

# *B e i n g*

Essays on UG Krishnamurti  
and Other Topics

Narayana Moorthy

2009

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## Preface

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In this book I have put together all the essays I have posted on my blog site (<http://moortysblogpage.blogspot.com>) for over a year. For the sake of completion, I have added a couple of other chapters: “Later Visits to UG,” and “Science and Spirituality.” Part 1 of the book consists of articles about how I met UG and an account of some of my meetings with him. Part 2 comprises a set of articles about UG’s teaching as well as his teaching process. Part 3 contains my ruminations about thinking, the self and mental states. Part 4 deals with a couple of academic issues, viz., the mind-body problem and the problem of other minds, as well as my views about meditation, morality and a few moral issues. I can’t say they are all inspired by UG’s teachings, but in some fashion or other, all the articles in parts 3 and 4 have some relationship to them.

My philosophical essays may not impress the professional philosopher and many not seem to advance any current discussion of specific philosophical problems. They certainly are not scholarly by any means. I didn’t even provide extensive documentation in my essays. My interest here is to tackle some of the problems of philosophy from a rather common sense point of view, mostly starting from my own experience. Of course, what I learned in both Western and Eastern philosophy, as well as what I learned from UG does come into play in my explorations.

Needless to say, I have to use my thinking and logical skills to present my understanding of the issues presented here. I don’t know if it is possible to arrive at a totally consistent theory about them or fit them into a coherent and meaningful picture. Indeed, the reader may find that in several places my conclusions are hesitant, tentative and inconclusive. I may seem to be expressing doubts about my own previous

conclusions or debating with myself. That's why I would like to call this book "work in progress."

My aim in this book is to approach some of the issues without presupposing any religious or spiritual beliefs, taking a commonsense point of view and remaining always within the sphere of the known. The book should also demonstrate how I have translated, as best as I could, what I understand or learned from UG into my own life. Standing from such a ground of experience I have tried to chip away, as it were, bit by bit, at the unknown. Of course, you can never know the unknown. But what has been considered mystical or mysterious before could, at least to a minor degree, be unraveled. In my opinion, that was indeed what UG was trying to achieve as well.

My central concern when I discuss moral issues is always to find out how I can relate to these subjects and what difference would they make to my life or my reader's life.

Thanks to Wendy Moorty for her meticulous editorial help.

Seaside, California  
March, 2009

Narayana Moorty

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Part 1

UG

## 1. How I Met UG

**First Introduction:** The first time I heard about UG was from Terry Newland (then Terry Agnew). I knew Terry in Berkeley around 1969 when I was living in Berkeley. I once saw an announcement in the UC Berkeley campus newspaper that there was going to be a J. Krishnamurti discussion group meeting in the Student Union Building on campus. I went there mainly out of curiosity (and perhaps also out of a need to belong to a Krishnamurti group). Terry was conducting what seemed like an organizational meeting. After the meeting we became friends.

It must have been some months later in the same year; Terry had taken a fancy to me and invited me to Sonoma State for a talk in a philosophy professor's class. He also asked me to talk to a student group. Then I visited an elementary school where Terry was teaching at the time. He asked me to speak to the kids there and then showed me his yoga class. Before that time he had a falling out with the Krishnamurti people, particularly in Switzerland. Terry was duly kicked out of the Krishnamurti circles. Earlier, he had been specially invited to go to Switzerland to meet and spend time with Krishnamurti. At the same time, he was also listening to UG.

Later, Terry invited me and three of my friends to spend the night in his place in Sebastapol on our way to Carson City where we were also going to visit another friend who was teaching in the Indian Reservation School. Early in the morning, I got to watch Terry do yoga. He looked like the image of health – sounds of breath coming out of his nostrils like steam from pipes and perfectly precise and graceful *asanas*, all done seemingly effortlessly with a robust and statuesque body.

That morning Terry gave us a breakfast of Musilex cereal. He also showed me a picture of UG and spoke of him as an enlightened man. Terry had heard him speak in Switzerland.

He told me later how UG had taken him out for a coffee and talked to him about himself.

UG had invited him, Terry said, to spend three months in India (in Bangalore) with him and write his biography. Terry described how UG's physical features had changed because of the transformation he had undergone: ashes falling out of his forehead, arms turning backward, glands swelling, eyes not blinking, and so on.<sup>1</sup>

Terry was obviously quite touched by the attention UG showered on him. Apparently, UG would get up early in the morning before Terry and fix the hot water for his bath!<sup>2</sup> The biography he was supposed to write, for which purpose he took a typewriter with him, never came to pass.

I heard several such accounts about UG from Terry and simply stored them away in memory without thinking much about them.

**Second Introduction:** The next occasion I heard about UG was when I was in Hawaii with Terry around 1971. My then-partner Linda and I had just gotten married and gone on a trip to Hawaii in response to an invitation from Terry to spend a month with him and learn Yoga. Soon after we arrived at his cabin in Molokai, there was an accident: while Terry was lighting a stove to make dinner for us the lighter fluid caught fire, the fire quickly spread through the whole cabin and the cabin was burnt down to ashes. We escaped with a few belongings, but lost our air tickets in the fire. We spent the

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<sup>1</sup> Till his final days, on special occasions, especially on full moon days, UG would show the swollen glands to those around him.

