

# JNANA Yoga

*Wolter A. Keers*



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- A PATH TO RECOGNITION -

WOLTER A. KEERS



samsara

For Jeroen

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## INTRODUCTION

**D** The text in the following chapters is a virtually unchanged reprint of a series of articles that appeared between December 1968 and March 1972 in the quarterly magazine of the Yoga Netherlands Foundation. Also included is a series of questions and answers that form part of the dialogue with the readers.

Vedanta, or jnana yoga, is of course by no means my invention. The essence of what is told in this book can already be found, for example, in the Rig-veda, which was written down around 2500 before Christ, but which presumably already existed as an oral tradition for countless centuries at that time.

To truly understand what jnana yoga is about, it is practically necessary to find a teacher of flesh and blood: a

guru. Without him, one can indeed read all philosophical literature, but thereby one does not arrive at the enlightening knowledge to which one is constantly appealed in the presence of a living master. After all, everyone reads a text at their own level and makes concepts of that one experience which, by definition, transcends all understanding.

A thought that exists for only a few seconds cannot contain what is infinite and eternal. Therefore, the one, indivisible experience to which the philosophy of these pages leads can never be grasped by the intellect or by feeling.

To arrive at understanding nonetheless, at that level where 'knowing' and 'being' are two words for the same experience, we need the help of a teacher who can show us our deepest subjectivity in the light of that which is neither objective nor subjective. Although I have had the unique privilege of making the journey to my deepest inner being for years under the ever-vigilant love of such an extremely rare guru, I wish to make no further statements regarding this. At all costs, I wish to avoid that any errors the following pages might contain be linked to the one to whom I owe all my lessons and through whose enlightening presence my life truly gained meaning.

In practice, a book can never bring you enlightenment. Yet reading an authentic

a specific text can be useful. That can already resolve many questions, so that we, when we take the matter seriously and at the moment we are ready for it to meet a living teacher, to be better prepared. That is, therefore, the purpose of this book.

Although it seems strange at first glance to share something personal as an introduction to many pages of text dealing with the unper  
Personally, this might nevertheless be useful for some readers who find themselves in, or have found themselves in, similar circumstances to those under which my journey began.

I belong to the group of people who were raised in the Christian tradition, but to whom the churches could no longer give an answer as soon as the questions became too intimate. That is how everything in the life of the practicing Christian revolved in those days for the soul, but no theologian seemed able to give even an approximate sensible answer to what that soul actually is. Something human? Did it really need to be saved then? Something that is essentially already divine? Did something still need to be saved after all?

In searching with growing anxiety for The answer to such questions revealed to me that the theologians had erected a magnificent structure full of far-reaching ingenious inventions, in which, however, the foundation had been omitted. When

If one asks the question: 'What is God?', one receives the answer: 'The father of Jesus Christ'. And if the answer to the question: 'Who or who then is Jesus Christ?' is 'The Son of God', then this is nothing more than a game of ping-pong that offers no explanation whatsoever, but in which a constant attempt is made to circumvent the difficulty.

Time and again I came to the conclusion that the key to the concept of God lay contained in three words from the New Testament: 'God is love'. But theologians knew the meaning of none of these three words, and whoever does not understand this one central sentence does not understand a word of any authentic metaphysics whatsoever. Therefore, it makes no sense at all to consult a theologian about the search for God.

By mistaking words for truth and allowing the content to be lost, the churches have fallen into a trap. And because I, as a descendant of many generations of theologians, had followed theologians in a Protestant tradition from my earliest youth, I myself was also in that trap.

Christ says somewhere that whoever believes in him feels a fountain of eternity gushing up in his heart. Well, among theologians I found no one who dared to declare to me that in his heart that fountain had arisen never to dry up again. I kept searching because I could do no other and visited all those who possessed any reputation of holiness or learned-

had. I sought advice from the Salvation Army, from Protestant theologians, and even from learned Jesuits and Dominicans, but no one knew how to give a sensible answer to truly elementary questions.

Until I came into contact with someone who lent me two books on Indian philosophy. One of the books was Swami Vivekanandasnanayoga, and the other a journalistic work by Paul Brunton on: Hidden Wisdom. In the first, I read with a sense of deep recognition numerous explanations to which I myself had gradually grown, but which I had never been able to clearly put into words. In the second, alongside all sorts of other interesting stories, I read what Brunton had to say about the spectacular enlightened sage Ramana Maharshi, who lived at the foot of Mount Arunàchala, in South India. I knew immediately that this was the man I had sought for so long, and I decided—at any cost—to meet him.

That was in 1943, and the most horrific part of the war was yet to come.

Just beginning 1950 I set foot ashore in Bombay, initially for a three-month visit to the great Ramana Maharshi, who at that time had only a few months left to live.

During the six or eight weeks I spent in his immediate vicinity, my life changed completely. All that time I have his voice

I heard it only a few times when he spoke in Ta mil with his caregivers. But his presence was like a continuous bath of light, penetrating into the deepest corners of my thoughts and feelings.

After leaving Ramanashram, I returned to Bombay, where I had a temporary job that allowed me, with some balancing act, to keep myself afloat economically. However, after a short time, it turned out that all kinds of old problems were returning. Although Ramana Maharshi had, as it were, confronted me with my deepest essence, my personality unfortunately was not satisfied with that, and I proved unable to solve my problems myself.

Until, a few months later, I met the one who would become my teacher and who, with his explanations so lucid that there was no escaping them, succeeded in dispelling my last doubts. Gradually, through his teaching and his presence, my towering ignorance began to diminish. On the one hand, this undoubtedly happened through my own effort and desire, but on the other, and in the first place, through his uninterrupted presence, which I could feel wherever I was. Gradually, the artificial separation of head and heart disappeared, a sad legacy of our Western civilization. Gradually, they vanished

also all those other tendencies with which our lives are so full, such as weighing, evaluating, and judging ourselves, Determine position, assume postures, and so on. All these habits are based on the assumption that one is a number of objects, one of which can judge the other and manipulate it in various ways.

The method taught to me by my teacher to escape the vicious circle of ignorance and unhappiness is that of the distinction between self and non-self in the tradition of Shri Shankaracharya.

This method-vichara marga or the direct path has a positive and a negative approach. The positive approach reduces all phenomena to the knowself that is present in every living being. In the words of Shri Ramana Maharshi: 'Nothing is as well known as the Self.' The disciple is confronted with himself again and again, as it were, but not in the usual, dualistic sense of this expression, where it concerns two things being confronted with each other. Confrontation with oneself, in the Vedantic sense of the word, means that everything is reduced to the one universal essence that I am. Not the self as I as personality, but,

Let's say the 'I' as the divine within me.

The negative approach places more emphasis on the fact that the Self before the personality, the

thinking, feeling, and body will remain forever unknown because the small cannot grasp the great. Therefore, in order to arrive at Knowing nonetheless, one must eliminate everything that is the non-self until the great void arises which is spontaneously filled 'at the end of the road' by Knowing itself. As long as the pupil has even the slightest notion that he is a body, a thinker, or any other object whatsoever, he must assume the position of 'I do not know'. The void, of which Lao Tzu also speaks so often, is perfect when

not-knowing is completely present. It is then, when man as an apparently self-reliant and independent being has entirely disappeared, that 'the divine' spontaneously fills the void, the silence.

In the following chapters, the reader finds traces of both approaches, which nowhere intersect. be in conflict and complement each other brilliantly.

One will probably encounter contradictions in large numbers upon first reading, such as: the Self is not the body, the Self is the body; the guru is a person and the guru is not a person, but the Knowledge itself.

These rain contradictions are but an illusion corpse. Sheare caused by the fact that all kinds of arguments that are used to arrive at the sought-after perspective, start from the point where the reader presumably finds themselves. And

We may assume that virtually every reader thinks that he is a body, and a mind, feels and perhaps even has a soul.

As long as he identifies with these objects, he also sees others, and thus the teacher, and possibly God, on a corresponding level. The language that pupil and teacher employ in their dialogue adapts to this perspective. In the beginning, he is shown that only that one thing that never leaves him has a right to the name I has. Something that often leaves me can never I be. Gradually he comes to the experience that he is the essence of everything that manifests, and

And finally he sees that he is all things himself, not as personality, as ego, but as essence in things. Like that shall one can read at the beginning of authentic texts: 'You are not the body, not the personality, not the ego' and so on. And a few pages further on, one reads the reverse. But by that time the pupil knows that in the first case he would the words 'as such'

can add, in the latter case the words 'as essence'.

Because these articles were written over the course of several years and because the questions and answers are partly derived from correspondence and partly out discussion evenings, there is quite a bit of variation in style to be discovered on the different pages. A letter to a young

After all, you write a rebel letter differently than a letter to an old nun.

All in all, the intention is merely to enable a few readers to view some of their tormenting and fundamental problems in a new light. And perhaps a few others, who have already become more deeply acquainted with themselves, will find here and there a remark, particularly in the later chapters, that takes them back to that 'heart that encompasses the universe'. For there we find man as he essentially is.

Wolter A. Keers, December 1971

## CHAPTER 1

Which is generally called 'Indian philosophy' and what in classical literature sometimes called 'jnana yoga' and what I personally prefer to refer to as 'advaita vedantà', comes into being in the dialogue between the enlightened one, the one who has found, and the one who seeks.

We call 'Enlightenment' the deep recognition, or the essential conviction, that the entire creation and I myself consist of one indivisible consciousness.

In a dream, the dream world, the dream senses, the dream body, and the first-person narrator are all products of the dream.

This whole takes place in consciousness, and just as waves are nothing but water, so the dream images, including the first-person figure in the dream, are nothing but consciousness.

The same applies when we are awake. World, body, senses, thoughts, and feelings consist of nothing but consciousness. The enlightened one has shifted his center of gravity from body, thinking, and feeling—that is, from the personality—to that absolute consciousness.

When he makes clear to someone who asks for it how this is possible, philosophy arises. The enlightened one himself does not need it.

Just as the ignorant person does not walk down the street and say: 'I am a man, I am a man', so too does the enlightened person need confirmation of his self-evident experience that the word 'I' in reality means absolute consciousness.

What stands in our way before we can be essentially and consciously aware of what we are? The idea, the notion, the feeling that we are something else.

The goal of every truly spiritual discipline—sadhana—is, therefore, on the one hand, to shed the incorrect feeling that we are a body or a thinking and feeling being, and on the other hand, to arrive at the immediate recognition of what we truly are, have always been, and will always remain.

The structure of our false self, our personality, requires that we find a living human being who has already found what we are now seeking. Without such a person, we can certainly read books, but we always read them from our own level. Where the author writes about the eternal, we shape ourselves.

ideas about the eternal. These differ from reality at least as much as ideas about Bombay differ from making the journey to, and walking through Bombay.

Whoever wants to see what he is and where he is not must examine what he means when he says 'I'. In sentences such as: 'I walk, I sit, I am tall or short, fat or thin, I work or I rest', the word 'I' means the body.

When one says: 'I see you, I hear something, this tastes good, this feels soft, or that is fragrant,' there is identification with the functioning of the senses. And in remarks such as: 'I think that...' or: 'I feel such and such,' 'I' signifies the functioning of thinking and feeling.

All these experiences have a 'I' in common. It is therefore clear that I am not limited to one of those experiences, but that, on the contrary, the 'I' is something that alternately identifies with the body, a sensory perception, a thought, or a feeling.

The fact that we can conclude this ourselves without being asked of even a gram of blind faith, and the fact that we can all observe this directly, proves irrefutably that at least one thing can be said with certainty about the 'I', namely: that it is a knowing 'I', and therefore a conscious entity. For how can I claim that I walk or sit, that I see or hear,

think or feel, when I am not the knower, the observer, of walking, sitting, seeing, hearing, thinking or feeling?

All these things: her body and its activities, the perceptions of the senses, thinking and feeling are distinct from her 'I' because they are objects and 'I' always subject. They are the known and I am the knower. We call the identification with the known the 'ego'. All our ignorance and all our unhappiness stem from that apparent self, and through this identification we end up, at least seemingly, in a world of illusion where love is replaced by justice and truth, and freedom by limitation and bondage. This gives rise to a feeling of unrest, pain, and incompleteness.

Because the world always appears at the level where 'I' find myself, a false world looms before the illusory self onto which it projects not only its psychic complexes, but also its bondage, its separateness, its loneliness, its desires, and so on. In fact, these projections are part of the world of illusion. And because man identifies with his body, he seeks the solution on the material level. He thinks that material possessions will provide him with security and happiness.

Not only in daily life am I the knower instead of the body, but the same is the case during the dream. In the dream I identify

One associates with a dream body that possesses entirely different properties from the body of the daytime. The dream body can fly or pass through a wall, it can walk on water, plunge into an abyss without being destroyed, or engage in a debate with the deceased, and all this even while the dreamer is aware of this fact.

The dreamed body and the dreamed personality are clearly totally different from the body and the personality in the waking state. The dream body does not exist when one is awake, and the body from the waking state does not exist in the dream. And neither exists in deep, dreamless sleep. Yet it is everyone's experience that the 'I' exists uninterruptedly in these three states.

No one who wakes up in the morning has, for even a moment, the idea that he has not existed for hours, nor that he might be a completely different person from the one who went to bed the previous evening.

It follows from this, too, that the 'I' is something different from the bodies that appear and disappear again. One can therefore say: 'During the day I am the 'I' plus the waking state, at night I am the 'I' plus the dream state, and in deep sleep I am the 'I' simply.'

The latter also applies countless times a day to the moment between two thoughts or feelings.

When there is an object that makes itself known in the waking or dream state, then the 'I' manifests itself as the knower, the observer, of the object. If there is no object, as in deep sleep, then 'I' am myself without any limitation whatsoever. That an 'I' exists is an irrefutable truth of which no one can doubt. After all, to doubt it, one must first exist.

The recognition of the 'I' as it truly is leads to the liberation from all bonds and to a perfectly satisfied state, because happiness the original and true nature belongs to man.

It turns out that happiness is not inherent in things we sometimes believe make us happy. This is abundantly clear from the fact that the objects that made us happy when we were babies or toddlers no longer do so. An object that seemed to make us happy yesterday can sadden us even today.

Happiness is also not an essential component of thoughts and feelings. This is evident from the fact that we are unable to write down certain thoughts that are always happy, in order to have them available for immediate use and in every situation. Moreover, accurate observation will show that happiness exists without the presence of thoughts or feelings.

That 'I' am happiness and love itself is also evident from the fact that one cannot make a choice when

answer to the question: 'What do you love more, love or yourself?' The 'I' is one and the same experience in all people; the harmony that can be found in everyone; love itself

Therefore, the 'I' is the basis of all existence (sat), knowing in knowing (chit), and perfect peace and harmony (ananda).

Whoever has recognized the 'I' as it essentially is, sees it as the basis of all certainty, even in feelings of fear; he even sees it as 'knowing' and as 'harmony' in apparent ignorance and disharmony. Just as the sun reflects its own light

Reflects against the planets, so he sees himself as everything in all. As the one, unchanging, and essential element in the multiplicity of the world.

## CHAPTER 2

I am the Knower, the Observer, of all things. In the ancient and authoritative text Ashtavakra Samhita, there are two important verses regarding being the Knower. In chapter 1, the guru Ashtavakra says to his disciple Yakanaka: 'If you want to find liberation, then see the 'I' as the knower of all this and as consciousness itself.' And in verse 7 of the same chapter he says: 'You are the knower of everything and truly always free. Your only bondage consists in the fact that you see the knower as something other than the knower.'

It seems so obvious to say that of all human functions, such as seeing, hearing, thinking, and feeling, knowing is the most important. And yet there is a fundamental error here. Seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, and tasting are functions of the senses.

Thinking and feeling are the functions of our mental instrument. But knowing is not a function, and it is of the utmost importance to learn to see this.

To start we can observe that all functions are brief: walking, seeing, or hearing last only a few moments. They exist by the grace of consciousness. I cannot simultaneously focus my attention on walking and thinking: either I am walking, or consciousness takes the form of a thought about a tree I see along the way, and then I am the knower of the seen tree. At that moment, I am not aware of my walking self. But knowing has neither beginning nor end. It is an experience equivalent to walking, sitting, feeling sick or healthy, seeing, hearing, thinking, and feeling. Neither on a physical, nor on a sensory, nor on a mental level is any activity possible without knowing, without consciousness, the essence, or whatever name we give it.

Moreover, a function requires an instrument. To walk, I need the body; to see, hear, smell, and so on, I need the eye, the ear, or another sense. But knowing has no instrument.

To understand this, we must first of all remind that, to be known, it must first be 'translated' in terms of consciousness.

As I read these lines tensely, I do not hear the clock ticking in my room. I only hear the sound when it has become a mental perception. With other words: into thought. I can only say that the clock is ticking when the ticking exists as a thought. The same applies to all other sensory perceptions.

It follows from this that my entire world consists of nothing but thoughts. Therefore, the knower is exclusively a knower of thoughts and never of material things. (This last point, matter, will be discussed in more detail later.)

A function has a beginning and an end, and therefore is known. Unlike a function, it has no instrument is needed, and therefore knowing is not a function, but an inherent property of consciousness. To be able to see, I need the instrument 'eye'; to be able to hear, the 'ear', and so on. But I have no instrument to know thoughts. Thoughts are modifications of consciousness itself. Between consciousness and thought there is no place for an instrument, just as steel does not need an instrument, nor is it even possible, to be hard. Just as water does not need an instrument, or any duality whatsoever.

to be wet. Wetness is an inherent, inseparable similar property of water. I take in my  
If the wetness is gone, then that's it too

water away. Without the property of wetness, water cannot exist as water. Likewise, the ash can sentie cannot exist withoutknowledge

In this consciousness, or knowingness, the body manifests itself from time to time. Because I mistakenly think that the body is an independent reality and that it would also exist if there were no consciousness, I have arrived at the feeling that I am the body. Identifying myself withthatbody, I see a corresponding solid and seemingly material world in which 'you', 'he', 'she', 'we' and the entire conjugation also consist of the seemingly solid matter that this one body conjures up before my eyes. But it is in the spirit, in the conscience,that this body rises. Thebody is located inthemind; the mind is not located in the body. Exactly the opposite of what is usually believed. Yet everyone can immediately verify this for themselves. What I know of the body is a series of mental impressions, perceptions. And of those perceptions, I am the knower.

A highly important point to realize lies in the fact that one is the knower of all those successive thoughts. Without the slightest effort and entirely outsideourwant to.

AllIf I am too tired to think, too tired to look, or too tired to walk, even then I am completely effortless of this tiredness.theexpert.

It could not be otherwise, because consciousness constitutes the essence, our true being, our being. Like a steelobjectnohas to make an effort, or evencanto be tough, that way I don't have to make any effortatto do to be consciousness and to be the knower of everything that manifests in consciousness.

Now it is possibletheA question still needs to be asked: Is knowing perhaps the function of a knower? Can we not say that the knower knows, and is it then not, in that sense, somewhat dualistic and perhaps a function after all? This is not the case: knower and consciousness are one and the same.

We have already seen that the thought pictures immediatelyonconsciousnessbe projected themselves, like the wave on the water. FromtheGoing out of the wave and inward, we find nothing but water. Going from thought and inward, we find nothing but consciousness, or in other words: essence. There we find the permanent 'I' that can never be separated fromtheessence of consciousness and is therefore one with it. For only that which can never be separated from me has the right to the name 'I'. That is consciousness. And this consciousness presents itself as a knower when there is a thought or a perception mingis, bothinthe waking state, asinThe dream. The selfhasno body, no personality, no sensory perceptions, no thoughts and no feelings.Afand then there come

in consciousness, mental images that we label as 'my body', 'my thoughts', 'that tree', and so on. From all In those pictures, I am the knower. Unchangeable, from birth to death. Even when one regards the knower as an active, known, and feeling man or woman. The requirement the Upanishads impose on something, for it to have the right to be called 'truth,' is that it must be unchangeable, always, everywhere, and true for everyone. And that applies to what is stated above. All people, from the greatest failures to saints, are at all times knowers of their sensory perceptions, thoughts, and feelings. Hence, one does not first need to become a saint to find enlightenment. Holiness and truth do not always have much to do with each other. The classic example of this is the career of Valmiki, the writer of the Ramayana. He was a highwayman!

Just as infinite space is equally close to or equally far from the bottom as from the top rung of the ladder, so too is the recognition of the truth possible for anyone who desires it, holy or not. 'Nothing is clearer than that I am this, whose majesty is experienced by all beings, from children to idiots,' said Shankara\*

The recognition of the knower within me is a direct path from the illusion of being a body, to

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\*Svatmanirtpanam, vers1 06b.

recognizing the one, unchanging, and imperishable 'I' in anyone. Whoever consciously identifies with this finds liberation immediately and effortlessly.

