrites and frauds. But it seems otherwise to me (perhaps you meant the scholars, priests, and politicians, not the buddhas). If they do that, then they are not buddhas at all. They’re just charlatans, no better than all the right-wing Christian hypocrites we’ve seen groveling for “forgiveness” in recent years.

I think the awakened ones — *authentic* buddhas — give their lives disinterestedly, without ego, in selfless service to the evolution of human consciousness. Instead of telling people to adjust to the socio-economic machine and fit into it like cogs — or fight against it, creating one futile revolution after another — they offer gateways to psychological and spiritual freedom — awareness rooted in Unity Consciousness. They are the genuine outsiders, the true leaders, the forerunners of a newly born human being.

Of course, they usually receive for their compassion, brilliance, insight, and wisdom, only a spear through the heart, a bullet through the head or a flaming pyre in the town square. The great mass is as blind, stupid and opinionated as it is violent, as terrified of choice as it is “decent and respectable” in its moral and intellectual hypocrisy. These “decent, respectable” ones fiercely resist awakening, insight, growth, creativity, evolution from one level to another, liberation from their conditioned psychological prisons, and all efforts to help them move out of their

inert mind-dead torpor. History is strewn with the corpses of the beautiful ones crucified by so-called “decent and respectable” people (and equally cluttered with the venerated statues those same “decent, respectable” people erect to them afterwards).

As I think about it, I could become discouraged or cynical, but when I look more deeply into it I see that the work of the buddhas is never wasted. These flowers of humanity retain their beauty and relevance. Even if centuries dead, they remain here, now, in the living present, in books, calling us out of our chaotic, murderous darkness, upward to the light of our own being — each one an example, not of tyrannical dictatorship, but of the realization and fulfillment of the highest (i.e., most inclusive) level of consciousness that is already an integral element of the human condition, albeit slumbering. The buddhas wake up, see clearly, speak to us of our inherent potential, and invite us to wake up too.

Personally, I see no reason to “climb down.” Are we not already in the dungeon? Why not “climb up”? Why not ascend from the socially venerated “gut level” into the higher climes, the heights above the clouds, where Han Shan lived? Why not move from savage, gut level emotion, up into the rational mind, still higher into all-embracing love, bliss, and compassion? Seems to me we could read a few vitalized books, listen to some great music, check out a few paintings, connect with some of those who have ascended into awareness, love, compassion, cooperation, Unity Consciousness.

I am not saying we should ignore the world. Out of compassion, we must observe politicians, priests, conflicting causes and all the mindless violence, brutality, stupidity, selfishness, and degradation that goes with them. But can we not also pay attention to the buddhas, steep ourselves in their works, imbibe their love and wisdom and insight, and bring them fully into our awareness too?

I often wonder why there is so much attachment to the evening News and the

hideous imagery in films and music, why there is such an obsession with power, violence, destruction, and so little interest in the geniuses of all ages, including our own, who have celebrated the best in humankind instead of the worst.

It is out of profound compassion for human suffering that these shining buddhas have spoken and given their lives. It is out of unbounded love that they have transcended stupidity and inertia, and shared their intelligence, insight, guidelines, information, methodologies, and impassioned realizations with us.

Unfortunately, we have not paid attention to them, not even *tried* to follow their suggestions, insights, directives, not made any widespread, significant effort to ascend to those high climes where we emerge from the gloom, misery and madness down in the shadowed valleys, into the radiant light that is within all of us, if only we were willing to look inward and take that Odyssean exploratory journey.

If we were to embrace the buddhas, listen to them, incorporate them, allow them to work on us, help us grow, help us transform ourselves from stupid clods of mud into glistening consciousness, then we would not need causes or gods or saviors, or follow them, or fight them.

Instead, we would find ourselves above and beyond yes/no conflict, in the realm where we can stretch our wings wide enough to embrace all of humankind, all sentient beings, matter itself, in love, respect, mutual appreciation, shared creativity and pragmatic cooperation in service to all, for all, of all. If we ascended to the point where we LIKED peace and love, we could live in a world BASED on peace and love. It starts, not with politics, but with our relationship to the buddhas and our own interiority.

Let me thank you for once again providing a spark that has provoked something of a fire that has been helpful (at least to me). I guess the benefit lies in the fact that after many years, I now see and know these things. That does *not* mean I have

patience with other peoples' malice, greed, stupidity or arrogant blindness.

It means I accept the fact that each newborn child starts at square one; evolves through several stages (sensory, imagistic, conceptual, egoic) before coming to a leaping off place: a leap from mind and its verbal-conceptual-pragmatic domain into post-rational selfless all-embracing transpersonal buddha consciousness. Whether we take that leap or not remains up to us. It is always there, available. Some will take it. Most will not. Those few who do take it join the buddhas in light and love and compassion.

From there, they give what they can to fellow travelers who are open enough to receive, grow, change, evolve. Those in the forefront cannot stop their own evolution to please the suffering ones left behind in the valleys; all they can do is beckon to them, inviting them up and out of the depths of misery to the celebratory, life-affirmative heights of consciousness, offering their words, gestures and lives in service to the journey itself and to those who choose to take it.

After the awakened ones are gone, maybe a few of their words remain in books, which become the only way we living ones can connect with them in our brief lives, let them speak to us, bring them into ourselves, let them do their transformational work. Those who enjoy the company of the buddhas know the realms I am talking about. Those who fear the buddhas condemn them and the receivers/readers/listeners who appreciate them. Such is the way of the world.

It doesn't matter if one has to travel this road alone. All of the buddhas have been outsiders, traveling alone, even when they have friends and followers. The journey itself is thrilling enough in itself and immensely beneficial: it is nothing less than transformational creativity in the thoughts and actions of daily life.

Anyway, J, I wander along in the midst of these thoughts, hardly bringing you the kinds of chuckles and distractions that might make for a more lighthearted e-mail.

Thank you for taking time enough to swim through these waters. This is simply a stream of consciousness epistle sparked by some of your imagery, shared with you in the spirit of friendship. From this side, it's been fun. Hope it's been fun for you too. Always good hearing from you.

Best,

L