<sup>2</sup> I know that treatment: there were times when I slept in UG's living rooms. He would come early in the morning at 6 or 7 am, stand by my side and say in a soft and gentle voice: "It's 7 o'clock, you want to get up now?"

night in Terry's friends' house and the next day moved to another friend's rather large house miles away. There Linda and I stayed for a week and learned some yoga from Terry anyway. We came to the main island of Oahu after that, got replacement airline tickets and headed back to the mainland.

A day or two after the cabin had burned down, I went with Linda and Terry to one of his lady friends' place. It was a lone house amid fields and pineapple plantations. There Terry played a tape of UG speaking. Again, I had no reaction. I remember UG's voice in the tape being somewhat screechy.

**Third Introduction:** With Linda and our daughter Bujji, I went to India in the summer of 1975. We spent a few days in Madras and then went to Tiruvannamalai, visiting my old friend, the famous Telugu writer Chalam. Just as I entered Chalam's front yard (across the street from the Ramanashram), and was approaching the house, I heard UG's audio cassette being played. I distinctly remember him in the tape saying something about the space between two thoughts. At that time, I was suffering from a bout of flu. I went upstairs in a few minutes, as the talk didn't make much impression on me. Some kind of Vedanta, I thought. I also saw for the first time a picture of UG on a wall in Chalam's house. Sowris, Chalam's daughter who was a mystic, told me that UG was her distant cousin. I later learned from Chandrasekhar that a few years before this visit, he had told them about UG and showed them a picture of him.<sup>3</sup> Sowris had recognized him as the person to whom she could have been married when she was young, except that UG wasn't interested. Chalam and his family met UG through Chandrasekhar.

Sowris, Chalam and Sowris's 'gang' used to visit UG in Bangalore. Apparently, after the initial visits, UG, in his usual

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<sup>3</sup> Chandrasekhar was a frequent visitor to Chalam's house and regarded Chalam as his 'father' besides being devoted to Sowris.

fashion, started tightening screws on Sowris, bluntly telling her that if she wanted to see him, she should come without all her followers. He also forbade her to sing in his presence (singing was one of her 'hang-ups'!). Later when Chalam was confined to a wheelchair, UG apparently said, "Why should that old man come here all the way? I will go and visit him myself," and did make a trip to Tiruvannamalai.

**My First Meeting with UG:** Then, some years later, sometime in 1981, I got a letter from Nartaki, the lady who lived with Chalam's family for much of her life.<sup>4</sup> She wrote that UG was coming to the U.S., and suggested that I should go and visit him. She gave me an address or a phone number or both. I, of course, promptly ignored her suggestion.

At about the same time (I think it was around September, 1981), Terry also called from Mill Valley saying that UG was in town and was asking about me ("Where is this Dr. Narayana Moorty?"). Apparently, Nartaki had given UG my phone number and address both of which he had promptly lost. He could, however, remember my name. She later told me that she had said to him, "You go and see everyone everywhere; why don't you go see this man when you go the U.S.?" Terry asked me if I wanted to come and visit UG in Mill Valley. I replied that I was too old to go see 'teachers' (I was already burned out with J. Krishnamurti), and that if he was passing through here in Seaside, he would be welcome here. So, I didn't go then.

It must have been about a month or so later: one morning<sup>5</sup>, I got a phone call from Ramesh Ganerwala, an engineer who worked for the California Energy Commission. He was driving UG and Valentine from San Louis Obispo after visiting James

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<sup>4</sup> Having been a widow and had no place to go, she took shelter in Chalam's place and became part of the family.

<sup>5</sup> Probably sometime in October, 1981.

Brodsky (later Jane) or some other person. He said that UG and Valentine were with him nearby in Carmel and that UG wanted to know if they could come and visit. I said they would be most welcome and that they could have lunch at my place as well.

I had a large quantity of *upma* made for my in-laws who had visited me that morning. After breakfast they had all gone out with my present wife, Wendy. I was home alone. The time was about noon. Ramesh drove UG and Valentine in his small old beat-up BMW. I watched through the living-room window as UG got out of the car and walked on the pavement toward my house. With his arms hanging loose, he had the gait of a zombie. His face was devoid of expression and he looked like a man on death row. (Recently, in spite of my denials, UG interpreted this as my saying that I saw 'death' walking in!)

Valentine and Ramesh, as well as UG, all came in. I greeted them, led them into the kitchen and seated them at the kitchen table. UG sat next to the wall in the kitchen and I sat across the table from him. I served lunch to everyone. UG was praising my *upma* to Ramesh saying that it was the "authentic stuff". UG started talking mostly about himself. During the conversation he and I exchanged notes about our backgrounds ~ he coming from Gudivada and me from Vijayawada, both towns in Andhra Pradesh, just twenty miles apart ~ and about the people we had known in common. He went to Madras University for his Honors studies and had as his professor T.M.P. Mahadevan who was also my M. Litt. thesis supervisor. Apparently he dropped out of his Philosophy Honors in Madras University, not having taken the final examinations. We both knew my Sanskrit lecturer in S.R.R. & C.V.R. College, Vijayawada, and a few others. Also, my old atheist friend in Vijayawada, Gora, was his botany lecturer in college in Masulipatnam.