## CHAPTER J

**A**<sup>1</sup> if we have our eyes wide open, we see  
anxiety when our thoughts are somewhere else  
be. The same applies to all the senses. When cars drive by  
and I am sitting reading with concentration, I do not hear the  
noise. When I listen to music with concentration, I see none  
of the wallpaper I am staring at, nor am I aware of the  
contact with the chair I am sitting on, or with the floor on  
which my feet rest.

Whoever believes that the world truly exists  
independently of consciousness will nevertheless have to  
admit that it only exists when it is translated.  
in terms of consciousness, when it has thus become thought,  
conscious perception.\*

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By 'thoughts' here, we also mean sensory perceptions.

And conscious perception is something mental, a thought, in short: a thought. In other words: from birth to death, I can never know anything other than the world as it exists in my thoughts. Whether a world exists separate and independent of thoughts, no one has ever known, no one knows, and no one ever will. Therefore, it is utterly senseless to claim that such a world exists.

Someone who claims that a twelve-legged horse lives in his room, although neither he nor anyone else has ever seen it, nor ever shall. To see is considered insane. But in fact, it is equally remarkable to claim that there exists a world that no one has ever perceived, that no one perceives now either, and that no one will ever be able to perceive. The difference between the man with the strange horse and most other people is that the former stands alone, while the others know their viewpoint is shared by virtually everyone.

Try to describe an object without making use of the qualities of the senses: that is completely impossible. An object consists of form, sound, taste, smell, and solidity. If we had had five other senses, the rose blooming in our garden now would be a completely different rose. A rose without scent and color, but, for example, with a slight tingling sensation of

the magnetic sense, now unknown to us, that would perceive an interaction with the minerals contained in the plant.

When we describe or define an object, we make use of the qualities of our senses. About a rose itself, however, we tell that tells us nothing. A rose itself is the background, the carrier of qualities such as: the color, the scent, the softness and the 'being-out-of-the-body'. Whoever therefore wishes to investigate what a rose itself is must ask themselves what the background is of all those qualities.

The world consists of sensory perception  
Genes and sensory perceptions are thoughts. It is therefore natural to ask: 'What is a thought?'

It is not terribly difficult to find an answer to this question. Anyone who takes their time can observe how, at first, there is seemingly nothing. Then a certain thought arises, regardless of whether this is a sensory perception or a mental image without any connection.

more or a so-called abstract thought, subsequently the thought disappears again, and once again there is nothing for a moment.

But appearances are deceiving, and if that applies anywhere, it is certainly here. For nothing can arise in 'nothing'; no thought can arise in 'nothing'. A thought manifests itself in the conscience,

not in the nothing. So first there is consciousness pure and simple. Within it a thought manifests itself, then that thought dissolves again, and what remains is once again not nothing, but conscience without form. Thus, between every two thoughts and/or feelings there is a moment of 'nothing' that is therefore by no means

nothing is, but consciousness itself is not bound by time and space. Recognizing this is extremely important. Because we are accustomed to thinking that there is nothing when there are no thoughts or feelings, it also seems to us that there is nothing in deep sleep. But when the world disappears, nothing remains. nothing about, but it conscience,

the essence itself. Therefore, deep sleep is in fact not a black abyss from which we often turn away in fear and horror, or which we hate because that is the cessation of our 'being', a death, but on the contrary: it is dissolving into peace itself. Deep sleep is so essential that we go to a doctor when we cannot sleep and that we wake up dead tired when we have dreamed disproportionately too much.

The world therefore consists of nothing other than thought. Thoughts arise in the conscious mind just like waves in the sea; they are manifest in the conscious mind for a moment and then dissolve back into the conscious mind. Just as a wave consists of nothing but water, so a thought consists of nothing other than consciousness, essence.

I return to the example of the rose. We have seen that a rose blooming in our garden consists of nothing other than a sensory perception. What is a rose itself? A rose is the background of those properties observed by us. That is to say: that through which those qualities, those thoughts, are borne, and that is consciousness, the essence.

We have seen before that this essence is the real 'I'. We can therefore now see that the world, including my own body, senses, thoughts, and feelings, is nothing other than the essence that I am. Or, in reverse order: I

I am the conscious being by the grace of which the world can manifest itself. 'I am the light of the world,' we read somewhere. And elsewhere: 'Thanks to my light, the sun can shine.'

To the uninitiated, someone who says such things may seem like an inflated frog. It is not without reason that many of his contemporaries Jesus had the land burning and that they accused him of blasphemy. And so it happens to countless others. Shankara once said: 'Finding the truth is not so difficult, but pleasing everyone is out of the question'.

Who, not as a personality, but as *ervaring*, can To say that he is one with God, which is another word for the absolute, the eternal being, and so on, is egoless and, if you will: humility itself.

Our entire life is one uninterrupted experience upon which, like waves on the water, endlessly shining sequences of thoughts and feelings rise and fall, manifest and resolve.

Because I identify with a body, I become mistakenly convinced that the body, and the corresponding seemingly coarse material world, have a relatively long existence. But in fact, this body, too, is merely an image that appears from time to time and then disappears again. The body, too, has a lifespan of only a few moments at a time. Bo

Moreover, it exists by the grace of the conscious and consists of nothing other than the conscious that I am. Whoever, with this recognition, is able to shift his sense of self from body, mind, and feeling  
He looks towards the essence that underlies it every moment and finds instantaneously and effortlessly the liberation from all limitations because he loses his identity with the limited. He knows that the entire creation and he himself consist of one and the same consciousness. This is called liberation or enlightenment.

## CHAPTER 4

**W**hat is the ego, actually? Some religions and philosophies, such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism seek to liberate us from it, while other movements, such as parts of Christianity, Islam, the Jewish tradition, and adherents of other religious doctrines of a more primitive character, view the ego as eternal and essentially, or potentially, divine. Various movements also speak of a 'soul', but a definition of it appears to be rarely provided.

We will understand the ego to mean an automatism that establishes a connection following a physical activity, a perception, a thought, or a feeling. of another feeling, the sense of self, and claims the author's rights to that act, perception, thought, or feeling. This automatism also demands ego-

emptiness stands up for itself when it is said: 'I have loved', 'I have slept', and so on.

By attributing a constancy to this automatism that it does not possess, the person emerges. We will return to this last point shortly.

He who sits reading a book intently perceives only the letters. Even that is an exaggeration. He perceives only the story or the reasoning, and in his imagination he may find himself in other parts of the world. In no way is he aware that he is sitting in a chair, that one or

both feet resting on the ground, that there carsby driving home, birds singing in the garden, and so on. The reader is also unaware of the fact that he is reading. In order to be able to be so, he must first the to interrupt reading. Only then can he say: I have read an interesting argument.

The same applies to other sensory activities, and likewise to thinking and feeling. One cannot simultaneously focus one's attention on a thought and on the thinker. If one wishes to think of the thinker, one must interrupt the initial thought. If one wishes to think of 'I' and 'thought' at the same time, a vague mixture of thoughts arises, which in fact amounts to a rapid back-and-forth movement of attention between the two objects.

Because during an activity, whether physical or mental, there is not a single sense that 'I' am the one performing it.

of that activity, one wonders why man nevertheless believes himself to be this and why he claims the rights thereof after the activity has ended.

It can be stated in advance that claiming copyright does not automatically make someone an author.

We have said that the ego establishes a connection between activity and a sense of self. The latter must be defined as the identification between spirit, or essence, on the one hand, and the body on the other.

An important element of our upbringing consists of establishing a connection between the developing person and their body: 'How big you have grown! What a strong boy you are!' This pressure for identification even extends to clothing: 'How beautiful you look today!' people say to a child wearing a new sweater or a new dress. Thus, from our earliest childhood, we are indoctrinated by our environment and our language with the doctrine that we are a body.

It is therefore understandable that an automatic connection is made between 'I' and 'body'. The average person therefore thinks primarily of the body when hearing the word 'I': I am still young, I am getting old, I am getting too fat, I am tired, I had a wonderful swim.

In this last example, we see how identifying with something works. One does not immediately identify with the body.

as such, but with a physical act, namely: swimming. It sounds downright foolish when we say: 'My body has had a wonderful swim,' and the fact that we prefer to use the word 'I' does not seem unnatural to us for a moment. This is a clear example of how we experience the inverted world as natural! That is, after all, how we were raised.

We see the same phenomenon on the levels of thought and feeling. No one says: 'My mind suspects that it will rain tomorrow,' or: 'My heart feels that Rembrandt is beside itself.' Time and again, we prefer to use the word 'I,' and time and again we demonstrate in the fact that we use 'I' there

find its place, however much we identify with various physical and mental activities.

But the identification with activities is not the most dangerous, for it is easy enough to observe how activities change from moment to moment and that we are, to say the least, less changeable than they are.

This identification with bodily actions is possible through identification with the body. As soon as we understand that we are not the body, it is easy to see that we are therefore not its activities either.

More dangerous is the identification with attributes, both physical and mental. For while actions do not insinuate to us that they are permanent

Having character, traits do. I am big or small. I was that ten years ago too, and I will probably still be that in ten years.

What do we see happening here? We attribute continuity to things that are not continuous. In our imagination, both in our mental imagination and in our feelings, we add a whole series of properties.

gather them together and say: 'I possess such-and-such a trait.' And after stirring this witchy fellow for a little while longer, a magic potion emerges called 'I am such-and-such.' Thus, I have stewed a gentleman or lady from the absolute, from the essence, from the one indivisible experience that I truly am. And although there is nothing that even remotely suggests that this gentleman is permanent, I cling to this notion and assert stiffly and firmly: 'This is me... and woe to anyone who steps on my toes.'

To escape this superstition, we only need to take a good look at what has happened and what keeps happening.

Let's take a few random examples: 'I am honest'. That is a trait, but That trait surfaces only occasionally when I am faced with the choice of lying or telling the truth, of stealing or not stealing, and so on. The trait of 'being honest' does not come into play when I eat a bowl of soup or watch a swallow darting high through the sky.

Honesty, therefore, is a phenomenon that occurs only occasionally and is not applicable at all to most situations. But I turn that flash of honesty, which perhaps lasts a second every now and then, into a permanent phenomenon by saying, doing, and thinking that I am an honest person. In doing so, I enter an inverted world, for an honest person does not exist. A person is that in which the phenomenon of 'honesty' can occur from time to time. And so, there is no dishonest person, no good person, no bad person, and the like. A person is..., or rather; I am that something in which those qualities can manifest from time to time. That 'something' is the essence of consciousness; the indivisible experience that never leaves me for a moment and that therefore alone has a right to the name 'I'.

In the world we create for ourselves, we attribute the properties of our senses to things. In this way, those things acquire properties. One of those things is our ego, our personality. When I make use of the observed phenomenon of 'honesty' to make myself an honest fellow, I turn myself into an object with certain properties.

This state of affairs is necessary for our daily interaction with the world. In the dream, too, I need 'dream eyes' to be able to see my dream world. But truth, reality, is

That which does not change. It is that enduring experience in which the dream manifests itself, regardless of whether it is the dream of night in bed or the dream I call 'everyday life'.

We have defined the ego as the auto-rights automatism that, after an action, observation, thought, or feeling, rears its head and says: 'I did it, saw it, heard it, thought it, or felt it.' Anyone paying close attention will see that one can only say: 'There was an action, an observation, a thought, or a feeling.' And that is something completely different, for actions, thoughts, and feelings can never bind us again once we have understood that they are nothing more than phenomena, appearances that manifest themselves in the experience of consciousness. In principle, every feeling and every thought can manifest itself in me, in the essence, therefore. From the lowest and meanest on the one hand, to the holiest and most sublime on the other.

Every perception, every thought, every feeling, also the sense of self, is granted a life of a few seconds. Just like a soap bubble that bursts, perfect within itself, after which a new soap bubble appears again. Enduring and real in this analogy is the unlimited space in which the soap bubbles float. For the soap bubble, ten seconds is a whole lifetime. It determines its time according to its position relative to other soap bubbles or to reflections. But the space is, and is, and is.

I am the space in which all those soap bubble perceptions, soap bubble thoughts, and soap bubble feelings manifest themselves. In their conception they float a lifetime long, reflecting the world in their dimensions. I, however, space, was always and will always be that which is inside and outside the soap bubble; the boundless space through which it floats. Space does not change; only the soap bubble can think that it is changing space by changing its place. The idea that it is the wind carrying it along cannot occur to it, for it moves just as fast as the wind and therefore does not notice it. That is why the poor soap bubble probably thinks that

he does it all himself; traveling and wandering, his whole life long.

Perhaps this analogy is a bit romantic, but it is an image that has clarified something for many. As long as there is no misunderstanding.

by thinking: 'I am just a poor soap bubble'. That is only true for the 'sense of self' and all other temporary phenomena. But 'I' is the space in this analogy.

Returning to personality, one could put the question to a number of people: 'Who or what are you? Could you give a description of that?' There is a very good chance that one would be presented with a list of characteristics. We think that we are a series of characteristics. To those characteristics, which

appearing every now and then, we attribute simultaneity and continuity to it. Then we put our signature under it and, There you go, That is me: a thing with such-and-such qualities.

Earlier in this text, we did not speak of a list with properties, but of a witches' cauldron full of characteristics. Why a witch-kettle? Because I limit myself by making myself into a thing. I become a temporary entity that, statistically speaking, will reach the age of about seventy-five in the Netherlands. Something bounded on one side by his head hair and on the other by the soles of his feet. Such an insignificant thing is vulnerability itself. Whoever lives as a thing, as an ego, as a personality, knows himself to be surrounded by enemies, for everything that shortens my life and everything that displeases my body, my thinking, and my feelings is, in principle, an enemy. And because I do not have others in my power, nor the circumstances, I am at the mercy of all external influences. Thus the world and my entire life become

one big witches' cauldron.

But when I know that I am not limited in that way, or even cannot be limited, and that all, both good and evil, manifests itself in me, who offers literally everything the possibility to reveal itself, then I am invulnerable. Then labels like 'good' and 'evil' lose their meaning and I can only say: 'I am who I am ...

look, there a bird goes. Look, there is a feeling. The clouds drift by, the water rushes in the brook, the neighbor boy comes whistling on his bike from work.

For whoever has understood that he is everything (the essence) in all (the manifestations, including thoughts and feelings), that entire world of judgment and condemnation collapses. For the egoist, 'that rotten boy from the neighbors is coming over again... the one who smashed my window last year... how can it be that someone whistles so off-key... he'll probably turn the television up way too loud again soon.' Instead of simply seeing what is—and what could be simpler?—a pile of memories and future expectations is glued together, and so he sees the world as he sees himself: small, and even hurt by the neighbor boy's whistling.

Personality exists only in our imagination. In psychological terms, one might say that it is nothing more than a projection, an illusion. Our sense of self rests on that illusion, but with its disappearance, not 'nothing' remains. I remain. Only I am no longer limited by a series of perceptions, thoughts, and feelings. I am who I am.

## CHAPTER 5

**E** One of the ways to lose identification with the body is to gain insight into the structure of time and memory. For it is our memory that tells us that we are more or less permanent personalities, that we were on holiday in France three months ago, and that we were once taught by Miss Mulder in primary school. The implication of the stories our memory serves up to us is clear: the past leads an independent existence. It exists in the form of sophisticated software in the repository of our subconscious.

Why is this reasoning untenable? The present, the 'now' moment, is the moment when the future becomes the past. A han-

A division, a perception, a thought or feeling that has passed, has as such completely ceased to exist. We can observe very clearly that there is first consciousness, essence, in which a thought arises. Then that thought disappears again and there is not 'nothing', but consciousness. The same unchanging consciousness that was there before the thought. The thought has dissolved again into the essence of consciousness and only that essence remains. It is timeless: it is in the essence where the concept of time is formed, just like every other concept.

The past is therefore: that which no longer exists. The future is something that neither exists. Both are ways of thinking in the present. In both cases, there is a thought now, but in the one case I attach the label 'yesterday' or 'earlier' to it now, and in the other case 'later', 'tomorrow', or 'next year'. No one can escape the indivisible moment 'now', even for a fraction of a second. All If one travels at a speed greater than that of light to a strange planet and returns to Earth before one has left, even if one lives in whatever strange time structure, it remains 'now'. The past does not exist, and no one has ever experienced the past. The future does not exist either: no one has ever experienced the future. And if what we say above is true: that the 'now' is that indivisible moment when the future becomes the past, then this implies crystal clear that the

The present, the now, does not exist. Time is a way of thinking that we formed when we saw that the sun revolved around the earth, and the later discovery that the earth actually revolves around the sun brought no change to our sense of time. But how relative this way of thinking is becomes all It becomes clear when we briefly imagine ourselves in the stellar world. Not only do the Sun and Earth dance around each other, but millions of other stars do the same, and the relationship between these two cosmic fireflies makes no sense at all when we consider that completely different relationships exist in other places and in other solar systems.

What we do is this: I divide the one experience that I am in small pieces which I call hours. And then I measure the whole again, as far as my thinking reaches, and I say: 'The whole or the time/distance from there to there is so many times my piece'. I divide the whole into meters and then say that a certain piece is so many times my meter. Does that make sense?

When I want to go somewhere, that makes sense. But when I seek the ultimate and irreducible truth, that makes absolutely no sense. For I cannot explain my standard. I cannot explain what 'one' means, let alone what 'two' or 'nineteen hundred and seventy' means. The whole issue of time, and thereby of space, is nothing other than a way of thinking that arises.

from the identification with the body. Something is far away or close by, large or small in relation to my body; in terms of my bodily proportions.

But the problem suddenly takes on different dimensions when I realize that I am not my I am a body, but that this body is a phenomenon that makes itself perceived by me from time to time man. In me manifests itself that object with a certain sense of time, with a certain awareness of time that belongs to that object body, but which is by no means inherent to my being. Give me in a dream, or after a few weeks of solitude in a completely dark cave, a different sense of time and I remain 'I', unchanged, but with a different sense of time. The 'I' that acquires a different sense of time here is therefore clearly the body, the thought.

Time emerges when I attribute reality, or independent reality, to things that do not have that: past and future. And due to this ultimately untenable position, a possibility of existence arises for memory: one of the heaviest anchors of the ego, of the personality. After all, I did go on vacation to France this summer... and so on. In a line of thought like the latter, we use memory to prove memory.

Just as we can have a dream witness summoned in a dream to testify under oath.

that everything that happened in the dream was really true. Only when we are awake do we see that it was 'just a dream' and that what happened took place exclusively in our dream world and that it has no independent reality. In other words: a dream world that leads no independent existence, but is one hundred percent dependent on the essence of consciousness in which it manifests itself and of which it consists.

In fact, memory is a trick, a way of thinking, that conjures up for me the idea that something happening now actually did not take place now, but in the past.

With any concentration on that indivisible eye-  
A glance at 'now' quickly reveals the trick.

In film, we know the same artifice, which we have known since our childhood consists of nothing but static images, of photographs. But we allow the filmmaker—we even ask him—to create for us the illusion that we are seeing moving images by rapidly playing these photographs in a projector. We see a similar phenomenon on television, where rapidly darting dots give us a similar impression.

give an illusion.

We do not realize that we, all day long, at every sensory perception or with every thought, do exactly the same thing. We have already seen that sensory perceptions are no different.

than thoughts, and what applies to a thought also applies to sensory perception.

When I concentrate on the indivisible moment 'now', I see easily and clearly that I can never have a whole thought at the same time. Let's take this last sentence as an example: when I have arrived at the last word 'to have', the rest of the sentence is already over. Upon reaching the end of the sentence, memory comes into play to make a coherent whole out of all those successive sounds or letters. But my experience in the strict 'now' is never more than a single sound or a small chunk of printed text. The sharper I can concentrate on the 'now', the smaller that piece of text becomes. There is a yoga sadhana\*, which was recommended by Shri Ramana Maharshi, among others, whereby one concentrates increasingly strongly on the now until one arrives at what one could literally call the 'atom': the indivisible: a moment<sup>Like this</sup>

small, so that it cannot get any smaller. Then, at least that is how it happened to me, something like an explosion takes place. The indivisible explodes and one has what is later wrongly referred to as a 'cosmic experience'. Wrongly, because 'cosmic' denotes infinitely large, and that is in turn infinitely large in comparison with the body, which, however, was not present in the experience itself. In retrospect pro-

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\* exercise, discipline

one attempts to explain the experience and does so in terms of the body, so that one begins to speak of 'endlessly large'. In the experience itself, the concepts of 'large' or 'small' are not present.

