

Our Relationship with the Universe

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Yes, you see the processes that we're going through can't be achieved by either simply sorting out the mind, or by an act of will. It's just a question of getting ourselves into the attunement of the recluse. And then of course, there are many things that one senses... though the being of the recluse is beyond any assessment. I've been trying to sense what that could be, that is characteristic of the recluse because that is the model for us to follow while on retreat. And I've come to the conclusion that it is sacredness. There are clues. I think quite rightly ... it was St. Therese of Avila who said that one is chosen for a very holy purpose. So, one can't make oneself holy, but one can respond to divine calling. And you see, I think that one can't bring about transformation in the human being, either by an act of the mind or an act of will, or by any personal act whatsoever, even emotion, if it's personal. And this is, of course, absolutely the perspective of the Sufis.

Remember this, because this is the governing thought for the whole weekend. And that is that we're used to thinking of ourselves as a subject that is cognizing the universe, and we like to think of ourselves sometimes as the object that we cognize ourselves. But according to Sufis, it is God who is the sole subject, and it is God who is the sole object. So we get ourselves alienated from the consciousness of the totality and consequently removed from participating in the divine intention. Which is, as I described this morning, self-discovery—discovering himself, or I don't know, you'd like to say him/ herself. And we participate in it by discovering God in ourselves, it's God who discovers Himself in us, by existentiating Himself as us. It's God who discovers Himself—our consciousness being an extension of His consciousness, and our nature being an extension of His nature. And so, when we alienate ourselves from this total action and try to discover ourselves without realizing that it is God who is discovering Himself through us then of course, we think in a way that is not conducive to our unfoldment, which locks us in a sclerosed, stereotyped personality and there's no hope for us, there's no progress. That's what we're fighting against all the time in a retreat: overcoming alienation from the consciousness of the Totality. You can call it, if you like, the consciousness of the Totality, if you don't like to use the word God.

And then, secondly, God becomes a reality—that's a word used by Hazrat Inayat Khan—by us, not only manifesting, but concretizing His being in us, in our personality. And so we participate in the act of auto creation, whereby God creates Himself in us, by conferring upon Him a mode of existence, by

recognizing Him in our being. So there's both existentiating and discovering—that is cognizing, knowing, discovering, realization, realizing God in one.

These are the premises. And it makes all the difference in our way of looking at things and our way of dealing with things.

So this early morning, we were going through the initial stages in a retreat. It always starts ... One goes through different ... : one is a pilgrim, as I said, and one goes through different *maqam*, that means different stages in the journey, which have been described by some of the Sufis. And the first one is catharsis, purification. Well, as I say, one has distanced oneself from the situations in which one was involved up to the present. It gives one a certain amount of perspective. And particularly, one frees oneself from the bonds that tether one—compulsory bonds. I'm not saying that it is a good state to be in all the time. In the course of a retreat, we're enhancing that aspect which the Sufis call the inbreath of God, where all things are drawn into the oneness—*Ahadiat*—instead of the opposite, the outbreath of God, where the divine nostalgia—*ishk*—is the drive that leads towards existence. I call it existentiating, self-discovery, the proliferation of the one into the many, and all the joy and suffering and fulfillment that results from it. So at this moment, we're ... for the moment, we're concentrating on the in-breath: renunciation, freedom from involvement, and so on. And that enables us to look at things with perspective, and therefore perhaps, see things differently to the way we've been thinking of them, seeing them before ... problems we're dealing with, as I said. In general, what I was hoping we would do was to take advantage of this moment, that we have left our private lives behind and are on retreat, to take advantage of this opportunity to ... take a fresh look at our problems from the various vantage points that we're going to be going into, we're going to get attuned to, because that's what meditation is about. So in other words, in short, it's applying meditation to real life. This morning, I spoke about a confrontation which means applying the power of truth to one's self, because there's a lot of self-deception in most of us, justifying our actions, although we don't feel totally comfortable about and, of course, trying to fool other people. And so, the first thing is, of course, being absolutely authentic and truthful, confronting oneself and finding out exactly what one's real intention is behind one's motivation. So, we were dealing with guilt this morning. I don't want to repeat what we went through, but I do think that we went through a real inner process. We were processing our guilt in very short, very brief ... There is either the danger of not admitting one's responsibility to oneself; on the other hand, there's the danger of mis-assessing one's guilt and blaming oneself for situations in which, well, first of all, causing pain to a person which you couldn't help because...