During the conversation, UG joked about Satya Sai Baba, saying how he used to materialize Swiss watches, but that now,



he was only materializing Hindustan watches after Indira Gandhi had imposed import restrictions on Swiss watches.

They stayed for about two hours. As they were leaving, I tried to put my arm around UG's shoulder as a gesture of affection, but he quickly moved away. I realized that he was not open to such physical contact. I was also aware how in Indian culture, touch is a sensitive issue. In the living room, as he was leaving, I shook his hand to say goodbye, addressing him as "Mr. Krishnamurti." He said that I could just as well call him "number 69," like a jail convict, and that people called him "UG"

It was a pleasant experience meeting UG. I had the strange feeling, as we were standing at the kitchen door and holding each other's hands, that he was so similar to me in many ways and that I was meeting myself. The feeling was one of closeness. I was already bonded with UG!

As he left, he invited me to visit him in Mill Valley. I thought that it was merely a formal invitation. I said, "Yes, thank you," and didn't take the invitation seriously.

**First Visit to UG:** I think UG visited me a second time, when Elena, a Russian young lady, was also present<sup>6</sup>. It must have been about a month or so after his first visit. I can't remember much about this visit except that this time he invited both Elena and me to visit him in Mill Valley. Again, I didn't respond except saying "OK, thank you." But the night before Thanksgiving that year, I got another phone call from Ramesh saying that UG would like to see me, could I come? Earlier, I had built all kinds of excuses in my mind not to go to see UG, namely, that the invitation was just a formality and he wasn't

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<sup>6</sup> She had been staying with us for about a month. She was recently separated from her husband and apparently they had both met UG once before in India.

probably very serious about it; that I didn't like driving long distances; that my old AMC Impala car wouldn't make it that far; and that I didn't like traveling ~ to mention a few. But all those excuses had evaporated now, as the invitation this time was so specific and personal that I couldn't as well turn it down. Also, Kodvatiganti Subba Rao, an engineer from Berkeley who worked for the FEMA and who was visiting us for Thanksgiving, was leaving on Thanksgiving Day and was willing to give me and Elena a ride to Mill Valley. So, we all three drove to Mill Valley.



We arrived at UG's house in Mill Valley around 5 o'clock in the afternoon. Subba Rao and UG quickly got into an

argument on the subject of the *Bhagavad Gita*. The argument got nowhere and Subbarao left after about an hour.

Julie Wellings, whom I had met once long ago in 1975 in Tiruvannamalai, when she was living in Chalam's household and learning Telugu from Sowris being her companion, was also visiting UG. She brought her own beer that night and drank it, to my surprise. (I though one didn't drink or smoke in front of 'holy men'.) The next day a few pictures were taken. I have included one of them above.

UG gave me a room upstairs with a big soft bed and some sheets. Not much else. I couldn't sleep very well. I was there a couple of nights. The next day in the kitchen, UG asked me if I could "look into" the cooking which Kim was doing. I put a few spices like cumin (or anything suitable I could find on the shelf) in the food.

On the second day I was there, Ramesh visited. UG went on talking hours on end about his past life, his wife and family, and so on. Then a young man walked in. He sat at the table and they talked about Zen. UG challenged the man, holding a cup in his hand, "Tell me what this is." "Do you really see this? What do you really see here?" And he kept on pounding him with such questions. Soon, he enlisted my help. I remember saying, "There is something funny about Zen. How can anyone certify that someone had *satori* or enlightenment and to what degree?" UG appeared to agree with me.

It was during this visit that Terry brought mimeographed copies of conversations with UG (later to become part of *The Mystique of Enlightenment*) and distributed them to people around. He collected five dollars per copy for the cost of mimeographing. I got a copy for myself.

This was when Elena met Krim, a young American of Russian origin, who had known UG in Switzerland for a number of years. I remember going out for a short walk with them.

Apparently, UG cautioned to Krim as we were leaving, "Make it, short — *kurtze promenade!*" That was the beginning of a disastrous relationship between Krim and Elena which ended several years later. UG repeatedly mentioned how he had warned him. I wonder if he foresaw the outcome of that relationship.<sup>7</sup>

That afternoon, an elderly man and a young couple, all Americans, came to visit UG. I was told that they were friends of Alan Watts. UG received them cordially and soon got involved in a discussion with them. At one stage, I interjected, saying something trying to help the discussion, and UG immediately interrupted me saying, "I want to stop him right there." I got the message and kept quiet.

When I arrived, I had noticed that Valentine was coughing. Trying to help, I gave her a dose of homeopathic Tuberculinum 200 pills. Later, I heard from UG that in India she had had an attack of TB. I regretted giving her the pills, as I worried that my pills might have brought about or worsened the attack. But apparently, all was well after that as I saw her later in Mill Valley, hale and healthy.