The thinking machine produces an innumerable number of those 'now moments', but due to the projecting effect we call memory, it seems as if the now is not an indivisible moment, but as if it lasts for an entire sentence, or even much longer ('I have been feeling so good all afternoon.').

The more positive the experience, the shorter that 'now' sometimes seems. That is because in what we now call a 'happiness experience' there is so much real 'I' and so on. There is little 'I-think' involved. The opposite is the case with suffering, and that is why hours of suffering last much longer than hours spent in happiness. Perfect happiness is, in fact, timeless.

But let's take a neutral example. If necessary, we close our eyes for a moment and think of an elephant. Immediately, that strange animal with its long trunk and short tail appears. What does the elephant consist of? Of an infinite number of dots. In every indivisible nu-mo-

In a moment, we perceive a single point. But again, the same phenomenon occurs as when observing a torch swung around in the dark. We do not see a circulating flame, but we see a circle. We do not see a thousand or ten thousand.

points, but we are getting one after the other so quickly

another little detail conjured up so that we see a complete picture: the elephant.

In other words: the thinking machine 'in our head' presents us with a performance containing a built-in delaying effect, making it seem as if perceptions, which are in fact already past, exist now. We call this built-in delaying effect 'memory'. Because we remember the beginning of the sentence when we have reached the end, we understand the entire sentence.

Memory is not a property of the 'I', but a property built into the object of perception.

It is not 'I: timeless and spaceless, who reminds me of \*that\* such-and-such happened to you at such-and-such a time, but there A thought presents itself as being from the past. While a child can see that that thought is now... and even that is actually saying too much. II remember nothing. It is a thought that presents itself as a memory.

Ultimately, this trick amounts to theft. Memory wants us to believe that certain events lead to a permanent existence. The ego steals the permanent from the egoless, for the ego is aware that the 'I' is not a temporary phenomenon. After all, at every moment of my life, I 'am'. That is a knowing that is always accessible. But the question is: 'What is

always present?' Not the ego, but the 'I', the essence of consciousness in which that sense of self manifests itself and by the grace of which that ego can from time to time stick its head above the grass. The trick consists largely of this: that the ego, this way of thinking, appropriates the permanence of the conscious. I am always there, aren't I, under all circumstances, and for so many years now? But the trick is possible due to the double meaning of the word 'I'. The 'I' as body, as sensory function, as thinking or as feeling, disappears every moment and is as temporary as 'the flower of the field. When the wind has passed over it, it is no more, and its place knows it no more'. (Psalm 103, vs. 15, 16). \*And because we live in the world of our thoughts, from which we can never step outside, this applies to everything and everyone.

Our days and nights consist, with the exception of deep sleep and the moments between thoughts and feelings, of an endless series of thought images, or concepts. When a concept is dissolved into its essence, it is gone, and the same concept will never return. Regardless of whether it concerns the concept I call 'my house', 'my body', 'my thinking', or 'my feeling'. Gone is gone, and the past, in whatever form, does not return.

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· When a ged4chu has passed, she no longer exists and her place  
· the one in question-kmtnot her anymore.

more back. Whoever fathoms this feels a heavy burden slide from their shoulders. It makes absolutely no sense to mourn over things from the past. By mourning mistakes we have made, we perpetuate the illusion of the past and nail ourselves to the level we were at when we made those mistakes. By mourning the past, we reinforce the ego, the illusory way of thinking and feeling, and as a result, we make mistakes again. Usually exactly the same ones, over and over again. This is a daily occurrence for the psychotherapist.

Breaking free from this misery—the 'past' is usually misery—is not so difficult. For one can realize that it is merely the built-in trick that makes me believe I am a personality, a semi-permanent phenomenon. In reality, I am that one, indivisible experience in which that entire film manifests itself.

Time and memory are modes of thinking. They exist exclusively when they are thought. This is also the case with every other perception, thought, or feeling.

But 'I' always exist, even when there is no thought is. I am this one experience that cannot be divided into pieces, no matter what memory wants to make me believe. The only thing that is always present is 'I', as the conscious, the essence. The thinking machine, including sense of time and memory, is not

more than an object. It is something that arises and allows itself to be perceived. Period. When it tries to tell me that 'I' perceive it, actively, it tries to show me myself in its terms. But I am neither active nor passive. I am that in which body, thinking machine, time, space, and memory

allow themselves to be perceived as they drift past me like clouds—like soap bubbles, each with the life of a few moments. I remain unchanged, the same, just as endless space does not change when clouds drift within it, and just as the sun does not change when a planet appears.

in his light.

Whoever fathoms this no longer seeks the success by changing circumstances. For all circumstances, pleasant or unpleasant, are 'like the flower of the field'. He who knows that all things are merely ideas within the conscious, is like the king of the universe. No one can be him threaten; nothing can dictate the law to him. He is no longer the body bound by laws. If one binds his body, he is still not bound. If one prescribes laws to him, he does not change. For he is freedom itself.

Unsolvable problems

There are questions that cannot be answered and because the question is contrary to itself, or for-

that the question is based on incorrect assumptions. Most of us probably know the joke: 'Have you stopped beating your wife yet?' If one says 'yes', it means that in the past, one constantly attacked one's wife. If one says 'no', it means that one still beats her. The question is based on the incorrect assumption that the person addressed regularly gives his wife a beating.

Another, more serious matter is the search for the squaring of the circle. When I was about ten years old, I was deeply convinced that, if only I were able to all my boys

to engage my genius, it would suddenly become clear to me, at a moment of tremendous inspiration, how I could construct a figure that was simultaneously round and square. The solution to this problem came after weeks or months of playing with this thought not in the form of the desired drawing, but in the form of the insight that the problem contained an impossibility. For a circle is a figure in which all points are by definition equally distant from a single center, whereas a square is by definition a figure in which that is not the case. One round line and four straight lines, together as one figure, are incompatible.

Similar questions exist in the field of Vedanta as well, and since they arise for so many people, it is useful to address them.

People interested in Raja Yoga, for example, notice that they are constantly in the 'now'; there is no escaping it. This moment of 'now' can be reduced to an indivisibly small moment. And in such an indivisibly small moment, one can perceive very little; nothing grand, no complete thought. In short: just one point. Our perceptions consist of countless millions of such dots that memory fuses together into living images. Just like those rapidly darting dots on television and just like the one-frame-at-a-time effect of a film. But in that indivisible little moment of 'now', at most only one dot is perceptible. One can clearly achieve this in the meditation of thought concentration. Now, a question often asked of me is: 'Where does that single dot come from, then?'

Our entire world consists of such dots. And with that, we have arrived at the question that countless has occupied the question over the course of many centuries: 'Where does creation come from?' The answer: 'Man himself creates the world,' may not satisfy the questioner, because he can then say: 'Why does man do that?' And with that, we arrive at another question that is essentially the same is. If it is true that I am the absolute conscious self, how is it then that I think I am a small and ignorant human being? If I am the knower, the observer, who then projects the feeling that I

am an actively acting being(doership)on that absolute?

The solution is analogous to that of the square to the circle. To begin with, we must ask ourselves by whom or what the question is asked and what kind of answer is expected. The question is asked by thought. The answer is expected in terms of thought: the answer must therefore be contained in logical terms.

But in asking the question, one forgets that thought itself is a part of the world and that it is not possible to express a whole in terms of a part.

Imagine a round cake. Cutting that we in eight points. We now consider each point as an individual. Now try to explain to a point what the whole pie looks like... it turns out to be impossible. Because the point, the individual, cannot to contain something that is greater than himself.

There are various ways in which one can analyze creation. One of these is into time, space, and causality. Now, when one asks: 'When did creation begin, and with it time?', one presupposes time before there was time. If one asks: 'Where did creation originate?', one presupposes space before there was space, and if one asks: 'What is the cause of creation?', one presupposes causality  
ness before there was causality.

Therefore, a logical answer is impossible, for the question itself contains an illogical desire. If one still wishes to give a true, albeit provisional, answer, then one can say: the world comes into being again and again now, now, now!

Theguru

The guru is someone who can answer all your spiritual questions to your complete satisfaction and who removes all your doubts.

We are speaking here about the Karnaguru, with whose help someone can realize their oneness with the absolute, with the divine, with Brahman, the true self, and so on. There is also the karya-goe ru, the preparer, someone who only at road helps until you meet the true guru.

Naturally, the guru himself is an enlightened being. He knows, and is deeply convinced of this, that the entire creation and he himself consist of nothing other than that one consciousness, the essence of all things. Someone who has not yet realized this for themselves can never lead another to it.

Now, the 'person' of the enlightened, and thus also the 'peroson' of the guru, is actually taboo as a subject of conversation. For viewed in this world, an enlightened person is something non-existent: it is a human being, a limited creature therefore, who is cosmic. And these two things are incompatible. One cannot te-

to be equally limited and unlimited. The difficulty lies in the fact that we are dealing with two viewpoints: the viewpoint of the one who sees someone he calls a guru, and the viewpoint of the guru himself.

The guru himself does not regard himself as an embodied, thinking, or feeling being, but as that one essence in which the film of world-thinking-feeling plays out, like water in the waves. From his own standpoint, he is no guru, and he has no followers. But because he knows that this is necessary from the viewpoint of the followers, he stands here to allow them to see him as guru, as the embodiment of the truth.

The guru occupies a unique place. The relationship with the guru is the relationship that puts an end to all relationships. It is a relationship that aims for unification for the follower, but the guru himself already knows himself to be one with everything and everyone from the outset.

The relationship with the guru is one of love. Although many words are sometimes needed to make clear to the follower what he must understand, the relationship is determined by the heart. The guru's love for his followers is greater than that of parents for their children, or than the love between spouses or friends. In union with this love, the personality dissolves forever and an end comes to the

chain of being born and dying again and again. Regardless of whether one interprets this in the sense of reincarnation, or in the sense of being reborn a hundred times a day as a pseudo-personality, as ego. Realizing the truth is no light matter. It is a kind of suicide, precisely as true love is a kind of suicide: not physical, but of the ego. The ego of the follower dissolves into love that the guru awakens in him. The relationship ends in a unity that puts an end to all dualistic relationships. The love of the follower for the guru is the guru in the heart of the follower, and the love of the guru for the follower is the follower in the heart of the guru. The goal of this relationship is to bring about this unity which not only transcends all duality, but which puts an end to all duality forever. The goal, mind you, viewed from the standpoint of the follower. For the guru, there is no goal. The shastrashowever, they say that one should never reach the unity with the guru

may make the subject of his meditation. As long as that unity is not fully experienced, the guru is needed as the ultimate 'means' to draw someone out of duality. And as soon as there is unity, there is no one left to affirm it.

The unique position the guru occupies sometimes leads to confusion among third parties. For instance, stories keep surfacing that there are enlightened beings who

have arrived there completely alone and that they have never had a guru. Historically speaking, this is always incorrect. There is no known case of anyone who never, at the beginning or during hisadhana, has had contact with an enlightened one. But for the follower in whom the bhakti element is growing ever stronger, it is—people in India are somewhat more romantic than we are—an unacceptable matter that his guru could ever have been an ignorant person himself who needed a guru. 'Anyone can have a guru, but my guru could never have had a guru.' The guru is the Absolute, and how could the Absolute have had a guru? And with the human being who the guru may once have been

to be, nobody has anything to do with it anymore.

The relationship between disciple and guru is beautifully summarized in the statement of Hanuman, the king of the monkeys, who helps Rama in his struggle to free Sita in Lanka. When asked about his relationship to his guru Rama, Hanuman says: 'When I am my body, I am his servant; when I am my spirit\*, I am his disciple; and when I am myself, he and I are one.'

How does one know if someone is enlightened?

It should be clear that an ochre-colored robe offers no guarantee of great wisdom. We

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\* Mind, thinking and feeling

In recent years, we have been flooded with swamis from all directions, each one appearing to know even less than the last. It is easy enough to utter slogans like: 'Realize the Self, meditate, persevere, hold on, do not give up'. Anyone can do that. But it is a completely different matter to explain how. This is an entirely different matter to show someone what he is and what he is not, to place someone, as it were, in the experience itself so that he recognizes himself without the slightest doubt. And that is what the true guru does. A parable from Hindu literature may illustrate this:

Suppose you are a simple Indian villager and you have lost your cow. Your cow is almost as important as your wife and children. Your entire existence depends on that cow, which not only gives you milk but with which you plow and which pulls your cart. In short: that cow is practically a member of the family. You have searched everywhere for days. You are desperate because the cow remains nowhere to be found. Then, one day, a stranger enters the village with a cow. He asks if it belongs there and is directed to your house. He knocks, you open the door, and he asks: 'Is that your cow?' 'Yes, that is my cow,' you say. Then the man asks: 'But how do you know that?' That is a strange question, too! You know your cow just as well as you know your wife and children. You got her as a calf and you raised her. Of course, you know down to the last detail exactly what your cow looks like.

looks like! 'So you know for sure?' asks the man. 'Yes, for sure,' you say. 'Good,' says the stranger, 'Then take her back.'

In this way, the guru confronts us with our true self, and time and again he asks: 'Is it true? Is what I say correct? Have you understood it through and through? Have you accepted nothing on authority, but verified everything within yourself?' Until one is completely satisfied by his explanation and no doubt is possible anymore. The guru is the one who knows how to remove all your doubts.

And this last point is the criterion by which one knows whether or not someone is the right guru. When someone, all his reputation, no matter how great, proves unable to convince you and dispel your doubts, then he is not your guru, and one must continue searching until one finds someone who can.

And how does one find a guru? There is only one answer to that. Whoever is truly serious finds their guru, even if he has to fall from the sky. In India, the saying goes: 'It is easier to reach a hundred.' bonajideto find gurus rather than one serious follower.' This may be a gross exaggeration, but the intention is clear. Whoever takes the matter truly seriously and is ready for the encounter will find their guru. It is at this encounter that the realization of the truth takes place: you realize the Self on the

the moment you hear the truth from the lips of the competent guru. After that, you only need to clear away your psychological obstacles. In more Western terms: after that, you need to integrate what has been gained and permeate every corner of your life with it until the old way of thinking, based on the misconception that one is a body, is completely erased. One's center of gravity then shifts from body and mind, Thinking and feeling, towards the essence, the one never-changing experience that is the 'I'. This brings about a drastic change in attitude to life.

### Spiritual authority

If someone disagrees with Vedanta on certain points, is he wrong from the outset?

Vedanta is not a system. It is not a way of thinking, nor a way of life. If one wishes to regard it as a philosophy—and there is no objection to that—then it is, however, a philosophy that is only formulated upon the encounter of 'the one who seeks' with 'the one who knows'. It is the 'translation into words' of that one, absolute experience which is called the state of 'enlightenment'. And in that 'translation', in this case, words from the Hindu tradition are used.

Whoever disagrees with Vedanta is itipsofacto at the same time disagree with every other tradition that offers a 'translation' of the absolute, such as Buddhism, Taoism, and so on. There is no difference of opinion regarding the essence. When a Taoist, a Zen master, a jnani or whoever has transcended identification with body, senses, thinking, and feeling, there is never even a milligram of difference in experience. One may, however, find the path that led there more efficient or less efficient. But, should we discover tomorrow that a spiritual tradition exists among the Eskimos that leads to enlightenment, we know in advance that there will be no disagreement whatsoever between the man who has reached the goal through this tradition and, for example, the jnani. The very fact that he speaks from exactly the same experience enables the enlightened one to explain all texts ever written by other enlightened ones. The big catch, however, is that not everyone who is considered an enlightened person actually is one, and that not every sage is correctly illuminated by his followers. If one were to take seriously all the stories written about Shri Ramakrishna, for example, one would almost come to believe that he was a charlatan rather than the great man he evidently was. An Indian enlightened person who saw the famous bust of Suraces in Europe exclaimed: 'What a beautiful sight,

'What a great enlightened one!' But where the Suraces are interpreted by Placo, it is a completely different story... Therefore, it is safe to stick to the great classical texts such as the Bhagavad Gita, the Ashtavakra Samhita, or to the texts of Shankara (charya) and the like.

We are deeply convinced that there is only one ultimate truth, whatever one may call it, and that Vedanta is the only tradition that indicates the way to it in detail and in so many words. If that is the case, one is mistaken if one disagrees, as long as one holds positions... provided, of course, that we are talking about the genuine, not romanticized or interpreted Vedanta. And provided that one does not confuse this position with fanaticism, an attitude stemming from inner uncertainty. The competent Vedam speaks precisely from the greatest possible certainty.

What has value?

When everything is one and the same, am I actually nothing more than a trash can?

One can also turn it around and say that everything becomes as sublime as you, even a trash can.

This question is often thrown at us by people who have only half digested a piece of Vedanta and who resist. For

the one who seriously seeks the truth shall it doesn't matter how valuable his ego might be. He or she will lovingly make it disappear into the trash can to part with it for good. If we hear this question, then we serve ourselves to ask whether no propaganda has been made, something that does not belong in this field. Vedanta is no detergent, and those who truly search seriously are guaranteed to come across the right information at a given moment. Nothing is as dangerous as speaking about these things. It all too easily makes us into a person who knows..., which is contrary to oneself. And nothing stays <sup>Like this</sup> to stick to us for a long time as vanity.

The personality, the ego, constantly needs a value judgment about itself. Most of us split ourselves—or at least appear to—into pieces where one judges, and often condemns, the other. A sentence from a conversation the other day: 'I actually don't know if I thought that was nice of myself at the time.' So here is one and the same person. A who wonders what B back then, indeed, of C found.

In fact, however, personality consists of nothing other than a number of projected characteristics that together form an image we call 'our self' and with which we identify. Personality exists exclusively in our imagination. Whether that sense of self is a dime or a guilder

is worth, is of no interest. The only thing that matters is: How do I get <sup>Like this</sup> thoroughly right of superstition after that I am a physical, thinking, and feeling being, instead of that one essence in which all those objects manifest themselves? Human dignity is not determined by nose, ears, hands, and feet, nor by sharp ways of thinking, but is proportional to the degree to which we manage to free ourselves from the illusion. Then we no longer have an ego to defend or self-interests to pursue. And the tremendous amount of energy that was formerly needed for the defense of that illusory personality is now spontaneously used to 'translate' what lives in our heart.

A completely different consideration regarding the 'listening' to this question is the following: in the world as such, when one loses the illusion, tables do not become chairs. In the words of Shri Ramakrishna: 'Before I realized the truth, I loved strawberries, and now I still love strawberries.' In other words: taste is a physical and psychological matter that retains much of its validity at that level. The enlightened one, too, will pay more attention to his family and friends than to the trash can. The world does not become a hazy kind of paradise: the only thing that changes is our subjective point of view.

## CHAPTER 6

**D** Time and memory are things that are difficult to seem to be separable, and the manifestation of the world depends on both of these, particularly on that part of the world that bothers us the most: our own personality.

As we have seen, no thought can exist without time, for every thought, and thus every perception, occupies a certain amount of time. Nor can we perceive thoughts without memory, for at the end of a sentence the beginning has already vanished. It is through what we have called the 'built-in delaying effect' that we attribute simultaneity to a number of 'now-moments'. This trick conjures up an entire thought for us, whereas upon close observation we discover that only one now-moment is present at a time.

We seek liberation from the ego, from personality, from identification with the body.\* To a significant extent, this means liberation from the past, for we feel that personality is something that has grown slowly over time. Admittedly, our fears relate primarily to the future, to what might happen, but those fears, too, originated in the past. If we can therefore liberate ourselves from the past, then in practice, we are also liberated from the future, from the 'now' that we project onto the future.

The manifestation of the world, of a perception, of a thought, is time and again immediately over. Should we reread this last sentence, the series of 15 preceding words has vanished, dissolved, when we arrive at the 16th and final word 'over'. And so it goes with every perception, regardless of whether it leaves the house.

concerns the neighbors, or the most intimate thoughts and feelings.

So when we have the feeling that INOW  
If one knows something, that means that the observation or thought in question has already disappeared and dissolved into the conscious, into the essence from which it existed. The idea that one knows something only arises when the observation or thought, which is also no more than

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\* Avalwhere we walk studs back in, isthat we seek liberation for the personality, something like that, as looking for a healthy disease.

When a perception is, it is over. At that moment there is only the essence of consciousness itself—without form, without time, without memory. Immediately thereafter a new object of perception may make itself known, but what matters in this approach is that instead of saying: 'I know something', one should say: 'This object, this thought has dissolved into the absolute that I am'.\*

When one applies this to the personality and is sensitive to this approach, it comes  
one leads to a surprising discovery. As soon as I speak of myself, or think or feel as a personality, that personality has already vanished without leaving a trace.