I gave the example of somebody who loves one, one isn't able to reciprocate for example, or a situation in which one cannot be one hundred percent responsible for another person because one would be underestimating their freewill. One would be refusing to grant them their status as a self-motivated being. And then further, remember that we went into this whole procedure whereby the hurt that we caused another person, and that person reciprocates in causing us hurt, and it escalates, higher and higher and worse and worse. And that is probably the reason why we don't communicate with the person

any longer. So, it is our privilege to break that chain of escalation by making a definite move, which is to ask forgiveness, for whatever one feels that one has done wrong, and repairing it if there is something that one can do, of course. But I didn't advise to engage in a conversation with the person because that person may take advantage of one's having made the overtures to cast aspersions upon one and then one may react with animosity and it will escalate, as I said. Only if one is really strong enough to be able to meet that challenge—and that means really being... and this is where renunciation comes in ... and that is the path of the recluse and the way of Christ—and that is to take the blows upon one's shield ... and that's the meaning of *aegis*, which is that of a being who is disarmed and, therefore, who cannot be hurt, who is immune, immutable, immune, detached and understanding the need of that other person psychologically maybe to hurt one. Maybe that's the inappropriate way of processing the hurt that they got from us, but that's the way that human nature, or even the animal nature reacts, of course. It's been programmed to do so. So at least at this point, the to-and-fro motion, the vicious circle, escalation of hurts, is interrupted and one is now intervening in stopping it from getting worse.

I must say that there's a great joy in being kind to the person who hurts one. In fact, it may be the greatest joy there is in the world. It's possible that no situation will produce enough joy for us to be able to be happy except this one—providing that one is not condoning that person's behavior in being violent. Understanding is not condoning.

This is all as preparation for our retreat. Ritually, one has ablutions in water and things like that. But this is what the Sufis call the purification of the heart.

Now, we want to deal with the other trauma, which is resentment, which is, of course, the counterpart of guilt. So, it is the victim who becomes resentful; and in becoming resentful, he or she makes other people his or her victim, and so it escalates again. Now, I mentioned, of course, the fact that if one should write to the person who one has offended, then of course, one doesn't incur the danger of dialogue, in which case one would fall back upon one's anger again, and get back into the vicious circle. Now ... look at things from the point of view of the person who has received that letter. Just imagine that person has now been all of a sudden dis-burdened of a lot of the hatred that that person has had for one. One is disarming that person and, what is more, the harm, the bitterness in the soul of a person who has been hurt is a much greater hurt than the damage that one created to the person in the beginning. So one has wrought upon that person two damages: one, first by the act which was unfair, and secondly, by the secondary effects, which are much deeper. And so in one act one has kind of helped a person to overcome a terrible trauma. Just imagine what it means to that person.

You see, all realizations, all breakthroughs in realization correspond to a resolution. That means an action. And so, in this sense, of course, meditation always has action in view ... unless one just goes into a trance state, which is just what we want to avoid doing.

Now, once more, the motivation behind all of this is, of course, not just to purify yourselves, but as soon as one becomes aware, or more aware, one, of course, becomes aware of the harm or the pain that one inflicts upon other people. And consequently, one cannot feel comfortable unfolding oneself—or one cannot even unfold oneself—as long as one does not do something about it. It's like, as I said: the condition for going on retreat is holiness. And so if there's anything that goes counter to that attunement of holiness ... I suppose it is the need of holiness, which is perhaps the deepest need in the human being that causes us to confront ourselves. Because, otherwise, worship is hypocrisy, if there's still some dishonesty in one's being.