I was ready to leave after two days. Kim was driving Ramesh's BMW car for UG in those days. On the third day, sometime in the afternoon, Kim was ready to drive me to the Bus Depot in San Francisco. (I was going to take a local bus there, but UG would have none of that.) I remember giving a hug to Ramesh and Terry and whoever before I left. UG decided to drive with us to the bus depot. I felt flattered. At the bus depot, he got out of the car and bid me farewell. I felt so special that he

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<sup>7</sup> He did make a few futile attempts later [sometimes with me helping him] to break up the relationship. They ended up having a child and then separating.

came to see me off there. I bought myself a ticket, got on the bus and returned to Monterey.

## 2. Later Visits to Mill Valley (and Sausalito)

I think it was Wendy's and my wedding anniversary in January 1982. Just before then, I think I had my first dental treatment (at the age of 48). And that day we visited my colleague Bob O'Brien. I finally got our wedding gift from him – a salad bowl which he had so deftly crafted. It took him so long because he made it himself. It's extremely well made with teak wood. We still own it.

Then we drove up to Mill Valley. We were pretty late in arriving. We arrived probably around 3:00 pm. And UG said he hadn't eaten his lunch yet. It looked like he was waiting for us. (Although, later, when I mentioned the fact, he dismissed it saying he had already eaten once before [but when?]). I apologized. Wendy and I were shown our room. Wendy was given her first sewing chore ("Sweatshop", as UG used to call it) to mend some pants for Valentine. Valentine talked to me in the balcony for a minute. She said UG liked being with me. We both stood in the balcony overlooking the canyon. Wendy took a picture of us from behind.

On the second day, I made cauliflower *pakodis* for everyone. Terry kept the place immaculately clean, the glass table in the living room and all that. I sat there in the morning and UG was sitting across the table. I remarked that I sometimes felt as if there was no space between him and me, as if we were one continuous person. He replied that he felt that way all the time.

There was a couple from San Francisco, the man being a professor of anthropology or something at San Francisco State. I was sitting away from them as they were discussing a family problem with UG – the problem of an unwelcome mother-in-law. UG was lying on his back listening to their problem. UG

said, after hearing them quietly for a while, “You really don’t want her to be with you, do you?” They saw his point.

After they had left, UG asked me what I thought of the conversation. I replied that I thought he had clarified the issue to them very well, I told him. He seemed to be pleased at my remark.

The next morning, there was a large group of people, probably around 20, gathered in the living room. Douglas was there with his wife. Also present were Bob Carr with his video camera and his friend Paul Arms. Before or after the meeting, there was a bit of an exchange between UG and me. I was telling him how Douglas called me in Seaside from a local hotel (he was visiting the area), how he tried to hook me into inviting him for dinner and how I wouldn’t be conned into it. UG remarked in reply, “Conned!” His remark felt like a lashing to me.

At the meeting, I was sitting by the fireplace, and UG came and sat next to me. I learned then and later that that was how he felt people’s bodies. I remarked during the discussion how a master desire runs all our thoughts and other desires. He seemed to agree with me (although he wouldn’t comment).

I think it was also during that visit that I was telling UG how he was shooting everyone down, and he replied that yes, he was shooting at us all the time, but “you duck!”

When Wendy and I were visiting him in Sausalito, one afternoon, we all went for a ride. Valentine, Wendy and whoever went in the fields for a walk, and I stayed in the car with UG, because UG didn’t want to go for a walk. I asked UG why he visited people everywhere and especially me. His answer was, “I always did that in my life.” It was not much of an answer to my mind. A few minutes later, he said he was “sinking”, meaning that his senses would become numb and he was ready to pass out. I understood that that after his

calamity he would literally “die” every day for about 45 minutes, that is, his body would become cold, his breathing and heartbeat would stop, and then suddenly for no apparent reason he would come back alive.

At one point, I was talking about Chalam and Sowris, describing how I had parted ways respectfully with her telling her that I couldn’t believe that God was incarnate in her and speaking through her. Then I told UG how I was first an atheist and to this day, I couldn’t believe in anything religious (or otherwise). He was emphatic in agreeing with me saying that no belief was necessary. Of course, Sowris had replied to my remark to keep an open mind. And I think to this day I have an open mind, although I am always at crossroads. In that same conversation, UG pooh-poohed Sowris and her so-called amorous delusions concerning UG, how his grandmother used to refer to Chalam in a rhyming fashion as “*Chalam gari malam* (the filth of Chalam).”

After the walk, either I volunteered to drive or UG asked me to. I drove that Horizon back. I was extremely nervous and slow; but I made it ok. And UG was of, course, encouraging.

It must be on this visit that the following conversation took place: I said to UG: “Your talk is like sweet poison. No wonder people are attracted to it.” I said poison because people would turn whatever UG says into some kind of teaching, drawing a direction (or as UG says, a ‘directive’) from it, and try to apply it to themselves. UG asked, “Why ‘Sweet’?” I answered, “Sweet, because what you say represents the end of a search.”