And whoever understands this suddenly has an experience ring that rises like a light from the heart and shines through the head and the whole world: the experience that the sense of personality suddenly fades, or is wiped away like a fade-out in a film. Here, suddenly, I stand, the absolute, the center of what I have always been. That which I took myself for is but a thing, and now I see through it. And regularly with that, the realization can dawn: What in heaven's name did I ever mean when I spoke of 'my personality'? For who did that little word refer to? mine relationship? There is not a second self that is the owner of the personality.

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\* Shri Atmananda -Atma Nirvriti, chapter9, fresh6

Personality is a picture that surfaces in consciousness from time to time and can be perceived, and even that is saying too much. It is not one picture that keeps coming back, but it is a new picture every time. The little self, the

personality, has less substance than a cloud. It is a kind of sunset, a *mythmor* gana.

Suddenly, the meaning of the conclusion of the previously cited and incomparable book by Shri Atmananda becomes clear. In which he speaks about the dream and observes that the world that is perceived is the product of

that dream. In the same way, the dreamer's body is a product of the dream, as are his senses, his thoughts, and his feelings. And a surprising element is that the sense of self in the dream, the personality of the dreamer, is also a product of the dream.

Then the question inevitably arises: 'Who, then, had that dream?' The correct answer is: 'No one had that dream. There has never even been a dream state.' Or, as Shri Armananda says elsewhere: 'All beings are always in deep sleep. This is not readily understandable.'

After the prior analysis of the personal-  
heid in the waking state, the one who has been able to follow this closely will have no difficulty

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· Atma Darshan, chapter 20, verses 16 to 24

We must understand that there is no one in the dream who owns the dream ego, of the dream personality. The entire story of the dream world, up to and including the personality of the dreamer, is nothing but a series of images that make themselves perceived in the conscious mind. There is no one who dreams. There is a series of dream images that is perceived and which, the moment one recognizes them, has already dissolved into the conscious mind. The sense of self, too, is like a light bulb turning on and off with borrowed light, barely visible in the great light of the conscious mind.

It is mind, that is to say: perceiving, thinking, knowing, and feeling, including the sense of self, which reside in, or better, form part of, the waking and dream states. Not 'I'. I am that in which the waking person and the dream person manifest themselves. I myself am timeless and untouched by changes in personality and by the successive states. I am the impersonal, bounded by nothing. Therefore, I neither wake nor dream. I myself am always without attributes—egoless, timeless.

Precisely because someone identifies with thinking and feeling, it becomes these two functions tied made possible to act as if they are something independent. Thinking behaves as if it can have an opinion about something, as if it were a less or is more of a lasting principle, instead of occasionally

a picture, occasionally a word. But whoever can think and feel, whoever can see personality and the dream-waking state as matters that manifest themselves in the conscious for inscrutable reasons, loses his identification with them and knows instantly and effortlessly that he is not this thing is, but that conscious in which conjures up all this as Shiva's dance. As soon as the understanding arises in a crystal-clear mind that the personality is no more than a phantom with a life of a few seconds, the conviction that one is such a personality vanishes forever. That is too laughable. Such a belief cannot be sustained for even a second. And with this realization comes the insight that, therefore, for this phantom either, no states can exist that can persist for many hours.

No one is awake, no one dreams, no one sleeps. Have we understood this?

No, we have not understood it, for no one can understand it, no thought can grasp it. No one can get 'there'.

'Having understood it' means bathing in all nakedness in the realization of the gripping fact that there is no one, or ever has been, who lived in bondage. It also means: bathing in the warmth of the great unity of the kidney-reeness, in which there is no 'we' and no 'other' to love, but where 'I' and 'love' are two words for one experience.

It is this 'bathing in', this unfathomable certainty of being, that expresses itself in the vaguely distinguishable smile of the Elephanta Trimurti. Liberation is: knowing that that to which one thought one was chained is nothing more than a phantom, a dream image, a fabrication that has already vanished the moment I know it.

Do conditions exist that go beyond enlightenment?

If this were the case, then change would still be possible after enlightenment. But by 'being enlightened' we understand non-duality, timelessness, and thus also non-changeability. What can change is never the absolute—to use a more vivid example: there is nothing greater than the infinite. Changes can only take place where time is involved, and that means within that which we have called 'personality'. In the course of a yoga discipline, the most impressive phenomena of infinity can occur, but the yogi involved must continue searching for 'that consciousness in which no further change takes place'. Only then can there be talk of what is called 'enlightenment'. This is the position of Advaita Vedanta. There can

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<sup>6</sup>The famous three-headed statue of Shiva from the 6<sup>th</sup> century, carved into the rocks of Eléphanta in India.

Change can only occur when one can compare different experiences, different states, with one another. Advaita is by definition that one experience that all such states and experiences have in common. To arrive at that recognition, to recognize that experience, everyone has more than enough with their own experiences up to the moment he or she begins to search. We even believe that great recognition is in principle easier for an ordinary housewife than for a professor of philosophy or for a great yogi. For would it not, in general, be much easier to let go of an ordinary little personality than of a well-known and famous personality spoken of in whispers and reverence?

Must the guru be a human being of flesh and blood?

A reader sent us a quote, we believe from Ramana Maharshi, who writes that this is not always necessary\*. Nevertheless, we are convinced that anyone who wishes to reach the ultimate goal must meet a guru 'of flesh and blood' at least once in their life. We are aware of various stories of yogis who maintained contact with their teacher from a distance,

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\*Such a remark comes for example for in the book of S. Cohen: Eraser Ramana, Sri Ramanasramam, 8' dmk, 2003, datWe Highly recommend.

but not until they had met him or her at least once in the three-dimensional world.

Jnana, bhakti, karma and raja yoga

When understanding goes deep, it unites with the heart naturally. That is bhakti yoga. Whoever follows a jnana discipline will see that he reaches a point where he focuses on the absolute, without wishing to achieve anything. After all, that wish implies a distance, and that is not there. One opens oneself to the truth. One looks intently and surrenders, but not for a reward, however sublime it may be. This is karma yoga. The further one progresses in understanding, the greater the surrender and concentration. And that is raja yoga, regardless of whether or not it is accompanied by troublesome and dangerous 'paranormal' phenomena. Thus, in the ultimate solution, the ends of all yogas are reached.

The importance of detachment

Usually, detachment takes the form of fleeing the world. In India, too, many thousands of ascetics live in the jungle or in small settlements. Often they live completely naked, eat sparingly, and know no, or a very spe-

a kind of sexual life. In many cases, they inflict very severe torments upon themselves to master the body and what was formerly called 'the lusts of the flesh'. Raja Yoga, in particular, requires strict discipline, strict vegetarianism, and the suppression or sublimation of sexuality and the like. But the detachment required by Jnana Yoga is of an entirely different nature. After all, the world can only pose a threat that keeps us from the straight path when we believe that the world, including our own body, thoughts, and feelings, is an independent reality. In other words, things can only bind and enslave us, at least seemingly, when we believe that it those things are those that bring us happiness. However, as soon as I see that the object of my desire is nothing other than a thought-form which, in turn, is nothing other than 'the conscious that I am' and I see that happiness does not come from perception but from the self, then at that very moment the possibility of attachment disappears.

When one sees that there is no connection whatsoever between the object of desire and the personality, which is, after all, also an object, where then is there room for attachment? At this moment, the image of a desirable object manifests itself within me, and at the next moment, a sense of self manifests itself. But where is it

connection? The object must first disappear before the sense of self can take its place. In other words: I am one, unchanging consciousness, in which now once again this, and then again that object allows perception. The thought or feeling that we call 'desire' is itself nothing more than such an object.

Whoever is capable of viewing the problem of detachment in this way will have no serious difficulties with it. True detachment is the detachment from the personality. Whoever has learned to see the latter as no more than an idea or a feeling that reveals itself from time to time is, by its very nature, no longer attached to the things he once thought gave him happiness. He will not shun the world because he knows that the happiness he finds in good food, in sexuality, in successfully completing a task, in listening to beautiful music, or in reading a worthwhile book, comes from nowhere else but himself. For that same reason shall He does not seek the world either. If he is hungry, he eats; if he is thirsty, he drinks, and if he is tired, he sleeps.

## CHAPTER?

**A**<sup>1</sup> We have spoken a few times about the  
feeling that the 'personality' is fiction, a fantasy  
image, and thus an object just like any other object; an  
idea or a feeling that manifests itself in consciousness  
from time to time. We have seen how this works. Initially,  
our environment tells us that we are a body. Even that we  
are our clothing, that we are the functioning of the  
senses, that we are a thinking and feeling being, and that  
we consist of a long list of qualities and characteristics.

When we try to give a description of ourselves, we  
mention the qualities of our body (I am tall or short, fat or  
thin, etc.) and of our thinking and feeling (I am rather  
hot-tempered, I am honest, I am sometimes very

afraid etc.). We have seen that everything we know is whole. Of the world, which we at first thought to be solid and entirely independent of us, we know exclusively what our senses tell us, and even then only when such a perception has become a thought in our mind. A car driving past does not exist for us if we do not hear it. We live, in other words, in a world that consists of nothing but thoughts, and whether anything exists outside those thoughts, no one has ever known since the beginning of creation. Should that <sup>w</sup>are, then we know with unerring certainty that no one will ever know it because there is no knowing without consciousness, so that we, in other words, know exclusively what consciousness is; what consists of consciousness. The same applies to each of the more than six billion people living on this earth: not a single one of them lives in a world other than the world that exists in his mind, and outside his mind he knows nothing and will never know anything.

Whoever has understood this can therefore at most say that a thought manifests itself in his mind, regardless of whether it concerns a sensory perception or a so-called abstract thought. Thoughts are pictures or words; *nama rupa*, name and form. And whenever a name or form, word or picture, presents itself, the conscious manifests itself as the knower there-

of. This knowingness comes completely effortlessly and is entirely independent of our wanting or not wanting. If there is a thought, then I am the knower of it. Whether I want to or not. This, too, is a rule that applies to each of us.

This fact that I am the knower of all those thoughts which I designate with words such as: 'my body, my personality,' and with 'I see, I think, my feelings, my rights and duties, the world, waking and dreaming,' and so on, is of the utmost importance on the path to liberation. Without the right perspective, without the fully lived understanding, the 'contemplation,' of the fact that I am the knower, and not the body, the acting and thinking being, one does not, in my deepest conviction, attain liberation. And, although we will hereafter attempt to clarify something of this perspective, it is equally my deepest conviction that, in order to arrive at a fundamental understanding of this, the help is needed of someone who has realized this himself. We cannot emphasize this enough.

The one who tries to take increasingly clear note of the fact that he is the connoisseur usually soon finds himself confronted with the difficulty, one way or another, that the connoisseur within him still carries a trace of personality. The connoisseur is always the connoisseur of my thoughts and never creeps, as it were, into the back of the mind of

another. Another has his own expert who is an expert of his thoughts and feelings.

Perhaps it helps if we return to the personality once again. We have seen that it is an object and never a subject. After all, I can remember my personality. I can remember very well what I was doing at this time yesterday, for example, or how I felt at a particular moment, or how I got to the place where I am sitting reading now.

Personality is an object, and we think that this object is about as old as we are ourselves, because we attribute more or less permanence to all those properties of which it consists at first glance, and moreover, simultaneity. We have seen that, in fact, those properties and the sense of self are each granted a life of only a few seconds.

But, even with this reasoning, there is a catch. For to unmask this trick, we used a specific word. We spoke about a long list of properties who, by means of permanence and simultaneity, maintained the fiction of personality. But if we now take another close look at that word 'properties', might we not ask ourselves: properties of what? Properties of personality, of course! So personality consists of nothing

than traits, and those traits are part of the personality; it is therefore a vicious circle. By using the word 'traits', we risk falling into the trap. Despite the argument

that unfolds crystal clear before our eyes, we still smuggle in the idea that that personality has a certain independence, a certain reality. After all, he has attributes.

But like this is not it.

Even what we call a 'trait' is nothing more than a thought. When we look closely by looking instead of projecting the picture of personality onto one another, we see that only one thought can become visible in the conscious mind at a time. There is only one characteristic that registers itself. But let us now replace that word 'characteristic' with a more neutral word like 'thought'. Instead of: 'I am tall' (my body is tall), or: 'I am calm', we now say:

These are not my characteristics, but there is a thought: 'this is long' and there is a thought or a feeling: 'calmness'. This thought, this feeling, manifests itself in the conscious mind and not in the personality. A thought can never manifest itself within another thought. The personality itself is nothing other than a thought, an image, a feeling. Therefore, a 'personality thought' can never manifest itself within the personality.

corpse. If there is the thought 'long' or 'calm', is  
There is no sense of self, no trace of a thought of personality.  
The world therefore never manifests itself in me, sir or  
madam.X,but in that one conscious one in which the picture  
of 'sir' was also  
or Mrs.X'appears. It is that one conscious being, the essence  
that 'I' truly am, and not the idea or feeling that I am such-  
and-such or that I am so-and-such. Where am 'I' at the  
moment I understand the foregoing?

Not in the personality, for it presents itself as a thing, as  
an object within 'me'. At that moment, therefore, I was not  
limited by that personality, but I was the essence in which it  
manifested itself. I was the essence from which that image  
or that feeling consisted. At that moment, I was truly the  
knower, not 'in the back of my head', but a knower of the  
entire personality as it

presented himself at that moment.

And who saw all this? Who had this understanding? The  
only correct answer is: no one possessed this concept.  
There was only the conscious, the essence, knowing itself, for  
behind the personality stands not yet another personality  
that is its owner. Everything that is personal manifests itself  
as an object, as a thing, in the conscious, and the conscious  
is therefore impersonal itself. Not impersonal in the sense of  
cold or indifferent, for the conscious is precisely love and  
warmth itself.

Can you work with it in practice?

This question, quite often posed by outsiders, is based on  
two incorrect assumptions. First, that there is someone who  
could do something with something, and second, that the  
absolute is finite and comparable to other things. What can  
the vase standing on my table do with infinite space? What  
can a minute practically do to eternity?

Perhaps this last comparison seems somewhat  
exaggerated, but it is not entirely incomprehensible when  
one realizes that the images we mistake for a permanent  
personality never last longer than a few moments. What can  
such an image do to the endless consciousness in which it  
arises, of which it consists, and into which it has already  
dissolved the moment the question is asked?

As soon as one is able to see the matter in the right  
perspective, the question disappears. But the above answer,  
which is understandable to someone who has delved into  
jnana yoga for some time, shall probably be completely  
unclear to the outsider. Therefore can one also follow a  
different approach for him: we, that is to say, those who  
think they are a personality, seek lasting happiness. Things  
that make life easier for us and that make us faster or easier-

Bringing the keijiker to our goal, we call 'practical'. practical'. Seen in that light, for some people jnana yoga is the most practical of all practical things. For nothing leads so directly to the sought-after ideal and nothing liberates us so thoroughly from the illusions that cause us suffering as jnana yoga.

Is it possible to transplant Vedanta, an Eastern cultural phenomenon, to the West, and is that not dangerous?

Vedanta is that one, irreducible experience that all people, Easterners and Westerners alike, have in common and which they, each in their own language, designate with the word 'I'. Jnana Yoga, or Advaita Vedanta, does not necessarily make use of rites and terminologies that are unfamiliar to the Westerner.

be more difficult to access than for the Easterner. Even concentration and meditation are not on this path necessary: it is a matter of immediate recognition. Like the wave that thinks it is a separate being, but then suddenly recognizes the fact that it is nothing other than water and that it has never been anything else and never will be anything else because water is its essential nature. This applies to high waves and low ones, to waves at an early hour and to waves in the evening.

Differences will arise when one considers from what one person or another has been liberated,

or wishes to become. It holds true for all people that they are freed from fears, but perhaps many Easterners will be freed from the fear of black magic and many Westerners from a flatneu rose. But this, of course, does not mean that one must first become afraid of black magic or of cobras in the garden before one can attain self-knowledge.

Of course, there are also differences when comparing Indian culture as such with our own. Life in India is aimed at achieving self-knowledge, but along a thousand and one paths. The Indian need not follow all of them if he wishes to attain liberation. Each of us must be liberated from the delusions he holds of himself and the world, and this

is different for every person. Broadly speaking, it holds true for everyone that they must be freed from the illusion of being a body and a thinking and feeling personality.

How do I get rid of the 'copyright mechanism'?

This question relates to the functioning of the ego. During an action, or during a thought or a feeling, there is no ego, no personality to be discerned, because the attention is focused. onher object of her knowing; on the action, the thought or the feeling (perceptions of the senses

(we count this among the thoughts). Only after the action has ended, or during an interruption, does the feeling often arise briefly, as if in a flash: I have done, thought, felt, and so on, this or that. This sense of self comes to claim the rights, even when we have understood that this feeling is unfounded, and even when we have arrived at the clear conclusion through many avenues that this ego has nothing to do with the past action, thought, and so on. How do we get rid of this?

Here again lies a clear intersection between jnana yoga and karma yoga. The latter is, after all, the continuous practice of acting without concerning oneself with the fruits of that action. And the only way to fully achieve this is the way we found along a different path in jnana yoga: namely, the deep recognition of the fact that, outside of our imagination, there is no such thing as a person who acts, thinks, or feels.

To get rid of an automatism like the 'copyright mechanism,' at least two things are required. First, the ever-growing realization that I am not the active and the thinking person, but that one conscious being in which both the body with its activities and thinking and feeling manifest themselves. And second, it is necessary to employ a counter-automatism. Time and again, one must confront the incorrect line of thought and the unfounded

correcting the feeling and reminding oneself: I am not the one who just happened to see this or that, but I am that conscious being in which those images manifest; I am the essence from which they consist. I am not the one who thinks thoughts, but I am always and effortlessly the unchanging knower of every thought and also of every feeling. In the first and last place, I am the knower of that sense of self that attempts to bind me to this body. But I can never be a fleeting, passing feeling. I am that one, unchanging 'I' in which that sense of self sometimes reveals itself like a shooting star.

Whoever continues to practice seeing things ever more clearly in this perspective will certainly be rid of his ego.

## CHAPTERS

**D** Liberation, or enlightenment, takes place when there is no longer any identification with body, mind, and feeling. When someone has understood that 'the world' is nothing other than a way of thinking and that 'thoughts' are nothing other than consciousness, the essence or knowingness, and when someone has fundamentally understood that thinking can understand nothing because a thought is nothing more than an object, and when someone has arrived at the experience that there is no such thing as a 'personality', then the deep silence breaks through in which all thoughts dissolve, and thus the world as well.

Anyone who has progressed this far with the guidance of a competent instructor need do nothing further. In the beginning, this may

silence still colored by the absence of thought. It is like a painting that has hung on a wall somewhere for years. One day the resident takes it down and you walk in. What do you see? Not primarily the wall, but the absence of the painting.

It is the same with this state of silence. At first one was troubled by thinking, by the gradually fading feeling that one was a thinker; then thoughts and feelings vanish, and now their absence stands out. The emphasis, therefore, is not yet on the silence, but on the Absence of other things. But here, one need only wait. One need not

to be opened only to the unknown.

Gradually, symptoms of great harmony emerge. From the heart rises a deep sense of peace, of warmth. A feeling that all is well. This feeling, which comes and goes, is not the absolute, not the unknown, but it is a manifestation of it. It is like the first rays of dawn coming over the horizon.

In this, one must find the right attitude oneself. Insofar as there is still a vague sense of self, of personality, present, one must allow it to dissolve into this gentle feeling. One must not so much surrender to it—that sounds a bit too active—but one must allow oneself to be filled. One must allow, one must desire.

without desiring that this soft feeling take the place of every trace of personality that may still EXIST.

..

Above all, one must not allow the personality, the automatism, to be in a hurry. To demand that it now must happen. As long as there is an awareness of 'now', one is still in time, and thus in the mental, and realization can never take place in the mental. One must keep this in mind again and again. One must therefore only allow the warm, soft feeling to wash away—blow away—the last traces of the sense of personality like a feather in a barely perceptible gust of wind on a quiet evening.

Then complete emptiness sets in. Much has been said and written about this emptiness in all great and living spiritual traditions. Sometimes in a poetic way, sometimes in an almost clinical-philosophical way, but this theme returns time and again.

'The usefulness of a bowl depends on its emptiness,' said Lao Tzu. A full bowl can no longer be used for anything else. And likewise, when thought and feeling are filled with other things, they can no longer be filled by the unknown, by the essence. Therefore, one must ensure that one is always 'empty'.