Now, the second stage is, as I said, dealing with resentment. And there's no use saying that one SHOULD forgive. In fact, one should never use the word should. Because people do try to forgive, and they can't. And then there's the other method, which is just exploding in one's anger, which is a first line of defense, of course—you find in those marvelous weekends with Dr. Kubler-Ross, who's so conscious of human suffering and has transformed people, just by letting them get in touch with their feelings and their anger. But, of course, the second stage consists in processing that anger, that resentment. And, of course, it takes much more time than simply exposing and expressing it.

The only way of doing this is, again, by calling meditation into play, and learning how to get into the consciousness of other persons. We say other persons but I've already mentioned that from the Sufi point of view, ultimately, it's all one being. Now it is true that the Sufi point of view always incorporates what in science now one calls complementarity, which is the two poles of the same thing. So it's not duality. It's complementarity. It's the conciliation of the opposites. So that, while all is one, the total being is present in each fragment of this one that is an indivisible in one sense, and at the same time, inasmuch as one can divide it, each fragment carries the totality. Like a wave carries the whole sea within it. And so from the moment that one looks upon it this way, the consciousness of that person that one thinks to be other than oneself, is part of the consciousness of which one is oneself the extension. Like that other wave in the sea is ... it's the same sea that has emerged in that wave as in this one. And so, there is a way of communicating by resonance. It is not the same thing as the I-it relationship of Martin Buber, but the I-thou relationship that is affinity, which is of course, the secret of love.

What seemed to be the other person is another oneself. If one had reversed the roles and had been in the position of that person, would one have perhaps not acted as that person did? Judging it from one's own personal point of view is not a proper assessment of the situation. It's a one-sided biased assessment of the situation. And this is a very great asset to psychology, to help one to learn. You see, you cannot just transfer your consciousness into the consciousness of another person. Because that person's consciousness is as much biased as your point of view.

The only way to reach into all beings is from inside. That is, let's say, deeper than where the crests of the waves distinguish one another, but in the depth, that's where they commune together. So, it's no use trying to read the thoughts of a person or transfer one's consciousness into the consciousness of a person.

Hazrat Inayat Khan said ... well, it was the Murshid of Hazrat Inayat Khan who said: intuition is the revelation of one's own spirit. One sees oneself in the other person. And that is why Jesus said, Who's going to throw the first stone? You can see the same faults that you accuse the other person of in yourself. And from that moment, judgmentalism is over. You can't ... you don't judge anyone. And of course, resentment is based upon judgment. And as you know, one has escalated things so that that person seems to be like a real devil. And one welcomes any bad reports about that person, or any failures of that person, and one doesn't like to hear any good about that person, or to hear that person is being successful in any way. One is being biased. And supposing that one were able to ... were to meet that person, one wouldn't want to meet that person. One would at first have built a wall because one doesn't want to recognize anything good in that person at all. And then, supposing that one started to erode that wall and one began to see how things would look from the point of view of that person: how that person was brought up, the circumstances, the way the person looks upon things—which may not be correct—but it's the way the person looks upon things.

I can think of that prisoner in a seminar of Dr. Kubler-Ross, who had been tortured as a child and his only way of reacting, dealing with all that anger was to become a criminal.

And what it meant for him to see that that was just a kind of primitive reaction and to discover the beauty in people, that he hadn't believed that there was beauty in people anymore. And then he was cured not just of his criminality, but of his resentment.

It's the story of Jesus walking on a path and there was a dead dog—it was in one of the *Apocrypha*—and people said, Oh, Master don't look at it, it looks awful. And he said, Yes, but its teeth are so beautiful. See, it's like, seeing beauty even in the person who has caused one so much pain.