His next visit to Seaside happened sometime later. UG called me once from Mill Valley or Sausalito and said he wanted to visit me because he wanted to seek my ‘spiritual advice’ on something. Of course, that was just a joking way for him to preamble his visit.

When he visited, he recounted to me some of the questions people showered on him wherever he went, in the vein of, “Why do you go to all these places? Why do you talk to people?” and so on. I told him that he didn’t owe any explanation to anyone on these matters, and that he could do just as he pleased. If people didn’t like to come and listen to him that was their problem. He repeated my answer to people everywhere, quoting me, of course, as he himself told me later.

Months later, I received a copy of the newly printed book, *Mystique of Enlightenment*, mailed from Mountain View. Obviously UG had it sent to me. When he visited after I received his book, he asked me if I had read it and what I had thought of it. I said I did read the book and that I thought he had made some matters very clear. He seemed satisfied with my reply.

It might be on the same visit: I started telling him about the car I had bought (must have been the Horizon) and whether he would like to see it. He said “No” and nipped my enthusiasm in the bud.

I also mentioned how I felt great around him and was going to say more in that vein. He replied, “Let’s not talk about it. Let’s eat some *upma* together and forget about it.”

I used to invite people whenever UG visited and have a discussion gathering. I would prepare *upma* and *raita* or something and offer lunch to everyone. “What Am I Saying?” was a video produced at one of those meetings (in 1985, I think). Bob Carr invited friends of his who were videographers and arranged for the discussion. A lot of people were there: Jean-Michel Terdjman, Vito and Shalom Victor, Mr. Said, Sunim, Shivasankaran, Linda, Roberto Lupetti, the Italian painter, and also perhaps Mr. Chu. The discussion recorded on that tape is a typical example of how frustrating it is to argue or debate about anything with UG. How could it be otherwise, when he wouldn’t respect any rules of logic like

non-contradiction and couldn’t really explain how he came to know some things? The discussion was dead-ended.

That probably was why I never really argued with him again.

UG always said that it is not possible to “figure him out” or make sense of what he says (maybe because he engaged in constant contradictions), and you can’t get a “directive” out of what he says.

In the early visits, particularly when I saw him in Mill Valley, I noticed some physical changes in myself. At least the first night of the visit, my body would be so excited and tense that I would have hard time falling asleep for hours. It was getting activated for some reason. There was this agitation from the bottom of my belly, as if some energy was being stirred up and I wouldn’t fall asleep easily. Observing other people experiencing similar changes, it became clear to me that my body as well others’ was responding to UG’s presence.

A third visit occurred when Valentine was still traveling with him. I drove all the way to Sausalito in my Horizon. UG gave me a small bedroom in the basement. He was then unexpectedly feeding a cat with the food from the cans. When the cat tried to jump into his lap he would gently push it away. (He was still a Brahmin in that and many other respects.) He sat with me in the living room for lengths of time listening to tapes of Indian music I had brought to play. (I didn’t know then that he was listening just to keep me company.) I even watched a Telugu movie with him, *Sagarasangamam* or *Saptapadi*, I am not sure which (with lots of dances and songs). I thought he had rented it for himself and I was just seeing it because I was there. But it became clear to me later that he had rented it for me. As I was leaving, he asked me to return it in the video store in Berkeley. I asked him if he would like me to rent another movie for him, and he told me no, he had rented it for me.

After a few visits, UG was complaining about his loose teeth, about having to place Valentine somewhere, as she was getting too old to travel with him, and so on. Not much later, on one of his trips to India he did take her to Bangalore and leave her there with the family of Chandrasekhar. This was slightly before I went to visit him in Bangalore in 1986, after I had spent six days with him in Gstaad Switzerland with my daughter, Shyamala.

On another visit to Mill Valley, I was driving my Horizon. It had a bad habit of stalling without notice in the middle of traffic. On that trip, it did, on 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue in San Francisco. I was struck with fear. Of course, when I stopped and waited for about half an hour the car started again.

By this time UG had moved to the “Crow’s Nest”, Terry Newland’s place. In this arrangement, Terry would move out to sleep in Dr. Paul Lynn’s house or his own trailer which he parked elsewhere, while UG stayed in his studio apartment located on the main street in Mill Valley. Of course, UG paid Terry’s rent while he stayed there. On at least one of my visits I slept in the back attic room of that apartment when I stayed there. UG slept in a closet-like room there. Once, in the afternoon, when I had returned from my walk and he was sleeping there, I had gone into the living room and asked someone there jokingly whether the Master was sleeping. UG must have heard this and later quoted me as referring to him as ‘my Master’. I didn’t bother to correct it. Well, after all, he could be the Master (or my Master), although I never quite thought of him in those terms.

The next morning or so, very early in the morning (around 5) I woke up and I think I was standing in the doorway talking to UG. I told UG: “UG, because of seeing you, anything can go in my life, including myself.” (I guess that was a declaration of faith.) He answered, “If you go, Sir, I go.” I am not sure what that meant. You never dared to ask UG for clarification (not that sometimes he wouldn’t give one). You just didn’t have

the guts. Perhaps, it meant he would go out of my system along with myself.