In the beginning, that only works during brief glances, although time does not exist in that state and so there can actually be no question of 'brief'.

or 'long'. But gradually this emptiness settles within us, even while we are engaged in our daily activities. We no longer tackle a problem with all kinds of preconceived notions. We no longer rely on our knowledge, our memory, and our experience, but arrive empty and naked. The rest then follows naturally. Initially to our surprise, the world then turns out to be well to be able to take very good care of oneself. The right idea comes at the right moment, and we do not know where from, but there are no more worries about that. Actions are often performed almost effortlessly because there is no one left to direct them. 'The work does itself,' say the Zen Buddhists.

One cannot order the 'great experience'. One can only make it possible, and when one makes it possible, it comes of its own accord. Cela vous remplit comme une grace', Jean Klein says: 'It fills you like grace'.

From that moment on one experiences the great. The lens of thinking and feeling through which we have allowed our vision to be limited until now has been set aside. Deep sleep and the moments between thoughts and feelings now form a unity with the essence of which thoughts are, as it were, a distant extension. Just as, in a certain sense, waves are a distant extension of the sea. No words are even remotely adequate to provide an accurate

to give a description of this condition. The word 'condition' is also, in fact, laughable.

What may be said is that this experience is endlessly satisfying and that it is boundlessly full of endless love, which is symbolized first and foremost in the unity with the guru now attained. 'The only thing that remains with you, even after realization of the Self, is the guru's teaching: (The only thing that remains with you, even after the realization of the Self, is the teaching of the guru.) Why? This experience, this oneness, is after all the teaching of the guru. Oh guru! This oneness itself. The thinking and feeling of the followers gave him a body and spirit. But viewed from his own standpoint, he is not a person, he has no body, he does not think, he does not speak, he is not a guru, but only this one, timeless, boundless oneness, or, in other words: non-duality.

I am no body, I have no body. I am no mind, I have no mind. I am no doer, I am no enjoyer. I am pure consciousness which knows no dissolution: (I am not a body, I have no body. I am not thoughts, I have no thoughts. I do not, I undergo not. I am pure consciousness that knows no impermanence.)\*

With being 'conquered' by the experience, the last vestige of personality is dissolved. It is through the teachings of the guru, who nothing

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\* Shri Krirhna Menon (Atmananda) -Atma Nirvriti chapter 1, v.2

is other than experiencing this and love itself, that this is brought about. At that moment the oneness between disciple and master is achieved, and with it the fulfillment of all love. For there is no relationship comparable to that of pupil and master. The love of a mother for her child cannot <sup>Like this</sup> be as great as the love of the guru for his disciple, or, in the words of Shri Kri sha Menon: 'For the one whom he allows to regard him as a guru'.

One of the most moving experiences one can have on one's path is when one suddenly sees, as if through the eyes of the guru, who one truly is. Instead of the ignorant, the incapable, and the imbecile one imagined oneself to be in the presence of the guru—of whom one knew intuitively and ever more strongly that he is greater than the very greatest—and instead of seeing a weak, stupid, and unworthy human being, it suddenly becomes apparent in this revelation that the Master saw you as Light Itself, as Love Itself, and as infinite good. He did not see you in terms of His personality, for that existed only in your imagination. He saw you, if one may put it that way, in terms of Love Itself, which He was and is, and always will be.

No one realizes the Self without tears. Not because the path is painful, but because of the love of the guru, which is the same love that he

arouses in you, is so incomprehensible and thereby makes so full it is undeserved. Cela vous remplit comme une grace'...That is exactly how it is.

When one of our fellow students once asked the guru, "How can I ever become worthy of you?" the immediate answer was: "By your death", by dying, of course not as body, but as ego, as personality. Thinking and feeling can never contain the infinite, therefore they must disappear and therefore personality and sense of self must disappear, die, be dissolved in the silent harmony that rises into the emptiness of the spirit.

• Aor many truths?

We sometimes hear the complaint that many 'yoga people' seem to think they have a monopoly on the truth. It would be healthy for them to reflect from time to time on the fact that this truth only <sup>our</sup> is the truth, but that there are also a whole lot of other truths.

It can indeed be very irritating to hear someone speak about the truth, for we have learned that humility entails putting our own point of view into perspective. Modesty requires that we say from time to time: 'But it is quite possible that I am mistaken'. And it can be disappointing at first glance to see that people of whom

we expect a certain spiritual level, presumably failing to display this modesty.

Modesty is appropriate where relative matters are concerned, such as personality, thinking and feeling, our capacity for expression, and the like. But one need never be humble where truth itself is concerned. After all, we speak and write about that which is true for every human being, everywhere and at every moment. That is the requirement the Upanishads impose on something if it is to be true. The reader who voices this complaint speaks and reasons from the perspective of personality. For him or her, truth is an idea or a structure, and he or she has been able to observe that there are many such ideas and structures. Protestants and Catholics, Communists and Democrats, all have their own truth. The difference, however, between those truths and the Vedic truth is that the former are merely ideas and structures, whereas the Vedic truth is not. The latter is *\*that\** imperishable consciousness in which all those ideas and structures manifest themselves, including

that highly individual idea of personality.

No one, that is to say no personality in the world, not even that of the enlightened, can have a monopoly on the truth, for the ephemeral structure of thought and feeling that we call 'personality' can never encompass the unlimited consciousness. Only as long as one superficially

If one looks at it with skepticism and mistakes Vedanta for a concept or a state of mind, one may confuse it with a structure and speak of a truth among many others. However, whoever penetrates to the insight that from this one conscious being all feelings and ideas arise like waves in a sea, will no longer make this mistake. It is as if, speaking of the waves in the same sea, one believes that they all consist of different kinds of water and as if every wave has its own kind of water. So as not to disappoint Christian readers, we can note that for practically all Christians, 'God' is no more than an idea, a picture, however many of the best feelings may accompany it. But does a Christian, or Muslim, Hindu, Jew, or Buddhist, want to know of his particular God, or

If one does indeed move from one's personal conception of God to God-as-he-essentially-is, then he must begin by realizing that God corresponds to no conception whatsoever. That is to say, that he is unknowable to the faculty of imagination, to thought. The approximately six billion private conceptions of God that we may suppose on this earth are, without exception: God as he essentially is plus the image that limited man projects onto him. If one therefore wishes to come to know God as he essentially is, then one must undo that conception. Thinking and feeling cannot do this.

If what John says is true, namely that we will one day see God as He essentially is, this means that we will see the eternal and the infinite as they essentially are. How can we see the infinite? We can only do so if we ourselves are infinite. And given that two infinities cannot exist side by side, this means that, at the moment we see God as He truly is, we have become one with God.(1 man.3:2).

How is this possible? By freeing ourselves in an analogous way from the limitations of images, of thoughts and feelings. Thoughts and feelings together make up what we call 'the personality', but a personality can never liberate oneself. We can only continuously do so through ourselves to observe, learning to see ever better that the personality has no independent reality whatsoever and that it is nothing more than a picture.

Gradually, we are then freed from the illusion that we are 'someone'. When, in this way and with the help of someone who has already realized this himself, the last identification with the images disappears, enlightenment breaks through. Then we are one with the infinite; one with what the religious person calls 'God'. Only then are religious truth and Vedic truth one and the same.

But because of his conception of God, and everything that all kinds of churches there with much weight and threats about

to say, to let go, requires a great deal of courage. That is the unimaginable greatness of a man like Meester Eckhart, who on a given Sunday from the the pulpit dared to say: 'A fly in its essence is more than God in his creation'. And by 'essence', Eckhart certainly did not mean something that the fly had a monopoly on.

## I am the expert

A reader sent us a quote from Shri Ramana Maharshi in which he says: 'Knowing is not true knowing'. This aroused a sense of unease in him. In these pages, we have repeatedly emphasized that each of us is always the 'knower'. Are we not, then, heading in precisely the wrong direction, considering the Maharishi's words above? The reader can rest assured. We are

never disagree with the Maharishi on a single point, and where there appear to be differences, they are apparent differences. They are rarely real and never substantial.

May we translate Bhagawan's sentence into prosaic Dutch?

Then it says: 'What one usually calls knowing is not true knowing'. For what do we usually call knowing? A memory. When we say that we know someone, it means that at this moment we have a picture in

our mind see that 'sirXcalled 'whom I saw at such-and-such a time'. When the student says that he knows his lesson, it means that he remembers what is on certain pages of his textbook. When we say that Mrs.Ypossesses great self-knowledge, by which we mean: the image that Mrs.Ywhat she has of herself corresponds to the image we have of her, including her limitations. 'Do you know Paris?' means that when I mention the word 'Paris,' pictures appear in your head of streets and squares and of the seat on the Champs-Élysées where you saw the whole world pass by.

This knowing, based on memory, is not true knowing. True knowing does not change; the images in the mind change every moment. And what is the knowing that does not change? The indescribable, but ever-present 'knowing' in which the images of memory manifest themselves.

The path from 'knowing memory', knowing the human tale, to 'true' knowledge, proceeds via the realization of the knower that I always am whenever a thought arises. In the Atma Nirvriti, Shri Krishna Menon puts the words into the mouth of the true 'I': 'You can find me most easily when you look behind you (when you realize that you are the knower of thinking and feeling). Having arrived at that pointshallI take you to the center of your true being'. And that 'true'

'Essence' is another word for 'true knowing' in the quote from the Maharishi. For at the deepest level are 'knowand 'are' two words for the same, unchanging experience.

In this context, the statement of Lao Tzu also becomes clear: 'He who knows, speaks not. He who speaks, knows not.' For 'he who knows' calculates: knowing itself, the enlightened one, he who is no longer a 'he,' no longer a personality, who has become one with the absolute (better: has realized his unity). And the absolute speaks not, for it is elevated above time, and thus also above activity. 'He who speaks' is the personality, and the personality can never, as such, understand or contain the absolute.

That is why theshastra's\*to say: 'When the enlightened one speaks, he does not speak; when he thinks, he does not think; and when he acts, he does not act.' For the enlightened one is no longer identified with 'he who speaks,' with the personality he once thought he was.

GrowstheExpert not keeping up with our development?

When such an assumption arises within us, we project properties of the mental onto the knower. When there is growth and I

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\*Skt., literally: construction books

If I observe that growth, then I am the expert on that growth.

'Spiritual growth' does not mean knowing more and more. Knowing more and more only keeps the ostracism multiplication of the number of objects of our knowledge. In the Vedantic sense, 'spiritual growth' means becoming increasingly aware of the fact that one is not the body, sensory functions, thinking, knowing, and feeling, but the knower thereof.

### The Society

A problem presented to us by a friend in recent months is the maintenance of this society, which he regards as an insane circus. By continuing to work in this society, one shares responsibility for its continued existence. Is that compatible with the path of Vedanta?

One of the great Indian teachers once said: 'If you truly seriously seek self-realization, the world will take care of itself'.

This is one of those statements that stirs up mountains of misunderstanding in the Western world regarding India and Hinduism. Almost inevitably, a sentence like this is interpreted as meaning that one should simply sit with one's arms crossed. has to sit down and then the roasted chickens will fly into our mouths. The difficulty with

Understanding this statement lies in the fact that one interprets the word 'world' as 'what I perceive outside my body'. But the enlightened one means something quite different by these words. When he uses the word 'world' in such a context, it means: everything that is objective, including the body and sensory perception.

genes, thoughts, and feelings. And as we know, the world as we know it is an exclusively mental world. That statement therefore amounts to the assurance that thinking will make no mistakes when one seriously continues to seek self-realization. The world, and also the reader's societal circus, changes depending on how our own standpoint changes. An obvious possibility is that what first seems like an insane circus later turns out to have been a training ground, while yet later it may turn out to be a 'Dance of Shiva'.

of which joy and pain are both a part. In any case, in the end, the world turns out to be nothing other than 'myself'.

Another aspect of the case is the separation that emerges here between the I who is on is searched for, and the world that just remains insane. This duality is only possible as long as one considers oneself a more or less permanent personality. If one attunes oneself to another perspective so that one sees that from that virtually endless series of images in the mind an arbitrary

## CHAPTER 9

a number has been selected and promoted to 'I' and the rest relegated to 'world', then it resolves

The problem also arises. Looking closely teaches us that the series of images as a whole consists of spirit, and that that essence, that spirit, in which they come to be perceived and from which all pictures emerge, ideas exist. But the true 'I' is something very different from a number of pictures.

The moment one sees that, a tremendous integration suddenly takes place. The old self, the personality, and the world turn out to form a single film together, but 'I' am not that film, 'I' am the light in the images. At that discovery, in which the 'self' is discovered, the problem is immediately solved.

Afterwards, it turns out that no one sits with their arms crossed, but that the body does what it must do, that thoughts appear as they must appear, and that feelings are precisely in accordance with what is true.

and love is. However that may appear in the eyes of others.

**B** Almost everyone who signs up for one reason or another to delve into yoga believes that they must primarily perform meditation exercises. The idea behind this is that yoga is 'concentrated meditation' and that one becomes enlightened through meditation.

The latter, however, is based on a misunderstanding. Meditation can be useful as training of the mind. It was initially intended as a discipline for people who had grown up in jungle villages who could not read or write and had not undergone mental training such as is provided in schools today. But for us Westerners, the intellectual requirements have been amply met. For us, meditation will perhaps be of more use as a means to

on the one hand to learn to shut out city noise, and on the other hand as an exercise to gradually, simultaneously be both concentrated and relaxed.

..

But the meditation of the yogi does not in itself lead to liberation or enlightenment.

The meditation of the yogi leads to samadhi, and samadhi is a temporary state. When it is over, one finds oneself back in the same chaos and the same ignorance as before. Samadhi solves nothing; does not show me what I am. On the contrary: samadhi leads me to think that I, as a personality, am the absolute: 'I had reached a state of deep peace and great happiness'. But this experience does not explain to me that this happiness was possible precisely because that 'I', the personality, had disappeared.

Ashtavakta even goes so far as to say to his disciple Janaka: 'In fact, you are only truly bound by chains because you practice samadhi!'

Liberation, or enlightenment, consists of the deep realization of the fact that the whole world, with an understanding of the things I thought were 'I' myself (the personality), consists of nothing other than one and the same indivisible absolute Consciousness exists: the only thing that can never be separated from me and therefore the only thing that has a right to the name 'I'.

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"Ashtavakra Samhita, 1 verse 15

And although there are as many roads leading there as there are people, all those roads ultimately lead via this one and final milestone: the realization of the fact that I am the knower, the observer, and not a body, not a series of sensory perceptions, not thinking and not feeling.

The absolute cannot be expressed in terms of the relative. I can never measure infinity in meters or kilometers, any more than I can measure eternity in hours or years. Therefore, concentration on any thought or feeling whatsoever can never lead me to liberation, for liberation transcends, by definition, every thought and every feeling.

Moreover, the more progress I make with concentration meditation, the greater the danger that I fall into the trap of starting to believe that I—that is to say, the personality—am achieving something. How can an image—a concept—ever achieve anything? In this way, it can at most be replaced by another concept or, when feelings are concerned, one feeling can at most be followed by another. But I remain just as ignorant as before.

In every circle around a teacher, one finds people who settle in comfortably and breathe in the pure and free atmosphere with full breaths, and tell anyone who will listen how wonderful

that it is there, and say: 'Come along too!' Often these are the propagandists who don't get any further themselves because they enjoy it, as a personality, as ego. They believe they will find liberation as ego and do not realize that liberation actually entails severing ties with the ego.

Therefore, it is extremely important—and this cannot be emphasized enough—to gain a very deep, living insight into the structure of personality as such. That is why it is of the utmost importance to learn to see ever more clearly that personality is nothing more than a number of images and feelings compressed into a large mental meatball, but which in fact possess no reality whatsoever. Because two thoughts and/or feelings can never be perceived simultaneously, one thought can never change the other, and with this, a tremendous piece of psychotherapy theory crumbles in one fell swoop. Thinking can never change thinking. And when someone changes during psychotherapeutic treatment, it is primarily because they have trust in their conversation partner and can relax to the point where they are capable of objectifying their problems and problematic situations.

While doing this, he unknowingly adopts the standpoint of the 'expert', and thereby a degree of identification with the problematic mental plane can disappear.

The same can, in exceptional and favorable cases, also happen through meditation, but it remains a stroke of luck and a rare exception. The rule is that the meditating person focuses their concentration on an object and feels more attracted to that object as the meditation brings about more pleasant feelings.

The mental resembles a river of thoughts: it flows and flows and flows.

Thoughts have only a life of a few moments, and the fact that we pretend if a more or less permanent personality were to exist, that changes nothing. Only 'I', that is to say ego, the conscious, the essence, was there yesterday too, not the thought 'I' that manifests itself today. But by linking that thought, which lives for a few moments today, to the intuitive knowing that if I am permanent, we give the impression of being twenty, forty, or sixty years old.

Meanwhile, the river flows on: ever new thoughts and feelings continue to manifest themselves in a seemingly endless line. I know this for sure. How? Because I myself stand outside those thoughts and feelings.

Anyone who, like me, has ever sat in a rowboat in the middle of the night by moonlight in a snowstorm, in the middle of a wide river, knows that he then has not a single point of reference.

has. The boat turns around every now and then  
ash. The banks are not visible, and a stick also floating in  
the water remains at the same distance. The boat moves  
as fast as the water, and one is fixated on the few square  
meters that can be distinguished outside the boat. Only  
when it stops snowing and one has landmarks outside  
the river again does one know which direction to head.

It is exactly the same with the river of thought. If I  
myself were an idea, I would drift along like a cork on the  
water. But the facts show the opposite. I am not sitting on  
the river, but standing on the distant bank, and I see the  
waves of thought and feeling drifting past me.

Meditation, at least in the usual sense of the word,  
entails focusing on one of those waves. Liberation can be  
brought about exclusively through the realization that I  
stand outside the flow, whether I want to or not, and that  
I am always the knower, the observer, of it.

Just as the absolute cannot be expressed in terms of  
the relative, neither can the reverse. Words like 'eternity',  
'infinity', 'Brahman', and so on, are merely signposts. But  
just as such words cannot contain reality, reality cannot  
contain the words! When the New Testament says that  
God does not know evil, that does not mean that God

has such a docile, perfect character, but that the infinite  
cannot cease to be infinite to come and take a look at  
what is actually taking place on the level of 'things'. In the  
often-quoted words of the Buddha: 'There is no  
relationship between nirvana (the absolute) and samsara (the  
illusion, the world of time, space, and causality). Or, in the  
words of Shri Krishna Menon: 'What is not the Absolute  
Conscious is thought-form. The Absolute Essence can  
never witness that.' Therefore, it is a completely hopeless  
endeavor to attempt to find happiness, liberation,  
through any change to the personality whatsoever, or by  
concentrating on any thought or feeling whatsoever.  
Liberation calculates exclusively non-identification with  
body, mind, and feeling. This does not mean that  
meditation and the psychiatrist are unconditionally  
rejected, but rather that the idea that ultimate salvation is  
to be expected from them is radically rejected.

Meditation and concentration can have a purifying  
and clarifying effect, as long as the sense exists that one  
is a personality. The psychiatrist can explain to me where  
I am fooling myself, or how someone else does so. One  
can go to him with psychological problems just as one  
goes to the general practitioner or another specialist for a  
physical ailment.

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· Atma Darshn1, chapter19<sup>fresh5</sup>

However, the one who wants to 'do' something for his spiritual development and therefore wanted to practice concentration does not have to come empty-handed. *jnanir*oad to go, for there are indeed exercises he can do. However: these exercises go in the exact opposite direction to what is attempted in conventional meditation. In that meditation, one begins with the tacit acceptance of the usual notion that one is a person, and that that person is now going to concentrate on something. Someone who follows the path of *jnana yoga* does exactly the opposite. He tries everything to break free from even the last trace of personality and ego. Not, especially not, by trying to replace bad thoughts and feelings with good thoughts and feelings. But rather by seeing that the personality is part of the 'river', while 'I myself stand outside the stream'.

He who sets out on his way with complete devotion to the wind can be certain of meeting his guru at the right moment. The latter will then presumably map out in detail a specific path that is most suitable for him. But before that happens, it can be useful to withdraw into silence for fifteen minutes every day, for example, and, by way of *sadhan*ato delve into, and open oneself up to, 'thoughts'. 'Thoughts' such as those here

are printed. The word 'thoughts' is in quotation marks here because it is not thoughts

are in the usual sense of the word. For there, the emphasis is placed on the form, on the idea as such; here, on the other hand, on that one Conscious in which name and form manifest themselves. The emphasis lies on the usual thought on the known. Here, on the contrary, on the Knower, the Observer whom I always am when name or form manifests itself.