And even feeling sorry for that person for having felt they had to resort to violence. It's what Gandhi did when the man killed him. He bowed to the man who killed him and, well, he couldn't speak, but his gesture, if you know the Hindu way of thinking, his gesture, saying, Ram Ram, was, "Oh please forgive me for not having convinced you of the wisdom of nonviolence."

So you see, that's not exactly ... You see, forgiving, you would be like, generosity on your part or something, but this is understanding. Nothing heroic about it, nothing virtuous. It's just understanding. And with it comes loving. And misunderstanding is standing in the way of the loving.

As I say, it's the in-breath of God whereby one goes through *fana*—that means the annihilation of the ego. It carries with it saintliness, which means that, as I say, one receives blows on all sides and one keeps on loving the people who cast blows upon one, and there's nothing heroic about it. It's just ... it seems to be so natural if you understand that that person is reacting to the hurt that they received, well then, maybe from someone else. Well, then you can only feel very sorry for them and try to help them by being kind,

instead of punishing them for being bitter. The despair of the human soul in the void of simply misunderstanding, and the mis-assessment is quite incredible.

These are so fundamental that I don't see how we can work with trying to improve ourselves and trying to fulfill our nostalgia for the celestial spheres and even have any grasp of the ultimate meaning of our lives, if there's all this rubble in the way, which hasn't been resolved.

I hope that while I'm speaking you are doing this because, as I said, this is a retreat and not a seminar.

Now, there's no condemnation of the other, there's no condemnation of yourself. And, therefore, the point of all of this is not condemning oneself. To be angry, it's natural that one should be angry. That's what the other person is doing too. It's primitive. That's the way that the psyche is built, exactly like the body is built a certain way and the psyche is built that way too. There's a kind of instinct of self-preservation in it: the primitive instincts.

Now I'm not saying that one should repress one's anger or condemn one's anger.

An anger is a power which can be harnessed, as Murshid says, and give one great sovereignty and mastery and majesty.

And maybe there's a ... it degenerates into hate. Maybe that's where the dividing line is, that it should not degenerate into hate. Anger at injustice, at iniquity, at hypocrisy. That was, again, the being of Christ. Unmask hypocrisy. There's anger that unmasks hypocrisy. It's an expression of the power of truth, and it degenerates into hatred. That's a degeneration of a beautiful power in the human being. [pause]

So, we're going to have to learn how to dive deep into ourselves.

We have to reverse a lot of our ways of thinking. And when I say ourselves, it is really the common denominator of the universe, the common ground of the universe. So the word "the self" collapses, and that's why Jung calls it the collective unconscious. It's a collective state and this is where one gets in touch with all beings. One gets in touch with ... the word "one" doesn't have its meaning any longer. It's the state of being enfolded instead of unfolded, like a bud is enfolded, or even the seed, the whole plant unfolds out in the seed and the whole plant is enfolded in the seed, and we also have the faculty of deploying ourselves, unfurling. That's what we do most of the time. On a retreat, we reverse the process and we enfold ourselves. It's like some flowers will draw within as they are exposed to a strong wind, for example, or a sea anemone will sometimes just squeeze into a very highly tightly packed compendium. We have to learn how to.

You see, I mentioned this, methods used by psychologists currently, I mean in a classical way, would be compared with taking a deep-sea fish from the depth and pulling it up to the surface and then it doesn't react anymore like the fish that it is in its proper environment. And so if you take your complexes and you bring them to the surface from the unconscious, you make them conscious, they're disformed right away. And so that's that psychoanalysis breaks down there and avers itself to be inadequate. And also by ... well, by manipulating an electron, for example, it's no more the electron that it was in its normal state so you can't observe it, and what is more, even the impact of the act of consciousness does something to behavior. If you were in a crowd in mass hysteria, and somebody thrust a projective light upon you and you knew that we were being photographed you could not behave as the collective crowd is doing anymore. You would become more aware of your own personal decisions, your own personal reactions.