Several incidents happened during my visits to the Crow’s Nest. I will recount them here as I remember:

Terry Newland always had to have a cause ~ if it wasn’t Henry George, it was UG. If it wasn’t UG, it was selling plastic tongue cleaners that he somehow had acquired a fancy for. Terry would also chastise people for their insincerities or half-heartedness or their games. He never really got along with anyone. He worked for brief periods at Bob and Paul’s restaurant (Mervin’s Gardens in Larkspur), but didn’t quite get along with them. For one thing, he had terrible health problems: He had to pee every five minutes or so; he couldn’t keep a job. He applied for federal disability and he wanted me to write a letter for him. I wrote a nice letter. He had a very nice girlfriend who really cared for him. But he would put too many demands on the girlfriends or become too critical of them. He would eventually spurn them.

But Terry really cared for people. Once, as we were standing outside of Crow’s nest on the far side of the road, a couple of kids were crossing the street when a car was coming by. He was really shook up and yelled at the kids not to cross while the car was coming. His face was plain red.

One night when I stayed over in Mill Valley, I slept in Paul Lynn’s house in the basement. I think it was on that occasion that Terry gave me a part of the manuscript of *The Sage and the Housewife* by Shanta Kelker, asked me to read and make corrections and comments. I read it and made them, and returned it to him. I told UG that Terry and I both thought that the manuscript was quite interesting and that Shanta should be encouraged to write a lot more. UG, of course, did just that. Later, the question came up as to who should edit it, because it would be redundant for both Terry and me to do it. Either he or I should, but not both of us, I said. That was

how, I think, it came about that the manuscript was sent to me in stages in small notebooks for editing. I did the editing in Seaside, and the book was eventually published by Frank Naronha in Delhi under the title, *The Sage and the Housewife*<sup>8</sup>. It was a bit after I had gotten introduced to using computers by Vito Victor and was developing my computer word-processing skills, that I edited the book.

UG was duly impressed with my editing skills (of which there aren't that many) telling people that I was the best editor he had ever known. He also had Terry send me the manuscript of *Mind is a Myth* (the title was given later by UG after much thought) and asking me to edit it. It was well written, so I didn't have to do much editing (Terry did such a good job himself); but I made the glossary more systematic.

About that time, Chandrasekhar and his wife Suguna were visiting from India. They, and I, were put up in Terry's girlfriend's apartment. I remember food being brought from a restaurant. The next morning, I drove Chandrasekhar and Suguna to Monterey where they spent a couple of days in my place. Suguna promptly had a migraine headache and hardly ate anything. We went to K-Mart where she shopped for dresses for her daughters. It was at that time that Chandrasekhar wanted me to edit another transcribed UG conversation with some scientists, a piece in which UG said something to the effect that just as cells have to cooperate with other cells for self-preservation, human beings have to do the same. Chandrasekhar and UG both liked my editing.

On one of those visits to the Crow's Nest I took UG, Krim and Terry (or perhaps Douglas) on a ride into the mountains next Mill Valley in my temperamental Horizon. Promptly the car stalled on one of those roads. I told everyone that the car wouldn't start again for another half hour. UG said, "You

guys go for a walk, I will rest here." We all went for a little walk and UG moved the seat backward and lay down there and fell asleep! He was absolutely worriless in spite of the fact we were stuck.

I think it was on the same visit that Sajid (Hussein, later changed to Martin) was going to visit UG in Mill Valley. UG had asked him when they spoke on the phone earlier to come around 1:00 pm. We arrived there after the drive a couple of minutes later. And Sajid had left a note saying he was there and was about to leave. UG said, "I told you I would be back at 1:00 p.m." So precise!

On one of the visits, Sajid and Jean-Michel also came to visit. We probably all drove together. UG wanted me to sleep in his place while the other two were going to stay in a Howard Johnson's. I told UG that as they came with me, I couldn't as well take the "privileged" position and let them go to a hotel. So I went with them and stayed in the hotel. Jean-Michel and I shared a room.

On one of those early visits, we all went to Pasand's, an Indian restaurant, in San Rafael or some other nearby town for lunch. As we were about to cross the road to get to the restaurant, I noticed that UG, as usual, threw up stuff into a garbage bin. I also saw how parts of his face were trembling. Then it was clear to me that the tremblings were energy outbursts.

I used my credit card to pay for the food and forgot my card there when we left. After we got back to the Crow's Nest, I remembered it and called the restaurant; luckily the card was still there. I was so nervous that I had lost the card. Then some pictures that had been taken by someone were shown. And UG gave me one of me, which was pretty ugly. I almost refused to accept it, but UG insisted. As I got into the car, the thermos I was carrying tilted and much of the coffee in it was spilled. I thought this was probably a punishment for my being resistant to take the ugly picture.

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<sup>8</sup> My article on UG, "Pulling Yourself Up by Your Bootstraps" was added at the end of the book later in the second edition.