I am not one or a number of objects that appear from time to time in consciousness. I am therefore not a body, not the functioning of the senses, not one or a number of thoughts, and not one or a number of feelings.

The personality is nothing more than a Fanta. *sie*, an idea, a general thought, arising because permanence and simultaneity were projected onto all kinds of characteristics that reveal themselves for only a few moments at a time. The ego is the identification with such an image, but in reality there is nothing that corresponds to that idea of 'myself'.

The world is nothing other than a series of sensory perceptions. A sensory perception is a thought, and a thought is nothing other than the conscious that 'I am'. The world is therefore a series of pictures in the mind. It is then clear that it is not I who live in the world, but that the world manifests itself, picture by picture, in 'I', the conscious.

Of all that is objective, the known, thus the world, the thoughts, the feelings, the person-

In reality, I am always and completely effortlessly the Knower, the Observer. Even if I wished to, I could not cease for a single moment to be the Knower whenever a thought or feeling presents itself.

The world is nothing but the conscious. I, the personality, am nothing other than that conscious. The world consists of that conscious, including the ego, just as a vase consists of clay. The world and the personality together form a long series of thoughts, forms, names, and feelings that are perceived in the conscious, and of which the conscious is always, without the slightest effort, the Knower, the Observer. The 'I', the conscious, the being, the deep peace, is always present in the 'eternal now' as a foundation in the waking and in the dream state, like water in a wave. When these two states, waking and dreaming, leave me, nothing remains but the deep peace, the being, the conscious. This is what is present as a positive experience in deep sleep and also, one hundred and three times a day, between any two thoughts and/or feelings.

Knowledge and spiritual growth do not consist of attempting to improve the personality, but of the increasingly sharp recognition of the fact that I am not a personality, indifferent whether this is a pleasant or an unacceptable personality. I can never be things that are mine

can be removed. Since experience clearly demonstrates that neither the world, nor the body, nor thoughts and feelings manifest themselves in deep, dreamless sleep, I am neither my body, nor my thoughts or feelings, but this one, unique 'being', in which they appear from time to time and of which they consist, namely:

the conscious, the 'knowingness'.

Psychological difficulties, such as the fear of not making progress or the fear of being rejected and the like, can be resolved by seeking deep within oneself the answer to the question: 'Who is afraid that...' and so on. One then discovers that the personality is nothing other than an image with which one had identified. At the moment of this deep recognition, this identification ceases, whereby the fear in question loses its meaning and eventually disappears. A **image**, an idea, makes no progress, is neither reprehensible nor desirable. Eventually one discovers that the image with which one identified oneself has no owner whatsoever, and that one therefore cannot truly speak meaningfully of **mine** personality. From that moment, the center of gravity of our existence shifts, and we become aware of what we have always been: that eternal, unlimited being in which personality and the world manifest themselves as waves on the water.

## Predestination

Predestination, or foreordination, is a problem that one of our readers thought he had resolved thanks to his new Vedantic understanding... and now he encounters this text in the Upanishads: 'Only he whom Atma chooses realizes the Absolute'. It is a text that drives numerous 'scribes'—and this title is by no means used only in the usual, unsympathetic sense of the word—to flee. They do not know what to make of it, for this text contradicts everything that the rest of the shastrasto say. Atma or Brahman, the absolute, is for it neither active nor passive. These two properties are qualities that apply exclusively in human thought, whereas the essence is that in which a thought manifests itself, so in this case: that in which 'active' and 'passive' can manifest themselves. And this statement from the Upanishad attributes activity to the essence. It seems absurd, but it is there nonetheless.

When explaining a problematic text, one may be faced with the choice that either the thought expressed therein is indeed absurd, or that the text perhaps does not mean what one would read into it at first glance.

If we believe that the text Atma wants to propose len as an active principle that selects some people to 'be saved', then the content is

indeed contrary to what the entire literature on this subject within the Hindu tradition attempts to explain to us. And this is unacceptable. Just as it would be unacceptable if one were to interpret a legal article in such a way that it would be contrary to the entire rest of the legislation, including even the constitution. Such a

Such an interpretation cannot stand before any court of appeal.

In my opinion, the explanation can then be formulated in only one way: it is a poetic analogy by the writer. Specifically, an analogy with expressions in which we project activity onto things that are not active. Every language known to us has such examples: 'That region attracts me tremendously,' we say, speaking of the Dordogne. 'That painting enraptures me.' 'That story moves me,' and so on. But the flower, the

The house and the region that attract us so strongly do nothing. Absolutely nothing. The painting that fills us with delight is a dull picture to someone else. What does happen is that our feelings

to present oneself as active: there the emotion and the attraction to manifest themselves,

but in our usage we attribute the activity to the motionless romantic house Al

Again: the house is not romantic in itself, but we detect a romantic feeling upon seeing what to someone else might be an old dump!

It is inevitable that the writer of this \*U Panishad\* felt the attraction of peace itself. But insofar as there was any active attraction, that activity lay within the writer's feeling. No one chooses Atma, but someone has chosen Atma as the one and only goal of his life, as the center upon which he attempts to direct all his feelings. And because he knows that personality, the series of images, can never have any merit, he humbly and gratefully projects this activity onto the absolute, perhaps even onto the guru who is the absolute itself, and says in a style comparable to that of the psalms: 'I thank You that You have chosen me.' Exactly as one thinks and feels towards one's guru: 'I thank You that You were willing to accept me as a disciple. What would I have been without You?'

But in fact, the guru does not choose disciples. From his own standpoint, he is not even a guru. It is the earnestness of the disciple that makes the absolute into a guru, and that is strictly necessary if the personality is to be dissolved. One cannot surrender to an abstraction, and that is what the absolute initially appears to be. Only when one has rediscovered oneself in the depths of experience, through the apparent personality of the guru, does one no longer see the teacher-master as a human being, but as the absolute.

lute, as the Primordial Experience Itself. Then pupil and teacher have become one, but then there is no one left to proclaim that from the rooftops. Until that moment, one needs the apparent personality of the guru: that is the only means to lift us from the level of the personal to the unity that is 'being' itself.

Therefore, one must never meditate on oneness with one's guru. By doing so, one throws the torch, as it were, into the fire with which it was stoked before one can place it outside that torch. One must first gather all the remaining pieces of wood to let them burn away in the flames. The love of the guru is, in fact, the love for love itself, which, incidentally, applies to every love relationship. But as long as one still detects a trace of personality, one needs the apparent human guru to erase those traces.

## Morality

Morality is a matter that occupies many of us from time to time. Here, too, we have an issue that makes many a scholar in the Western sphere feel somewhat uncomfortable. As soon as issues like morality are broached, many people's hair stands on end and their hearts begin to beat a little faster. Very many of

We identify our morality with the best in us. The idea that morality in the usual sense is actually a phenomenon of degeneration does not occur to us. Many of us would even be quite shocked by such a statement and have visions of certain Nazis who claimed the same thing, but our way of thinking has very little in common with that...

When our eldest son started kindergarten about twelve years ago, a teacher taught him the following morality: 'Think of others first, then yourself.' And this little sentence contains a tremendous part of what most of us consider morality. The other is fellow man (later the term 'fellow humanity' also emerged). The Other with a capital letter can also mean God, and then the religious person can say: 'Think of God first, then yourself.' And as is the case with all these pitfalls: it sounds very acceptable.

The devil is in the details. What is 'yourself'? By now, we have read enough about this to know immediately that I myself am the other. Everything that seemingly separates me from the other, everything that distinguishes us, is not essential. Rather than reasoning extensively about this, we quote the words of the great Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu, who observes that when love (that is to say, the experience of unity) flees out the window, it

walk straight through the front door. Walk in, perhaps even. Why is this so? When we love someone, that is to say when personalities dissolve and the experience we call 'love' remains, it never occurs to us for a moment to give the other only what he or she is entitled to. On the contrary, one tries to give \*everything\*, for giving is the nature of love. And what the word 'everything' means depends on the relationship. In any case, it is everything on the wavelength of the relationship, which will be different between parents and children, spouses among themselves, friends, and certainly in the relationship of student and guru, which is only seemingly a relationship. But for those who are incapable of loving and who still wish to 'live as well as possible', the right

feel showing up as compensation for the vanished or not allowed love. The Dutch people can be characterized as a people with a deeply felt right-wing instinct, but let us not imagine that we have reached a superlative with that. The 'underdeveloped' Moroccan with whom, during a serious conversation, we shed tears of emotion

Seeing cheeks roll is perhaps more balanced than the Dutchman with his sense of justice, or what is left of it these days.

It is love that leads to true knowledge and to the deep self-inquiry of which Shankara speaks. Every attempt to establish a morality-

A gene that must be valid for everyone and everywhere is doomed to fail from the start.

The only general principle we can accept is that that morality which brings me closer to myself, and thereby to my neighbor, is the right one for me at this moment.

Or, To use the words cited before: 'Moral is that which breaks down the ego; immoral is that which strengthens or maintains it'.

### Yoga, psychology and psychotherapy

Someone in our circle once remarked that, even though we do not view psychotherapy as a savior, we still pay quite a lot of attention to it. How can this be reconciled?

Perhaps we may put it this way: the Vedanta Science that separates us from personality, while psychology investigates how personality is structured. Psychotherapy is, to a significant extent, the application of the findings of psychology.

We are firmly convinced that anyone who has truly seen, 'beheld', that personality as such is an illusion and nothing more than an image, will never again have insurmountable psychological problems. For the illusion is primarily maintained by fear,

And whoever has seen deeper than the personality has dug deeper than fear and can never again be tormented by it for long.

But for those who have not yet clearly seen what this new perspective looks like for them, psychotherapy or psychology can help discover where we seem to be nailed to our personality.

Even there, psychotherapy is by no means a panacea, for just as it makes no real sense to read 'Vedanta booklets' because one finds them interesting, it makes no sense either to consult a good psychiatrist when one does not really want to untangle the knot and descend into himself to see why, at certain points, one is vulnerable, and why people have resistance to certain things. In short: why people mistake cats for tigers. Anyone who clings to the conviction that all tigers are real tigers will not get out of it, and even small concessions will not help.

Therefore, we do not promote psychology or psychotherapy, nor jnana yoga, bhakti yoga, and the like. The only thing we can do is make as much bona fide material available as possible. The success of this depends entirely, and that does not mean for 99.9% but for 100%, away from the one who seeks the solution. For the one who is not serious, propa-

Ganda makes no sense. And the one who is serious will make it, one way or another.

Our articles on psychotherapy\* should therefore be regarded merely as making material available that, exclusively on a certain level, can help a few people to see through certain tricks of the personality. At that level, after all, the person concerned still has the feeling that that personality has a certain reality.

One argument for seeing a doctor is that a festering finger hurts, and that pain demands attention we would rather devote to better things. Exactly the same applies to anxieties, defense mechanisms, and the like, and to visiting an expert in that field.

But a so-called 'healthy personality' is just like an 'unstable personality': a chain to which one is bound. Only the latter hurts more acutely.

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In the Yoga Chronicle 1970 and 1971.

## CHAPTER 10

**V**eel What we have said and written so far can be summarized in one conclusion: we must arrive at the profound recognition of the total bankruptcy of the personality.

As long as we think we understand something and as long as we think we can achieve something, we are identified with an imaginary thinker; with an imaginary active person. In short: then we identify with our body, thinking, and feeling. As long as we think we are doing reasonably well, or that we are doing poorly, or very poorly.

or have done, and as long as we cling to feelings of guilt or to know-it-all attitudes or to whatever characteristics, we remain under-negotiating. And as long as we negotiate, there is no real and no substantial outcome. Oe eer-

of the quoted statement by Socrates: 'Wise is the man who knows that he knows nothing: says the same thing in ten words. Whoever thinks he knows something is a 'someonewho knows', and thereby ipso facto distinguished from 'knowledge' itself.

Time and again they speak shastras by: 'You are not a doer, you are not an enjoyer', you are not active and an acting being (not a thinker) and you are not someone who undergoes feelings or processes feelings produces, but: 'You are the one knower of all', you are the one knower of all things.

Every chela\* He must therefore constantly keep in mind that it is certainly not about doing things better from now on. For example, to be more active or to be a bit kinder to those around him, and so on. All these things can be fruits that come of their own accord when one suddenly, and in the deepest depths, understands that there is nothing, absolutely nothing, to defend.

The personality can in no way approach, contain, understand, express, or anything else the absolute. For a series of pictures and feelings, each with a life of a few seconds, has nothing in common with the ever-present.

The only way to achieve liberation is by realizing that one is not the pictures, and that exchanging ugly pictures for beautiful pictures also leads to nothing.

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\* student

Therefore Ashtavakra says: 'You are the one knower of all things'. Therefore Jean Klein says: 'Observer immerse yourself in all intimacy and without a trace of judgment', for, at the moment that If, when the painter takes 'three steps back', one has shifted one's center of gravity to the connoisseur and one stands outside the level of the observed.

The leather path has its pitfalls and traps. The path of the vichara marga\* It entails the danger that one begins to claim the acquired insight for one's own personality, and therefore we must constantly correct this and, where possible, prevent it. Whoever suddenly understands what it means when one says: 'I am the Knower', must subsequently guard against the danger of turning the Knower into a memory again, and of settling for an insight once acquired that has since crystallized into a finding that now lies in the drawer among the other reports on all kinds of discoveries.

This danger can be circumvented by, for example, following Socrates and realizing, to the very depths of the feeling: 'I know nothing, absolutely nothing. I do nothing, absolutely nothing, and I have never known or done anything, nor will I ever know or do anything'. But this past tense and this future are dangerous again, for the experience

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The direct path, or: the path of self-inquiry.

is always now and non-objectifiable: I know nothing... I do nothing...

This insight, this acknowledgment, by no means leads to lounging in a chair, for 'doing nothing' is the opposite of being lazy. The latter is being identified with the body that has no life of its own. But 'doing nothing' and 'knowing nothing' is the deep recognition of the fact that knowing itself and life itself do not lie in thinking and feeling, but there where thinking and feeling cease. In thinking and feeling we see its reflection, just as reflected light on waves sets just like the sun. It is like iron filings that start to move as soon as a magnet comes near.

The deep recognition of: 'I know nothing, I do nothing, I can do nothing' dissolves the identification with body, senses, thinking, and feeling, and leads us to the source of all knowledge and of all life.

Having arrived there, the miracle can take place that it is suddenly no longer 'I' that thinks, feels, or acts, but that things, as it were, create themselves. Thoughts arise of their own accord, and where they come from, no one knows. That, too, is perfectly unimportant. Actions take place of their own accord and in harmony with harmony itself, which 'I am'. One need only be what one is, and how simple this is once one has seen it. Nothing requires less effort; one is merely what one is.

Whoever has seen it once can tear up all holy books. They have served only to guide our attention in the right direction, to make clear to us where happiness is not to be found, and to convince us of the necessity to seek a teacher who can dissolve our deepest sense of self into being itself. In the presence of a guru, one cannot deceive oneself. One cannot cheat, cannot negotiate. Matters are too clear, and it is all so obvious that there is no escaping it.

Shankara says somewhere: 'It is not difficult to find the truth, but it is utterly impossible to please everyone.' In their direct meaning, these words present no difficulties. But one could interpret them in another way: in the presence of the guru, one realizes the truth, one recognizes 'life itself.' But afterwards, one must be careful not to start negotiating again to satisfy all kinds of personalities with whom we identify. As a disciple, one has grasped it, but as a father or mother, as a craftsman, as an art connoisseur, as a motorist, and whatever else, one still wants to know better and still wants to negotiate. And those are, in a deeper sense, 'the others,' or Shankara's 'everyone.'

Therefore, it is necessary to 'observe in all intimacy' the aspects of our imaginary personality time and again. all aspects. Each of those aspects is, as it were, a single personality to which we are tied by a string. These are the 'knots of the heart,' and gradually we must cut all those strings.

When all those knots, after we have observed them all, have been cut, without judgment and in all intimacy, and after we have let go of all ideas, including those about the self, only then do we know nothing, do nothing, can do nothing.

Then the great and final revolution can take place without us doing anything further. Just as the sun continues to shine as soon as the clouds have been blown away.

Guarantees

One of us complained that all his certainties had been taken away by reading articles about Vedanta and attending a few meetings devoted to the same philosophical approach.

When something is a certainty, it can never be taken away from us. And so if we lose something, it was a false certainty; a belief that was not sufficiently well-founded to stand up against convincing arguments. And because, will

losing one's chains, everything superfluous and untrue must disappear; thus, with the losing of viewpoints that proved to be illusions, a turn for the better has occurred.

Why does someone abandon an old position? Because he sees that it is unsustainable, or because he exchanges one faith for another. In the latter case, there is nothing to complain about, and one shall then presumably have no sense of having lost anything. But in the first case?

We can clearly see that someone can only understand that his old position is untenable when he, all is it only for a few moments, that he has looked from a different perspective. Only when he has understood something of the seemingly new will he realize the untenability of the old. And how did he manage to look with 'new eyes'? That is only possible when he went along with his teacher's arguments and 'looked along' step by step from an ever-higher level. The old level proves untenable, at least on a spiritual path, only when we look from the next level. And when the reader says that he has lost all his certainties, this means that he has gone beyond thinking and feeling, beyond the personality.

At that moment, he would not have complained. On the contrary, only when a new

If the viewpoint is richer than the old one, one is willing to give up the old one; otherwise, not. But later, returning to the mental level, he is likely shocked. That may be annoying, but when one holds firmly to the new vision, one must no longer allow oneself to be fooled by the automatisms of the old way of thinking. Who, after all, has lost something? The personality has the idea of having lost something. But that is only halfway there. We must get the 'feeling' that we have lost our personality.

The word 'feeling' is in quotation marks in the sentence above because, without personality, there is no one left to feel that loss. It is actually the opposite: without personality, only freedom remains, but then the actual freedom, which can never again be constrained by anything whatsoever. The reader had a foretaste of this the moment he saw his old views melt away. And that was by no means a tragic moment; far from it!

The feeling that something has now unfortunately been lost is nothing more than a trick of the personality, for as long as we complain about something, it can maintain itself without much difficulty.

But in the meantime, the proof has been provided, at least if the complaint regarding all certainties is true,

that the apparent owner of certainty is dying. If the right perspective is continually kept in mind, he will certainly not live much longer. With which everything that can be achieved has been achieved.

## CHAPTER 11

**D** Time and memory are two of the most difficult elements to understand in the intellectual approach to the self. We have to these questions, which actually boil down to just one

The question has already been devoted to several pages, but it is useful to return to it and take another look now that the illusion has largely fallen away on other points in the meantime.

To understand what time, a little way of thinking, is, we must first realize very clearly that we never live other than in the now. Before an identification is established with body, thought, or feeling, there is a moment where there is only 'I am'. Only when 'I am' can I take a step

putting it further outwards and thinking 'I am a body', 'I am a thinker', and so on. In other words: I

sit, I walk, I stand, I read, I feel good. These last expressions do not say in so many words: 'I am, plus such-and-such identification', but that meaning is indeed embedded within them. 'I sit' means: 'I am' plus identification with a sitting body. 'I think' means: 'I am' plus identification with the image 'thinker'.

Whatever happens, I am always 'I am', and a feeling or a thought, an identification, can be attached to this 'I am'. Then I become, at least seemingly, a body, a thinker, a feeling person, and so on. It is very important to visualize this and to learn to see this 'I am' separately. For example in: '(I am) a reader'.

The 'I am' experience is the only lasting element in our lives. This 'I am' was there when we were still toddlers and will be there until the end of our lives. It is the one experience that all experiences have in common.

Our connection consists quite simply in the fact that we do not see this 'I am' in isolation from the rest of the sentence, for example in 'I sit', which we can pronounce as: 'I am sitting'. We reduce the ever-present 'I am' to a temporary entity by viewing it as part of the 'I sit', a thought that lasts only a few seconds. Thus, it seems as if this 'I am' is divided into all sorts of pieces: 'I sit, I think, I read... I am (sitting), I am (thinking), I am {reading}' and so on.

Whatever needs to happen, first this 'I am' is no dig, otherwise nothing can manifest, no thought, no feeling, nothing.