And so, by bringing the unconscious to the conscious one is transforming it, one is manipulating it. So, the methods that we're using in meditation consist in learning how to dive deep within that unknown no man's land, which the psychologists call the unconscious, with the light of consciousness as personified as Eurydice going into hellish regions, Orpheus going in, finding her and fetching her there ... learning how to dive within that very deep place from which our deepest motivations surge forth, without getting drowned in what they call the sea of the unconscious. That means without getting into a state of trance or knowing how to keep on operating the transfer from that deep place where everything is one, back into the place where everything is unfurled into, well specific, into location, space, and time and specific frontiers, borderlines between individuals, and so on. Between concepts and so on.

That's what we want to do now. Basically, these are the first practices in meditation. Of course, meditation is often described as turning within. And of course, there's a danger of simply getting encapsulated in one's personal psyche, which is not the collective psyche. It's still an artificially hemmed in area of one's being that has alienated itself from the totality. Now I'd like to... you know, sometimes a model will help one to overcome one's faulty way of thinking and it is a faulty way of thinking that stands in the way of our experience. You see, we think of ourselves as a definite person with a definite borderline, with definite idiosyncrasies, and the universe is other than ourselves and outside ourselves and we think of God as up there, somewhere, and beyond our reach, and so on. These are just very naive, middle-range modes of thinking, which unfortunately most people have been brought up in and most people think just exactly that way. [tape change]

We want to change this. The model that I suggest is this—and please, let's do it instead of my talking about it in theory: can you think of yourself as a vortex? That means, for example, a whirlpool. Now the whirlpool does not have a boundary, it's fluid, let's say. There is no boundary. The whirlpool maintains itself precariously, I mean maintains its continuity—whatever that word "it" means, of course, because there's no boundary—precariously, by drawing the environment into itself, that is, the water of the environment, or the water, and by diffusing the water that was in the center, let's say, or close to the center, towards the periphery back into the environment again. Can you think of yourself as being

something like that? Actually, it's not just the water of the immediate environment. Eventually, the whole lake gets processed into that whirlpool which does not have any borderlines.

So think of yourself as being like a formation... that's what a whirlpool is... within the total harmony of the universe. And what the whirlpool does is to coordinate the universe according to its own axis. So that's what we're doing. We're coordinating the total many-splendored bounty of the universe around our axis. That's our ego, our concept of ourselves. And we can only maintain ourselves by continually losing ourselves and refinding ourselves again. We are continually decaying, dissolving, disrupting, diffusing, deflecting. And we are also radiating a lot of things, not just energy and light, but also thoughts, emotions. And, as a matter of fact, we are acting upon the environment or transforming the environment. So, can you look at yourself as just that, as being part of the environment and yet acting upon the environment, because there's no borderline between you and the environment?

And how precarious the suspended one is.

In reality, since there's no borderline, the whirlpool really does include the whole lake. And so, can you see how you are the totality of being and yet, you are the focalization of that totality in the ... around the axis, let's say, around the center.

As a consequence, it should give you a sense of the vastness of your being, and the indeterminate nature of your being.

We suffer from the pressure of the ego, from the tyranny of the ego, from being hemmed in to our self-image, of thinking of ourselves a definite entity and so on. All those things crowd into us—the crowding in of, let's say, the pressure of the universe as us becomes intolerably painful, and so we all need this like, stretching out, like Marcel Marceau did once with, locked into walls, and he was pushing those walls further and further back, the sense of being free from that terrible pressure of one's own ego, as a matter of fact. It's like gravity, local gravity, which is a breakdown of the gravity of the whole universe. The global symmetry is broken up into local symmetries.