A couple of times I slept in Bob and Paul's house. I remember on one occasion having a beer with them and talking about the paper I had written on J. Krishnamurti: "Fragmentation, Meditation and Transformation." Paul was pretty incisive in his critique, I thought.

On another visit, one of my friends, K.S. Sastry, a professor of Metallurgy at UC Berkeley, came to visit UG, on my persuasion. He talked a little, but neither he nor UG seemed impressed with each other. It might be on the same visit that Jeffrey Mishlove came for an initial conversation with UG as a preamble to a TV interview with him. I wasn't too impressed with him. But the TV interviews, at least one of them, turned out to be a success. Mishlove was pretty passive in those interviews (there were three of them). The interviews are still sold commercially. I think one of those interviews of UG is bundled with another with John Searle, the famous philosopher from UC Berkeley, whom I assisted as a TA in my final year there.

Terry was also trying to make efforts to "sell" UG to the media. This was during a time when UG was announcing that he was interested in getting into the media. "Just so, someone somewhere will get the message that there is nothing to get," he said. Terry was sending copies of *Mystique* to various people, including Larry King.

There was an occasion at Crow's Nest when Terry tried to pick an argument with me in front of UG, attacking my "wishy-washiness" or something (just because I wouldn't say much in front of UG). I tried to defend myself and in the process UG was putting his arm out wanting to stop our argument, and in the counterattack I gently pushed UG's arm away, saying, "Wait, UG." Of course, UG withdrew his arm.

Douglas, Krim, Paul and Bob were all around once. There was some discussion going on (this time about sex and pleasure, I

think). And we were so marveling at the quality of the discussion that we regretted not having a tape recorder to record the conversation. But we all admitted that the quality of the discussion would change radically if there were to be a tape-recorder in the middle. Those electrifying conversations could never be repeated. We couldn't even remember much of them.

I remember there were about ten people one night; UG offered to make a quick (10-minute) dinner for them all. In about ten minutes he produced a delicious potato flakes and cheese dish for the ten people! We were all impressed.

Terry had a hard time getting along with people. One night I and Larry Morris went to his place (which he must have rented while UG stayed at Crow's Nest) to spend the night. He recently had returned from an unsuccessful trip to Mexico. He had gone there, with the help of money from UG, to try to find a different way of living. He wasn't doing very well. (He had sold his motorcycle and whatever else.) He had his usual troubles of meeting girls and making friends. He would alienate people quickly because he was so demanding. He still had trouble making a living and keeping jobs because of his poor health condition. He had some problem with his urinary tract (he had intestinal cancer). On top of it, he had had an unsuccessful septum surgery which he went through to correct a deviated septum (to help his breathing in Yoga - what a stupid idea!). He had infections upon infections which were not cured by antibiotics. He was in miserable shape. And he had pretty poor childhood memories. His father had been chased by the McArthur House Committee for Un-American Activities for being a Communist. His childhood was troubled. Apparently, he had been beaten by his father even when he was a teenager. That night, for the first time, I saw Terry crying. He was in pain. His whole life was in total darkness, except for a little light at the end of the tunnel -UG. I felt so sorry for Terry.



Soon after, Terry died in pretty miserable circumstances. This happened sometime around 1991 (soon after Valentine had died in India).<sup>9</sup> UG had dropped by in Seaside on his way to Mill Valley from Los Angeles, I think. He might have spent a day here. But that afternoon UG and others all went to Costco and from there they left. As he was getting into the car, UG looked pretty strange. He must have already a premonition of Terry's death.

When UG arrived in Mill Valley, apparently, he couldn't find Terry. The next morning, I suppose, the hospital called for Terry, looking for him for his missed appointment. Then UG sent Julie Thayer and someone else to look for Terry. Terry was found by Julie dead and lying on his face in the basement apartment of Dr. Paul Lynn, where he had been house-sitting while the Lynns were away. The body was soon brought to the mortuary next door to the Crow's Nest, the last place Terry ever wanted to enter. UG never bothered to look at the dead body or go to the funeral. But when Terry's parents arrived for the burial, UG offered to buy Terry's sofa and other furniture from the parents to help them pay for the funeral, the furniture which he helped Terry buy in the first place.

Some or all of the stuff he later gave away to Krim and whomever, because that was the end of the Crow's Nest and of Mill Valley for UG. The landlady was willing to rent it to UG, but he wasn't interested.

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<sup>9</sup> Here is Julie's account of it: "Anyway, yes, we stopped at your (Moorty's) house on the way down to L.A. in September of 1990 (Valentine died later, in January of 1991), UG and I and Douglas and Olivia, and when we returned to Mill Valley a few days later, Terry was missing... I did find him dead in Lynn's house, but there was no blood. He had suffered a massive heart attack and was lying on his stomach in the living room, near the telephone, not in the basement.

On one visit, Scotty from Ojai came with a friend of his, Ted, who was an editor or something of the sort. We all three went to the town center café for coffee on a Sunday morning. Ted started pouring out his gripes about UG, how UG said the same thing over and over again and how boring he was. I tried to defend UG a bit saying that you don't go to UG if you are looking to be entertained. I don't think I ever saw Ted again. But, of course, I saw Scotty many times, including once in his house in Ojai, California, with UG.