So: I am. And in this 'I am', a thought manifests itself, for example. At this moment, in our reasoning, it is still completely unimportant whether the image of an elephant man manifests itself in this 'I am', or an image of the past vacation. If we merely see that the image is, as it were, a distortion of the 'I am', in the same sense that a wave is, as it were, a distortion of the water. I am, always and at this moment, eternally present, and if there is a thought, it is nothing other than: 'I am' plus form. I am, if you will, plus some vibrations in the 'I am', which we call thoughts or feelings. Those vibrations, those images, consist of nothing other than 'I am'. The 'I am' is the raw material from which they are composed, just as wood is the raw material from which my table is composed, or humidity is the raw material from which a cloud is composed. This is easier to see with a very concrete thought, such as the elephant, than with more complicated matters, because there we immediately shift our center of gravity back onto the thought and start running along with it. We must try to avoid this. So we continue to look at the elephant for a moment and realize that it consists of nothing other than 'I am'.

The elephant is a thought. And now it is important to understand that nothing fundamentally changes when I replace this thought with another thought. Elephant means: 'I am, plus the form elephant'; cow means: 'I am, plus picture cow'; table means: 'I am, plus the image table'. The past holiday: 'I am plus a picture with a representation that I call 'past holiday'.

This leap is a very important leap, because when I manage to replace the elephant with the recent holiday, I can clearly see that the time that has suddenly crept in here is also part of the picture that is now manifesting itself in the 'I am'. To that picture of the campsite, the hotel, the lounge chair in the sun, or the children on the beach, there is a special scent that I call 'past'. A special dimension that I call 'gone', or 'past'. But that scent, that dimension that has now been added, is at this moment a manifestation in the 'I am'.

And my bondage consists in the fact that I do not realize precisely this, and that I allow myself to be tempted to think that this scent is not a  
The phenomenon is that it consists of the 'I am now', but that it comes from afar, from something we call 'the distant past'. As soon as we understand this, a heavy burden falls from our shoulders.

For the past is therefore merely a mannerism in the present. I am not bound to a darkness.

a past that I cannot change, but if I am bothered by something of that nature, when I feel bound, it is solely by a thought that manifests itself in the 'I am now'.

The other thinking trick, which we call 'memory', wants us to believe that there is a stream of thoughts in an endless succession. But when we have properly understood and processed the preceding, we can now see that we have never perceived a stream of thoughts, but only the thought of a stream! No continuity of thoughts, only the thought of continuity that manifests itself occasionally in the 'I am now'. The only continuity is that of the 'I am', and even that is an overstatement. For continuity is a thought,

'I am' is an experience. Experience stares outside thought, outside time and space. 'I am' is the knower, the observer of all these things, or better: of the one thought, the one perception that at this moment ifetail. 'I am' is the essence in these names and forms, or better: in the name of form that at this moment manifestail. For whoever understands this, a world dissolves into steam and a new world is born. A world that is not the result of millions of years of 'past', but a world that creates itself from moment to moment, that manifests itself from moment to moment, and that is nothing other than a

(De)formation, an extension of the 'I am'. A world that has no purpose whatsoever, unless to sing itself out, that is to say: the self, in every conceivable key; from what people call 'pain' up to and including what people call 'ecstatic joy'. A world consisting of the 'I am' which is the deepest, the most boundless peace and which reveals itself at the moment I have seen through the illusion of time and memory from all sides.

It is then that the guru suddenly stands before me as the hitherto unknown 'I'.\* It is then that the unity between pupil and teacher is realized. For seeing through the trick that we once *Maya* mentioned, already applies

our chains shattered into smithereens. And because the trick, once seen through, can never again be experienced as real—for there is, after all, no longer an ego to be taken for a ride—this realization is lasting. Forever one now knows what one has always been: freedom itself, love itself. At that moment, tears of emotion turn into tears of joy, and the universe manifests itself in the smile of the guru who 'is' what no eye has seen and what no ear has heard.

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\* For thinking<sub>and</sub>feel, therefore unknown to the personality - ego.

The void

Is emptiness really a terrifying thing for many people? Surely it is supposed to be delightful?

Of course, you are absolutely right when you believe that emptiness is in fact by no means a frightening thing. Yet many people are terribly afraid of it because it strikes them as the death of death. We can see that emptiness, and especially the fact that one ends up in the unknown, is a nightmare for quite a few people. Why do people take years and years to escape all kinds of difficulties and misery, and why do most not try at all? Because in all one's misery one at least still has something familiar in sight: one knows where one stands. But misery stems from selfishness, and if I lose my selfishness, what am I to do then? Then I must surely behave like a saint, and I am not; on the contrary! So people conjure up all kinds of delusions about it, just so they don't have to jump into the unknown!

In fact, when one does not run away from it, it turns out that the void is, as it were, the front door.  
of peace itself.

## Insight and practice

If love itself is the same, how often per day can a normal person working in society have such an experience of happiness?

As long as one is a normal working person, one cannot have an experience of happiness. Not because of the work, but because of being human. Happiness comes at the moment I cease to regard myself as a human being, as a personality, as something cut off from the whole.

When my center of gravity has shifted from body, senses, thinking, and feeling to the eternally present, I no longer consider myself an acting and thinking being, for then I am, knowing and conscious, that one essence in which the thought of body, thinking, work, society, and all else manifests itself.

I am then harmony itself. The distant world always appears at the level where I place my center of gravity, and thus the new world then appears at the level of harmony itself. I see the world as harmony, and I am first and foremost, even before the world reveals itself, harmony itself, the eternally present 'self'. In this, body, thought, world, and work manifest themselves. When I do not identify myself with those things, I am uninterruptedly the experience of happiness of which you speak.

Not all day long, for 'all day long' is merely an idea that makes itself perceived in the eternal present, but timeless. In short: eternally present. But as long as I identify myself with a piece, the eternal present becomes something unknown to me. As long as I do things all day long, I am time and again a piece, never freedom itself. As long as I do not identify with a piece, it turns out that the work does itself, just as Herrigel's arrows struck their target by themselves.\*

## The emptiness2

Is emptiness not itself also a thought?

Yes, in a certain sense. At first, one was bound because one identified with the images, with the ideas, that one perceived oneself to be. Now one has seen through and through, and as living experience, that one can never be a series of images, and as a result, the images have departed. Now the void arises. And in that void, I am no longer bound by the presence of the always seductive images, but by the absence of the images. We must therefore never think that we have arrived when we feel the void rising within us. The void still has an objective

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\* E. Herrigel: Zen and the art of archery, De Driehoek, Amsterdam

comb; a beginning and an end. And yet, a great step has been taken here. The void can be filled with something other than thoughts, with something other than the temporary and spatial, namely: with the realization of the self.

The bankruptcy

YOU speaks quite often of the bankruptcy of the personality. Could you give a summary of what you said about this?

I am of the opinion that, in psychological terms, no healing is possible and, in Vedantic terms, no self-realization is possible unless we have personally experienced the failure of the personality.

As long as we look at it from the outside, it seems like a Golgotha; a nadir of suffering, a tremendous breaking of the knees, an admission of wrongdoing, and so on. An extremely painful affair, therefore. In fact, it is such a joyful event that the realization of bankruptcy is often accompanied by, or followed by, an ecstatic joy and the feeling that tons have fallen from your shoulders for good. The bankruptcy of the personality is the seeing through of a fundamental illusion and thereby the discovery of the fundamental truth, and... the w-

Peace will set you free. If that applies anywhere, it is certainly here. Freedom, not for, but of the personality, is essential freedom, and true freedom is another term for happiness.

As long as we serve the personality, claim its rights, and attempt to satisfy it, we project a cage around ourselves and view our environment in terms of 'dangerous' and 'non-dangerous'—in short, from what Jean Klein calls: 'the position of choosing'.

Her bankruptcy entails:

1. Seeing through the trick of personality. We create a mental collage of all kinds of characteristics, of which we say: This Is Me (I am big, small, I see, hear, I am smart, stupid, honest, cowardly, have such-and-such backgrounds that have shaped me, the collage, into what I am now, and so on). We attribute simultaneity and permanence to these attributes, something they never possess. And according to the law that the world always appears at the level on which I place my center of gravity, we create an entire world that corresponds exactly to our collage. Thus, we can see, more or less, how our collage is constructed from our judgment of the world, of others, and of our surroundings. Someone who dislikes others dislikes their own collage.

2. In fact, the collage consists of thoughts and feelings arising from time to time that are nothing other than the essence of consciousness that I essentially am. Whoever sees through this understands that personality and the projected world accompanying it can harm or restrict him just as little as space is harmed or restricted by, for example, the presence or absence of clouds.

3. From this insight follows naturally the knowledge that the personality is not mine. Personality is. For this 'my' (ego) and the collage are two words for the same symptom of illness.

This is automatically followed by ceasing the 'gold-seeking' for the personality, for I now know that happiness is not to be found by cherishing the image of the gentleman or lady one thinks one is, or by being appreciated, accepted, and loved as a person, but that happiness appears when the person disappears.

It also suddenly dawns on you that the ego and circumstances are two words for the same phenomenon. For someone who has consciously 'become' harmony itself (one has never been anything else, but took no notice of it), there is no longer any gain to be had from the music that pleases the ego. He is harmony, even in dissonances.

4. Seeing through the trick is followed, once again almost automatically, by the void. When the trick has been seen through and the ego can no longer cherish the illusion of being a real, independent thing, then perhaps it comes and pays a visit now and then, but his death is now merely a matter of time. Keep watching, see through the trick three, four, five times, and the ego disappears like an unprofitable film is taken out of circulation because no more viewers come to the cinema. Because I—at most occasionally in the beginning and out of habit—do not continue to invest energy in the ego, that energy is released and I no longer need to defend myself, for example. An unimaginable amount of energy now becomes available and begins to sing out the harmony, even in dissonances. That means that I do not sing, but that the song sings itself. Or to use another term: from now on, 'calculation' is replaced by 'spontaneous

count .

Surely all this isn't a painful ordeal?

## CHAPTER 12

**T** During our journey through the realm of jnana yoga, we used two words to denote identification with the body, senses, thoughts, and feelings.

We talked about 'the personality', and by that we meant the picture we have created of 'ourselves', the collage of all kinds of characteristics (I am tall, fat, musical, intelligent, stupid, afraid, etc.) of which we had the conviction and the feeling: that is me, that is who I am

And we have spoken about the ego, by which we mean the reflex that has become completely automatic, whereby we immediately claim everything that happens for that collage. We see: a thought or a feeling manifests itself and we say:

I think, I feel.

Through repeated 'notification', through observation without a trace of judgment, let alone condemnation, so much of the collage has gradually vanished that we get the feeling that the personality has become almost or even completely transparent. One sometimes has the feeling: just a little longer, and there will be nothing but emptiness.

But the ego, the copyright firm claiming everything for itself, continues to work quietly, and for that reason it is strictly necessary to keep a close eye on it, time and again and until the very end.

In the beginning, the ego was something like a little claw that everything gripped whatever was nearby came. The sitting of the body became: 'I sit', the appearance of images and feelings became: 'I look', 'I think', 'I feel' And now that surrounding world just as the collage gradually begins to become transparent, one would think that this ego becomes transparent along with it.

That may well be the case, but then we must first have passed a very dangerous hurdle, for we have by now seen that the ego plays both sides. At the comb of the collage, it says: 'I think', 'I feel', but it also does not keep its mouth shut when, however absurd this may be, it talks about the stare of egolessness. Thus, we can hear someone say every morning: 'I slept wonderfully'. In this last example, the ego grasps at a 'situation', the deep, egoless one.

sleep, which could only exist by the grace of his absence!

We have seen exactly the same thing when it comes to happiness. When happiness wells up within us at a given moment, we are filled by an A state of deep peace that is only possible through the absence of personality, ego, or any other object whatsoever. And immediately afterwards we say: 'I was so happy'.

It is this danger that continues to lie in wait in all sorts of nooks and crannies, until the very end.

If we wish to investigate ourselves, it is best to begin by asking ourselves: 'What am I?' or 'Who am I?'. In doing so, we discover that, in order to achieve true self-knowledge to come, usego ('ego' is actually a precarious one term, because there is no owner of the ego, there is no ego behind the ego) must get rid of. We gradually move forward and one fine morning we discover that we have actually made quite a bit of progress and that we now understand quite a bit of it. But with that, we arrive at the threshold on which thousands have foundered. A threshold that is almost impossible to cross unless someone points out this mistake to us. For by 'understanding' we usually mean the art of being able to retell something or to be able to place in connection with other things. But this has nothing to do with essential understanding.

When the guru us via aprakriyatak us from what we formerly called the-world-outside-us to what constitutes our essential center, we follow the words, and having arrived at the central meaning of those words, the self, our center of gravity has shifted there. There are then no more words. There is no one speaking and no one listening. At that moment, which is in fact timeless, the senses no longer function, any more than thinking and feeling, but we have become our 'essential nature,' without attributes. There is there 'understanding itself' without anyone understanding it, for the personality cannot exist at that 'moment.'

Therefore, when we say or believe that we are beginning to understand quite a bit of it, this can mean only two things: either that we observe that many difficulties and many doubts have disappeared, or that it is becoming increasingly easier for us to dissolve the entire world, including personality and world, into understanding itself, into the 'I'.

But the ego, which is after all nothing more than a bad habit, has no use for new things and keeps rearing its head like a jack-in-the-box. Ridiculous as it may be, the ego demands the state of egolessness.par excellence stands up to himself and says, though of course never in such clearly ridiculous terms: 'I was egoless for a moment'.

If we now reread everything we have encountered along the way, we see that the ego claims 'the world' for itself on the one hand—that is, sensory perceptions, thoughts, and feelings—and the 'egoless' on the other.

The only difference is that sometimes it goes in the direction we call or used to call 'outward', and other times in the direction we consider or considered 'inward'. If we bear in mind that, upon close observation, nothing personal can be discovered on the apparent exterior either, it amounts to exactly the same thing. The images, whether landscapes, cityscapes, or the sight of a coveted object, are strictly impersonal. One need only look closely to see that the seemingly personal element within them is a feeling projected onto it. And that feeling is also an object!

In short: the automatism we call 'ego' is a magic show creating the impression that a 'little self' exists, limited by all sorts of things. In sitting or walking, in seeing or hearing, in thinking or feeling, that little self is not present. But immediately after an action, perception, thought, or feeling, the grasping hand appears and says: 'I swam, I saw, I thought'. That is all. The grasping hand itself is also nothing other than an object, and the moment at which one realizes this clearly and penetratingly

faces it, one deals the automatism the blow that marks the beginning of its end. And at a certain moment, we see the ego alongside the personality stands on the shelf like an old and discarded object. It then stands next to all kinds of others Antiquities, and nothing gives us the feeling anymore that we are restricted by those objects in any way, or that we have a substantial interest in possessing them. We therefore no longer need to cherish and defend the ego.

Just as we can see other thoughts drifting past like clouds, so too do we see ego and personality, as it were, in the distance as clouds drifting past.

But until the last trace of this automatism has disappeared, vigilance is required. If we do not penetrate deep within ourselves time and again, into complete emptiness, and thereby prevent the impression from arising that we have understood things at a level of thought, the ego will lead us by the nose and feed on the idea that I have now become 'a gentleman or lady who understands matters'!

When we find ourselves in those regions, there is also the danger that we will confuse 'the path' with the goal it leads us to. We then sometimes feel the urge to start explaining things to others. We goshastrasreread

to find new arguments again, in short:

We are turning it into an intellectual game of chess.

Needless to say, we get stuck then. Every mistake makes itself felt at some point.

The 'feeling': 'knowing for absolute certainty', which used to become 'visible' at the memory of the guru or when reading the words that took us 'inward', remains absent. At that moment, we stand

faced with the choice of either becoming know-it-all specialists in Eastern philosophy, or looking deeply and sharply to see where automatism has played a trick again. At a certain point, it is no longer about the matter at hand, yet better to understand, but the point is to now start living in that 'state of understanding' - l'état de grâce-without concerning oneself any further with thinking, feeling, and the rest.

One will immediately realize that this does not mean to 'let the world fall apart' from now on. Rather, in the sense that one no longer gives in to the antics of ignorance and that one no longer allows oneself to be blackmailed, nor defends one's ego. But, once Having arrived there, the world that at first seemed outside of us manifests itself ever more clearly in terms of harmony itself. With this, the right thoughts and the right feelings present themselves, spontaneously and without anyone intervening, at the right moment. We no longer fall into the trap of wanting to defend the ego. We no longer fall into the trap of wanting to maintain it by wanting to do good.

to do. The actions take place of their own accord and the feeling that there is an 'I' performing them has vanished. Precisely in the same way, at a given moment, the feeling that there is an 'I' that must understand the path of Vedanta is doomed to disappear. That is what the Lin ChiLü means when it says: 'Don't be mistaken! Neither on the outside nor on the inside is there anything at all that you could understand'. Because there is no 'understander'. There is only lucid knowing itself. No one awake anymore, no one dreaming anymore, no one sleeping.

I am that one conscious principle that needs no other light to shine. That one experience that all so-called experiences have in common. That brightly illuminated being in which all worlds and I myself have their origin and in which they dissolve again.

#### Discussion

A group of young people has set up a discussion about Vedanta. Following this, I received a few pages of marginal notes where I have also added some annotations with each new section.

Young people: Let us seriously and attentively consider the central point of Vedanta. What is Vedanta based on? Vedanta asserts

that Brahman creates the world with all its delusion and illusions (maya).

S(writer): This idea does not stem from Vedanta, but from Hindu mythology. This is about the god Brahma, not about Brahman, the absolute.

What is the premise of Vedanta? As we already saw at the beginning of these pages on jnana yoga, Vedanta is not a system, not a doctrine. Vedanta is based on the fact that someone who in

In need, he goes to someone who is never in need and asks him: 'How can I become like that too?' Then a dialogue arises between these two, a dialogue between the guru and the aspirant. In this dialogue, it is irrefutably proven to the disciple in various ways that the world is one gigantic projection that changes whenever man's perspective changes. And that the sensory world is an extension of the senses, the senses of the mental, the mental of the 'self'. As the disciple follows the guru's reasoning, he shifts his center of gravity from 'outside' to 'inside' while listening. Arriving there, he discovers that what he initially regarded as an independent world actually consists of nothing other than 'self'. In other words: that the only reality in all appearances is the 'self'.

Advaita Vedanta does not concern itself with seeking the origin of the world and considers

the question about it even as being at odds with himself. The pupil is made to understand that he finds himself time and again with something identifies, but that he didn't do all kinds of things is. This does not happen because the guru proclaims a doctrine, but because, step by step and starting from the point where the disciple believes himself to be, he analyzes, with words, gestures, and his presence, what the disciple essentially actually is.

}: Man ought to awaken from everyday consciousness just as he awakens from a dream. And just as the dreamer creates the totality of his dreams, so individual consciousness creates the totality of the revealed world and its people, is it not? This assertion is rich in fantasy.

S: Almost agree, but not entirely. The dreamer himself is also part of the dream and can therefore never be out of it. the creator of his. But as mentioned, we are not looking for a *prima causa*, towards an explanation of 'the first beginning'. Even if that could be found, we would still be no wiser. Our bondage lies in the fact that we have come to regard ourselves as a series of things, appearing time and again as one thing. From this absurdity follows everything else.

}: Could war, famine, human suffering, death, life, and love really be an illusion? A dream?

S: Let us be very careful not to draw hasty conclusions. Good and evil are very temporary standards. What we consider good today, we consider bad tomorrow. If there were not many people who find war acceptable, there would be no war.

We must realize that we ourselves are the measure. Good is what we consider good today.

Evil is what we consider evil today.

Since we ourselves are ultimately the sole measure of all things, it is unavoidable, if we ever wish to stand a chance of penetrating to essential truth, to first conduct a self-examination.

and not to draw conclusions until we know that one standard. Until that moment, our judgment is a shot in the dark.

}: We can expound a theory and say that it is so, but what we expound is not the truth. It is rather a view, a theory, an assertion. And the truth is not a theory, is it? Our expositions are rather a convenient outcome of thinking itself.

S: You are saying here in other words what I just put forward.

That is why we must never

To stand still with a theory, however beautiful it may be. A theory, a system, is intellectual work. What we seek is the living, unchanging truth,

if such a thing even exists. That is why the guru always tries to take the aspirant 'beyond the thinker,' if I may put it that way. As long as one clings to the thinker and feeler within us that appears and disappears from time to time, one simultaneously binds oneself to a fragmentary

standpoint. One then judges by no means the world and world events, but one's own perception, and those are two things that have hardly anything in common. One judges, in short, one's own projection which one calls 'the world'. And that projection is different for each of us, for, as I have said before, a world always appears that corresponds perfectly with the level at which I place myself at a given moment. Thus, to prevent us from replacing the truth with what you call the 'convenient outcome of thinking itself', we must detach ourselves from that changeable and fragmentary standpoint which is thinking. The only way known to me to do this is by learning to look very clearly with our whole being. By learning to see, from head hair to soles of feet, that all those objects—body as 'I', perceiving sense as 'I', thinker as 'I', and feeling human as 'I'—are objects, and not the one unchanging subject. Only when fragmented thinking ceases will I no longer fall into the trap of 'convenient outcomes'.