So, it's not establishing one's connection with the universe. That is the interpretation which has often been made, which is, I think, wrong. You see there are two levels of our relationship with the universe. The first one is experience. That is where we think of ourselves as the subject, the universe is the object, and there is some interaction. Like we're learning from the universe, we're drawing something of the universe into ourselves, we're doing something, there's experience. And then there's a deeper relationship, and that's the one that we're doing in meditation. And it's the relationship of identity. It is that one discovers that one is the universe, one discovers that one is that which one was observing. St. Francis said, "That which sees is that which is seeing you." I say our mind has the same constitution as the software of the universe. But then we discover new dimensions of our mind by discovering the thinking of the universe.

And thinking of ourselves as a separate entity stands in the way of, how can I say, resonating with the thinking of the universe, with the harmony of the universe, with the programming in the universe. And that's why, what we're doing now, it's very important that we destroy the imaginary frontiers between ourselves and the universe. That's the first thing we have to do: realize there aren't any frontiers without totally losing sight of the axis, of the way the universe is coordinated in each of the vortices into which it is broken up. Not broken up. It's focalized, let's say, in different vortices.

Totally new conception of ourselves. And the word me doesn't mean the same as it meant before. And you realize what happens, if you're doing this as I'm talking, the wonderful freedom you're getting from the tyranny of the ego. From being closed, hemmed in, locked into one's self-image.

We have a need of vastness.

We have a need to discover the way things are being caught in our concepts.

And so the vastness of understanding frees one from one's personal assessment, personal opinion, at last, gaining the stature of one's thinking: it is coextensive with the thinking of the universe and the emotion of the universe instead of being caught up in the storms in our teacups.

Cosmic emotion ... the grandeur of the universe is present as the grandeur of our soul. You see, that picture I gave of the vortex, the whirlpool, well, it's like all models, of course, it's relative. It has some value, but never gives a full description of the beauty of reality; because one is not only drawing the environment within the whirlpool and then dispersing, diffusing, but one is also drawing, from inside, a reality that cannot be described as the water of the lake, for example. And one is even drawing from above other elements, which we'll have to go into a little later. For the moment we're just on the first stage. But I don't want us to be encapsulated in any particular stage, so we have to be able to forestall the next stage.

What do we mean when we say we're incorporating the universe? Perceiving things and our representation of the universe gets enriched by every time we perceive something new. So somehow the picture of the soul gets enriched. We carry the image of the universe inside ourselves that gets enriched as, from moment to moment, we go into new experiences. We carry beings into ourselves, in the image of our souls, beings who continue to live in us.

And there's more than that. The emotion of the universe becomes part of our being. So, it's not just extending into vastness, but it's also incorporating all this bounty ... incorporating may not be the best word: it's converging it, construing it, congrueing it ... into meaningfulness. [long pause]

That's the experience of the dervish. One is overwhelmed with bounty. They use the word, *haiba*, which is ... sometimes they use the word, *the consternation of intelligence*.

It's, of course, a wonderful thing to be freed from the narrowness of one's understanding ... and one's little joys and pains into something so gigantically bewildering. [long pause]

And all we did was to break those artificial dikes hemming us in and then something happened to our being. And the bind is in the mind. As Fariduddin Attar says, "Oh man, if you only knew that you're free. It's your ignorance of your freedom that is your captivity."

There's also a sense of power, which is, I think, so important to so many of us who have a sense of inadequacy or don't have enough strength to be able to meet the challenges of life. It's again, assessment, from one's personal vantage point as soon as one removes the frontiers and realizes oneself as a vortex. Incidentally, the whirlpool is also pulsing. Although it doesn't have a frontier and still its energy is fluctuating and it can also increase in its reach, in its influence on the environment. That means its energy... and could decrease and it could even let itself ... result in the Totality.

And so we can think of ourselves as being the power of the universe, instead of being the instrument through which the power of the universe works. You see, come back to the Sufi view. Thinking of oneself as other than God is what the Muslims called *shirk*, which means the quality of *associationism*, that is, thinking of others as though they were other than God. And so, the consequence of that is that there is a mistake in our way of thinking of ourselves as being the instrument through which the Divine Being manifests. And that's why Ibn Arabi says, "That through which he sees is also himself."

And we do this all time because our spiritual education has been so faulty. No. We ARE the Being of God—that has become limited or distorted, but it still is the being of God. Like the cells of your body: they proliferate; some of those cells may become... well in the case of cancer, of course, the cells have been distorted, disfigured, but they still are the cells of your body. And so we ARE the power of God.

That's why Christ said, "I AM the truth." And Al Hallaj said, "I AM the truth, the divine truth."

There's a difference between ascribing divinity to oneself—like the Pharaoh did, thinking that he was God, that is, ascribing godness to the personal ego—and what we're doing now, which is, while being aware of the ego, not as a receptacle but as an axis, being aware of the inexhaustible reaches of the being of God manifesting through this axis.

And that is what we are.

I say, discovering the whirlpool, the nature of the ocean, right? Discover in yourself, as Murshid says, the same power that moves the universe. [pause]

Of course, there's much more in it than that, is there? There's magic and mystery and splendor and harmony in our being, ... inasmuch as it incorporates the Universe.

I'm not even so sure of the word convergence anymore. I think it's ... maybe the way things are organized around an axis. And of course, the harmony of the universe gets impoverished by having to be reorganized around an axis.

And of course, this is another, more advanced model of the vortex and of the whirlpool, and that is that it is incorporating ... incorporating maybe is not the right word ... it maybe it is organizing, forming; the organizing—is perhaps the right word—the bounty, the harmony of the universe around its axis so that it's integrating more and more of all this richness, but of course, the richness is inexhaustible. So, at no time can one say that one has organized the total universe in oneself, but that is what one is, tends to ... that's what one's purpose is in life.

Let's say God is now looking from a particular vantage point and organizing the universe around that vantage point in us. It's difficult to say this in words, but there's always the consciousness of God behind it all.

To forego the danger of slipping into one's personal consciousness again, so one mustn't think that one is organizing the universe around one's axis. It is the universe that organizes itself around one's axis. Maybe that's way to say it.

I hope you're following me, because I notice the challenge to our way of thinking, but then that's the only way to bring about a change is to suddenly see things from a different angle to what one had seen before. And you see how it affects you immediately. It is affecting me and I hope it does affect you the same way. It's as though one does not have any frontiers to one's skin, for example, and one's skin is no more the frontier of one's body. One is aware of being an electromagnetic field, for example--it does not have any frontier, it extends and merges in the Totality.

One is aware of being an aura and consequently the aura again extends ... not just extends, it is traveling, the photons are traveling through space at the speed of 186,000 miles a second. So the concept of oneself is totally altered. One is also, just like the whirlpool, one is drawing energy from light energy from the environment like the plants are doing, photosynthesis. One is burning one's substance of one's body like the glow worm does, or the deep-sea fish do, producing radiation out of one's own flesh.

So, a totally new way of looking upon oneself

and consequently, one is free from any idea that, well I'm not very intelligent or I'm not very bright or I not very ... I don't have much love or so on, all those ideas that are the result of our becoming sclerosed in our self-image which is an artifice, a notion of the mind. [pause]

One can say that the potentialities have not yet become materialized. That one can say, yes.

Potentialities that are [?] I suppose inasmuch as there is any reference to the person, then it has to be like the point of convergence. It has to be like it incorporates the whole universe. But it is converged. It gravitates around an axis.

So, that as one exhales, one dissolves. And remember that one is not extending in the universe. One dissolves. The whirlpool is resorbed in the total lake. And, as one inhales, the whirlpool is formed again, or one is aware of being the whirlpool once more. One is more, let's say, concentrated on the center of the whirlpool than the periphery, which is a never-never. And one sees oneself as being the convergence.