IWe can say that we have experienced a vision of Christ or, if you That is what one wants from Krishna, but what do such experiences prove? Perhaps it strengthens us in our claims and makes the belief in our theory even stronger. Such experiences only prove the outcome of a certain knowledge. After all, how could we recognize a vision if we did not know the given fact? This only proves that they are the product of an imaginative mind and are therefore of little value.

S:Almost completely agree.

Such things, however dangerous, are not simply worthless! Such visions are manifestations of a surrender to what the person concerned perceives as 'the good'. They stimulate our highest feelings and have a purifying effect on thought and feeling. If one succeeds in loving Christ or Krishna with one's whole heart, it is no longer difficult to love one's neighbor as well. The same applies, incidentally, always to total love for every being: in that case, it is not difficult to love every other being. But those visions prove little. At most, they prove that 'I myself' exist, even on that level. There is the possibility of seeing that I, in all circumstances and thus also here, am invariably the 'eternally present' element, vision or no vision.

In general, students on the path of Advaita Vedanta are advised to mo- as little mo-

to pay equal attention to visions, occult phenomena, magical powers, and so on, should they unexpectedly and spontaneously present themselves. This ties in, incidentally, with your following remarks:

I: Why do we desire a visionary experience, a theory, or one of the thousands of explanations at all? Doesn't this point to fear? Fear of daily life as it is, fear of sexual pleasure, the truth, war, drugs? Of the utter meaninglessness of life itself? We are confronted with this time and again by radio, television, and the press. When we see all this, we might take up yoga, use drugs, invent theories, study ancient truths such as Zen Buddhism, Vedanta, and so on. None of this helps us move forward much.

S: Virtually everyone we know only seriously started searching after a mental or spiritual bankruptcy.

By what one reaps, one can see what one sows. Whoever seriously seeks the solution will find it. Whoever does not find it has not searched long enough or seriously enough. One can also flirt with the act of searching!

From the part that now follows in your argument, it appears that you believe that people rarely see clearly. Therefore, we must now begin to perceive purely,

not starting from some theory or any exposition, no matter how clear it may seem, for only then do we come to face what is. Perhaps then we will see the folly of the saviors, clever philosophers, gurus, teachers, and many other things. Perhaps then, too, there will be an end to the series of structures so ingeniously put together by thought.

In this regard, we might consider a few points: How do you intend to perceive purely? When we read carefully what you write, you do not intend to perceive purely, but to use your perception to prove what you already believe you know beforehand. That clever philosophers proclaim follies and that, as you write before the above-quoted passage, the truth is terrible.

It is impossible to arrive at pure seeing in this way. Pure seeing must—and one may accept this as a dogma—begin with a question mark, not an exclamation mark. Pure seeing means: seeing without projection, and thus without fragmentation. For as long as I identify myself with a fragment, as long as I project all kinds of images onto myself and then think that I am those images, I make myself into something small, into an ever-changing thing, and the truth is thereby excluded for me.

As long as I accept a position as a thing, as an object, I am vulnerable and manipulable.

it only needs to appeal to my deeper fears and I am already marching behind a banner, indifferent to whether it is pro or contra this or that. Therefore, socially speaking, I must first ensure that I am no longer susceptible to manipulation. Furthermore, I must bear in mind that I can never take another further than I have come myself. And finally, I could consider whether the will, or the inclination, to want to help others is not pure vanity. Whoever loses his fragmentation and his egoism has thereby automatically become availability itself. But no great man has ever tried to help the world. If genuine help is to come, the illusion must first disappear. Before this happens, it is impossible to know what helps another. This by no means implies that Ithe hungrynot have to give bread, but it does mean that I have to give up the 'will to help' as an attitude to life. The essential good is never an attitude. It is the inner harmony, love, which translates spontaneously and without calculation into some deed or other that one probably already the next day

has forgotten again.

Another point that raises a question mark is Your assessment of the smart philosophers and gurus. To talk abouttheTo be able to judge philosophers, one must all have some reading behind you.

AbouttheJudging gurus can only be done in ignorance. We must guard against the error.

which the otherwise so likeable J. Krishnamurti has made, and of which he himself has become the embodiment, namely: to make a caricature of the guru, to condemn it, and subsequently to conclude that gurus are no good. Let us first establish that there is only one guru, not many gurus. The guru is the one, universal 'self'. As long as the disciple identifies with the fragment, with the thing, he sees his guru as a gentleman or lady. As soon as he loses his egoism, this one 'self' remains. At that moment, the disciple is no longer a gentleman or lady, but that one experience that all fragmentary experiences have in common. He has then become one with the guru.

Fromhis ownviewpointithe guru is no guru and has no followers. Only the disciple is permitted to view that which he considers a person as a guru. Only when the disciple begins to 'see' things in essential perspective does it begin to dawn on him that the guru is no longer a person. The fact that there may be persons, still full of ignorance and vanity, who proclaim themselves guru or rishi, does not alter this fact. The guru is by definition egolessness itself, and to say that one must avoid gurus because they wish to exploit you (Krishnamurti) is like claiming that one must exterminate all dogs and cats because

their trunks are too long. Just as dogs and cats have no trunks, the guru knows no selfishness. If someone does know selfishness, then he is not the guru.

Whoever truly wants to learn to see clearly must be willing to abandon his old viewpoints, however noble they may be in themselves. (Incidentally, a noble, socially perfectly acceptable standpoint is often far more dangerous than hard-core egoism... No obstacle is as difficult to overcome as holiness!). Whoever wishes to learn to see God as He truly is, whatever one may understand by 'God', must begin by giving up his always fragmented ideas about God. Exactly the same applies to self-realization. To know what

I essentially am, I must throw every idea about myself in the trash.

'We are the world,' you say again, just a little further on. Yes and no. Ultimately, there is no 'we'. The other, as other, is part of my projection. I am the world, but not as a personality. The world is a series of ideas and I, as a personality, am a series of ideas. When I discover what I essentially am, that one thing that all those ideas have in common, only then do I discover what it means to say: 'I am the world'. By that time, the word 'I' means something quite different from the 'I' that has a role reversal with a thing. Indifferent to whether that thing is called 'body', or 'thinker', or something else.

When I know, with my whole being and so certainly that no doubt is possible, that I am who I am, this one unchanging experience, only then do I know what the other is. That 'we' is another word for 'myself'; that 'the world' is another word for 'myself'. For then I no longer look through colored glasses from a fragmented standpoint.

};WeWe might perhaps think that we are separate from the world, or place ourselves on a higher plane. However, this once again implies a new outcome of thinking.

- S:Do you see how you continuously pass judgment and draw conclusions from your current, fragmented, and therefore illusory standpoint? And, rushing quickly along the path, strewn with your conclusions, you say: 'We are the world... that is what needs to be understood.' and not our theories about Vedāna, Zen Buddhism, religion, drugs, etc.'

In our opinion, you will never know what the world is as long as you do not know what you yourself are. And in our opinion, you will never discover who you yourself are as long as you have conclusions as a starting point.

Your comb drawings conclude as follows:

- };Wecannot help the world with cleverly devised theories, and even less with trying to fathom them.

the. If we want to understand life and ourselves, then it seems that we must stop maintaining our prejudices, constantly to choose, to judge, to divide, and much more. This is a problem of our entire lives and cannot simply be solved with explanations and assertions.

S: As for stopping perpetuating prejudices and such: exactly!

But that this is a problem of our entire lives, isn't that also a prejudice? As soon as you identify with the body, thinking, feeling, humanity, good intentions, and whatever else, you are in a conflict situation. Intuitively, in your deepest and most certain being, you know that 'you have a heart as vast as the universe'. This essential greatness is incompatible with your fragmented

be. It is only for that reason that we must learn to look, very sharply and in all intimacy, and this we must try to get rid of being fragmented. Then that heart remains that encompasses the world. That heart will know exactly what must be done or not done. There the action takes place of its own accord, without calculation, and every action becomes a translation of what one then

is. It cannot be otherwise. Only then is help that presents itself spontaneously true and essential help, without being inspired by fear, and without calculation and vanity.

## Drugs

Drugs, a problem touched upon indirectly in the dialogue above, is a subject that surfaces very frequently. As noted in the penultimate paragraph, a conflict arises as soon as identification is established with an object, with the personality. We seek compensation for the unpleasant feeling that this identification entails in a thousand and one ways. One of these is the use of drugs. In practice, it appears that the need for drugs disappears as there is less to compensate for internally. Moreover, I am of the opinion that LSD and hashish, provided they are used responsibly and under the right circumstances, can be of great benefit in solving problems on a psychological level. None of these types of drugs are addictive. Very little is known yet about potential harm. Presumably, the damage, should it be discovered at all, will be considerably less than that of the cigarette.

Psychological addiction is of course possible, but that is no argument whatsoever.\* One of our friends was addicted to licorice for years and could not sleep without first eating a whole bag full of it. Psychological addiction can arise in relation to virtually anything and anyone;

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\* Since the writer this theft opgetel (md is theremuch me bt kmdgemakt 011er theeffect of DMGS, also in the long term. The ll-imbos-imtiltw (www.trimbos.ul) gives actor l c n trustbmY' mjormatie.

She says nothing about the product, but a lot about the consumer.

It goes without saying that I am of the opinion that one should set total independence from drugs, or from anything else for that matter, as a goal. And naturally, first and foremost from one's own personality, because then the other problems will solve themselves.

## CHAPTER 13

I know again that I have a heart as big as the world. This is a knowing that lives in each of us. This heart, without limitations, 'as big as the world' so to speak, is our essential heart, and this unlimited is our essential nature. This infinity of warmth and light is what I essentially am.

On this being, on this being-that-I-am, or rather in this being, I have projected a personality, a limitation stemming from the feeling 'I am this body.'

This projection does not limit the being, but when the feeling sets in that I am this body, this person, a kind of mirage arises in which the 'self' seems limited, too. It is not really limited.

To achieve liberation, therefore, we must not change the ego, but learn to see through the illusion. As soon as this disappears, and with it the sense of I-am-this and I-am-that, one is free. Or rather: what remains is freedom itself, devoid of any personality. The habit of identifying with all kinds of limitations vanishes; there is only this 'global' heart; unity with the guru has been achieved.

It takes a long time before one can see the guru as he essentially is. Out of habit, one insists on seeing him as a personality. When he says: 'I have nothing to give you, nothing to teach, I am absolutely nobody,' the disciple says to himself: 'How useless he is,' and thereby turns the guru into a person with attributes.

I keep pointing to the moon, but you keep looking 'Look at my finger,' says a well-known Zen expression. The guru is that index finger, but the intention is that we look in the direction it points, not that we perform a dissection on the finger.

Because we project a personality into this endless heart that we are, all kinds of misunderstandings arise... but that is all. We think that we must protect our love and ourselves. We think that our love is hurt, that someone else has hurt us, or that we have hurt someone else.

But the love that we are cannot be hurt. That tiny fragment, that piece of reflection that the personality has claimed for itself and that it calls 'my love', is the wound. Being hurt is nothing other than being reminded of being fragmented, of the self-abandonment that I impose upon myself by identifying with small things. 'My' love is monkey love. The expression 'my love' is at odds with itself, for in love there is no 'I', no 'you', no 'mine'. Only when theft has been committed and when the ego believes it can appropriate what is pre-eminently egolessness itself, can there be such a thing.

of 'being hurt' and of 'hurting.' In fact, I am hurt because I have been caught stealing. Added to this is the fact that, through my theft, I think I can play with 'something' of such immense magnitude and power that it can never be grasped and can be preserved in the fragile vessel of the ego. As soon as I set out on the path of thievery, I find myself in a crisis, and if I say that someone else is to blame for me being hurt, I am in fact blaming him or her for a theft that I committed myself.

Whoever 'gives to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what is God's' can never fall into a similar crisis, no matter what is done to 'him'. For suffering is not primarily the result of circumstances, but of the fact that

I allow myself to regard myself as a thing, as a body, a personality. As soon as I firmly believe in that, the coming of suffering is as certain as night following day.

As soon as I make myself into an object, there is a complete loss of love.that I put it on myself. For love, there is a global, cosmic experience. It is the a cosmic experience from which I exclude myself by allowing myself to identify with something again and again.

To be able to be once again unmixed with what we are, love itself, we need by no means become angels or saints. By creating a personality from the unlimited light somewhere in the center, which is everywhere, consisting of a body plus ego, we have become something like fallen angels. To be freedom itself, light itself, again, we need only look at what we have done and go back the same way we came. I am an ego, I am a body, I am a personality, I am conscious or I have consciousness. We can observe all of this; all of this lies on the object side. I observe this and immediately put a clearly visible period behind it. And by observing this and putting a period, the image changes: I am not an ego, not a body, not a personality. I am the conscious self from which every trace of limitation, of personality or ego disappears. I am that unlimited light. There is

nothing or no one that possesses the conscious. The 'something' or the 'someone' is an idea, a feeling, that comes to make itself perceived within the conscious. A dot in the infinity of the warmth that 'I am'.

But seemingly there are two aspects of Happiness. On the one hand, there is this deepest knowing that I have a heart that encompasses the entire universe, and on the other hand, there is the manifestation of a sense of happiness that sometimes seems to nest within me in all intimacy, or that at other moments reveals itself as an explosion; like a golden flame bursting forth from me.

Both experiences are the 'self', and upon close inspection, it turns out that these two experiences are one and the same, but that we view them in retrospect from different perspectives.

The intimate, seemingly personal happiness is essentially impersonal. We can see that a person or thing that took us to that experience was not present in the experience itself, nor was a personality or ego present. Only afterwards does the ego claim: I was happy.

In exactly the same way, 'cosmic' happiness at that moment had no personality and no ego. Only afterwards do I project onto it a few vague images of grandeur, of 'a universe full of warmth'. This happens because, having returned to personality and the body, the experience is great when I compare it to them. But that comparison is

invalid because the two did not present themselves together. And when, therefore, we subtract the memory of our body from the memory of this 'universe-as-warmth', what remains is the experience which is neither great nor small, for it is compared with nothing.

Then Atma, the seemingly personal happiness, and Brahman, the seemingly cosmic happiness, are fused, or better: recognized as one experience that never disappears again. Then unity with the guru is achieved, for the guru is this experience. Then I discover that it was never 'another' who led me, but that hemine my own 'self' was, all this life long, before I recognized it.

Then that is what I was looking for, with all my thinking, working, and chasing after all sorts of things, achieved. Happiness has been found, not through me, but as me. As the 'myself'. As the cord that I had lost and which, after a long search, I discover had been hanging around my own neck the whole time.

## The Expert

For the one who has fully realized that he is not a body, nor a thinker, nor someone who has feelings, but invariably the knower of these successive perceptions, the rest of traversing the road, provided he continues on the chosen path, is merely a matter of time.

The approach via the knower is a tool, but an indispensable tool. When there is deep identification with a thinker and a feeler, I know that I am thinking, or rather: it is as if there is a principle behind the thoughts that knows them. This is called: 'the lower knower', that is to say: viewed from the lower standpoint of the thinker, as it were from below.

By continually 'moving' from object to subject, from that with which I identify to the knowledge that I am the knower of that object, the objects are hollowed out 'on the outside', while the emphasis increasingly shifts to the connoisseur 'on the inside'.

Identifying my intimate reactions is the most efficient tool for this purpose, for they reveal where the 'knots of the heart' lie hidden.

Not: I am happy or sad or afraid, but: there is a reaction of happiness, of sadness, of fear. I allow the fear to come and make itself perceived. I do not repress it, nor do I chase after it, but observe simply, even without wishing that fear disappears or, in the event that I am cheerful, without hoping that the cheerfulness persists. I observe something and immediately, very clearly and forever, put an end to it. That end is just as important as the observation itself. Just as a painter does with his work,

That is how I deal with my inner reactions: taking a few steps back each time to see better.

This is something that needs to be practiced as if one were anew language loan. And gradually indeed, a space arises between the one who observes and what is observed.

Then the perspective changes. At first I was a thinker and 'somewhere behind me' resided a connoisseur. Now I am a connoisseur and yonder, before me, things come to be observed, the inner reactions but also the people, the houses, the waves. My position is now comparable to that of the man in the cinema. That man has realized the fact that he is no longer identified with the protagonist, but that he is in the room sits, meters away from the actor on the screen.

This gentleman: 'the higher knower'. Important here is realizing the fact that being a knower is not an activity, and that the known, the world, leads an (illusory) existence exclusively as thought, and that the knower is therefore also exclusively a knower of, at any given time, one thought. This knowing is my true nature, and therefore knowing is not an occupation, but, as it were, a quality of being itself. Just as water cannot cease to be wet, so I cannot cease to be 'knowingness'.

Ranging from object to subject, I shift my identification of object, I am a thinker, to subject, I am unchanging and effortlessly the

knower of thought. Having arrived there, the object of knowing vanishes far away, and at that moment the knower loses every trace of limitation that there yet projected onto <sup>was</sup>, and he changes in knowing itself (chit).

Even after realizing the connoisseur, one is, returning to the selfish

Mode of behavior, again inclined to project something like a personality onto the knower, or to project the knower into thought. But the knower is a knower of all such limitations and can himself, in reality, never be limited.

Moreover, knowing itself appears to be a knower only through the presence of objects. Shankara says regarding this:\*

It is exclusively with regard to other things that the 'I myself' is called a knower. We can take the sun as an example. Although the sun has no idea of 'me' or 'mine' and has no desire to illuminate anything or makes any effort, the sun is nevertheless seen as an illuminator with regard to things that are illuminated by being in the vicinity of the sun, which is nothing other than unchanging light. The sun is in no other way a lighter. He consists of nothing but pure light and is there without further ado, and in the vicinity of being illuminated

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\* Atmajnanopadeshavidhi, head swk<sub>2, fresh</sub>12

things. Thereby the ignorant project the activity of enlightenment onto the sun, when they are enlightened by the sun. In such a way, the activity of knowing things, such as the intellect and other matters, is projected onto the 'self' which in its true nature is exclusively pure consciousness, never changing, without attributes or qualities, and the knower of all intellects and their changes. It does nothing other than to be in the vicinity of the objects of knowing as pure consciousness, not different from itself. The 'self' is in no other way a knower.

#### The Silence

The essential Silence is unknowable to the one who seeks, who thinks, who speaks, or who acts.

The only way, which everyone in their own way the path one traverses to arrive at that Silence is that of making the distinction between 'I' and 'non-I', that of realizing the perspective as set out above by Shankara. One knows this silence only when one has 'become' it, realizing that one has never been anything else. One knows it only when there is no longer a trace of thought.

or the feeling that one is something else. When no object is considered a subject anymore and when every viewpoint, even the deep conviction: 'I

'I am not an object' has disappeared. Only then reveals the emptiness as silence.

The yoga of thought concentration aims to lead us here by forcibly bringing the thought to a standstill. This leads to samadhi, a temporary situation. As soon as the samadhi is over, our questions return.

Jnana yoga answers these questions and does so, if all goes well, in such a way that the questions disappear. When all questions have vanished, their place is taken by emptiness, for after the trick of what one at the beginning has seen through Mayamentions, the questions no longer return. As a result, the 'true emptiness', in contrast to the temporary emptiness, can reveal itself once and for all as 'being' itself, the eternal present

dige, silence itself. That which is unknowable to the personality, thinking, and feeling, yet is nevertheless the best known because it is the 'knowingness' in all knowing, the 'knowing' in every living being.

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# Jnana Yoga



*Jnana yoga* van WOLTER A. KEERS, de nestor van de Nederlandse advaita, is oorspronkelijk uitgegeven in 1972 door de Stichting Yoga Nederland.

Het is een bundeling van artikelen en beschouwingen die verschenen zijn in het tijdschrift de *Yoga Kroniek*, dat later het tijdschrift *Yoga en Vedanta* is geworden.

In deze artikelen komen twee thema's steeds naar voren:

- Het feit dat bevrijding of verlichting niet bewerkstelligd kan worden maar ons alleen ten deel kan vallen wanneer het door ons zelf geconstrueerde 'ik' wegvalt.
- Het belang van de relatie tussen goeroe en leerling.

Deze teksten zijn, net als in zijn vorige boek *Vrij Zijn*, nog steeds actueel en glashelder, mede doordat het taalgebruik is aangepast aan de eisen van deze tijd.