And it is important to recover the sense of the person but incorporate the whole universe into it, instead of alienating itself and building up frontiers again.

The pressure building up is enormous. It's expressed by the poet who says—it was Prentice Mulford [?] who said, "Infinity in a finite fact, and eternity in a temporal act." That's the whole idea of convergence. "Infinity in a finite fact"—that's convergence—"and eternity in a temporal act."

You see, the abyss of despair is the personal ego, which is a notion, of course, being alienated from the totality.

Now, I'd like to say a little more, let's pursue this a little further. The example of the whirlpool. So far we've been thinking statically... the whirlpool. The fact is, of course, that the whirlpool can get impacted from currents and tries to address itself by resorbing the energy. But if the perturbation reaches beyond a certain critical point, then the whole whirlpool will have to reorganize itself in a new way. And this is true of ourselves. We are continuing ... think of yourself now as being not a discrete entity, but, the way we were looking at ourselves now. But now, let's say think dynamically instead of statically. Like now you're absorbing life like yes, right, but you are also reacting to situations that perturb your status quo,

and you try to absorb them and try to as I said, for example, if somebody does harm to you, you try to become detached and so, what, you resolve the shot [?]. Right, but if the perturbation reaches a certain critical point there's no way of adjusting down there. You have to reorganize yourself totally new.

You can't just add a little bit to your person and say, well, I need a little more compassion, let's work with good compassion, and so on. No. It's like a painting ... you can't add a little bit of dabs of color here

and there. No, you have to start the whole thing over again and you have a new inspiration and you find that there's no way of changing that picture, you have to really start again.

How're you going to do that? And this is where the model of the whirlpool avers itself to be inadequate.

Well, it is, but I mean, one could think of a better model.

We have a kind of inner resourcefulness. So that we find a way of reorganizing ourselves without knowing how to do it. When we have no alternative and the impact of a situation is so great ... or the way it's been so far. Somehow, if we can trust the formative process within ourselves, a self-organizing power will find a way of being which we could never have planned and can't sort out with our mind, but it is true that it requires us to want the process

to do the work it has to do without interfering with our own preconceived ideas. That's really the ultimate trust in God.

That is quite different to the way people generally express it as, God up there, and ... No, it's really an internal resourcefulness. It is exactly God discovering himself eternally by existenciating himself and the extensions of that act whereby we are discovering him or we're discovering ourselves ... it comes to the same: by finding new modes of existence, it's in the nitty gritty of life that the self-discovery takes place.

Perhaps you know that one cannot always plan a work of art in advance, that some of the formative process takes place as one is kneading the clay, or one is using paint on the brush. Somehow it comes through creatively, it comes through in the act of being creative.

So, one is not just reacting to the environment or the impacting of the environment. One is acting creatively with regard to the impacting of the environment [pause]

by affirming one's being. In other words, by organizing the environment instead of just being receptive to the impact of the environment or absorbing the environment or simulating the environment.

And that's the opposite, isn't it?

And by the environment I mean circumstances.

So somehow, the possibilities, the resourcefulness that I'm talking about that emerge from inside are just as bountiful as those that are impacted upon us from outside.

How does one have access to this resourcefulness—I call it—that emerges?

That is learning how to thrust the light of consciousness into the implicate state, the enfolded state, and that's what one does in meditation. One turns within. So, there is, of course, a decision not to let oneself be impressed by the way things appear through the senses. So one isn't alienating oneself from the universe, but one is protecting oneself from the appearance of things, that is the illusion, the way things appear through the senses, which is not the way things are. And there's a gain, this is where the Sufi way helps one. Shahabuddin Suhrawardi talks about that which transpires behind that which appears. So one is protecting oneself against that which appears because that conceals that which transpires behind it. It's like looking at the face of the person and scanning the face and you see the moles or the defects on the face, and sort of grasping the countenance of that being, which is much more beautiful than the appearance of the face.