In some ways I was responsible for Julie meeting UG. It happened sometime (maybe about a year or two) before. I used to place some of UG books for sale in the Pilgrim's Way bookstore in Carmel and also leave a card with my phone number and a note in each of the books saying that if the reader was interested in meeting UG, he or she should contact me. Julie was visiting Carmel. Her friend Tom Head was a part owner of K-Mart and lived in Carmel Valley. Julie was then a disciple of Andrew Cohen, along with some other ladies, one of whom, Luna Tarlo, was Andrew's mother. Julie had seen *The Mystique of Enlightenment* once on Andrew's shelf and had looked into it. In Carmel at the Pilgrim's Way she bought a copy of it and called me up after she saw the card.

She and Tom came over to my house and talked about UG, expressing an interest in meeting him. Apparently Julie was involved in some Zen group doing community service or whatnot. I can't remember now, but either she went with the other ladies to see UG in Mill Valley or she met him at a meeting here.<sup>10</sup> Anyway, when she went to see UG, he in his usual forceful fashion told them, "if the book had done its job you wouldn't be here." She and the other ladies had been

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<sup>10</sup> Julie says: "I met UG at YOUR HOUSE, also Luna did. Then we all went to see him again in Mill Valley two days later, as we were moving into a house there nearly next door to the crow's nest. We immediately all left Andrew's community after that meeting with UG."

going to Mill Valley to attend Andrew Cohen's *satsangs*. After meeting UG (or about that time) there was some turmoil in the sub-group and they all decided to leave Andrew's group.

Later on, Julie came to see me with the other three ladies (one of them was Polish, called Elisabeth, another was Luna and I can't recall the third one. Maybe there was no third one.) I made pancakes for them all that morning.

One evening when I was at the Crow's Nest, there was a row between UG and Julie. It had something to do with the videos Julie was shooting. UG was asking her to catalog them and edit them; and Julie was resisting the idea saying that she had neither the equipment nor the skills to do it. I tried to clarify to her exactly what UG was saying, and UG agreed with my interpretation. She could have just done that much and no more and let things take their own course. But Julie could be stubborn too.

I think at that time Julie was crashing at UG's place.<sup>11</sup> Another time Julie came over to Seaside to see me for a couple of days. Apparently, she had another row with UG<sup>12</sup>. I also noticed the disciplining type of schoolteacher-pupil relationship developing between them: UG correcting every move of hers.

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<sup>11</sup> Julie says: "I was not 'crashing' at UG's house, I was staying in the bedroom for at least a month. UG had asked Scott to build a little room in the attic for himself so I could have the bedroom."

<sup>12</sup> Julie's remark: "And I wouldn't call those "fights" with UG, he was *always* blasting me and I was stupid and stubborn and couldn't listen. But I have yet to see *anyone* really listen to him; it was impossible on some level. We were all just listening to ourselves. Nobody really knew the nature of the relationship I had with UG and that is okay with me, even I am only beginning to understand it now, a little too late."

Then UG had asked her to "go see Moorty, spend a couple of days with him and talk things over." She and I had gone to Point Lobos for a walk. It was useless to talk to her or point out things to her; she would never quit her attachments, attitudes and beliefs. It was by then obvious to me that she was simply in love with UG. After all these years, she still is. I believe she is still grieving the loss of UG, like several others I know.

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Those were just the beginnings of the strong connection between UG and me. UG visited us here in Seaside at least once almost every year since the first few meetings, and I in turn, on his invitation, visited him many times on various occasions and in many places including Corte Madera, San Rafael, Los Angeles, Hemet, and Palm Springs in California and Lake Havasu in Arizona. I also spent times with him in Bangalore, Madras, Yercaud and Mysore in India on various occasions, once, in 1990, with my wife and children. On his invitation I (sometimes with my family) spent several summers with him in Gstaad, Switzerland.

On all those trips, I had memorable conversations, car rides and restaurant meals as well as delectable meals cooked by UG himself. I had made numerous acquaintances around UG's gatherings and some close friendships as well, although I had lost some close friends too because of my friendship with UG.

It's hard for me to recall every detail now, but I will include the trips or events that have made an indelible mark in the following chapter.

### 3. Notable Travels and Visits

For many people, knowing UG involved travel to places all over the world, for as UG would boast, he never stayed in one place more than six months. Even at an advanced age, he managed to keep moving. For many years, he rented the same Chalet Sunbeam in Gstaad Switzerland, and people would visit him there from all over. He would make brief trips to other countries in Europe from that base. While I knew him, he visited California almost every year, first staying in the Mill Valley area, then in Palm Springs. He also made regular brief visits to New York, passing through, as it were. He often went to India, staying for some time with Chandrasekhar and Suguna in Bangalore before and during the time they cared for Valentine, and after. He also made many trips to Australia, and even China, although his forays into China were always solo. He traveled simply and insisted on carrying his own small suit case or carry-on bag, his total sum of luggage, a point of pride. In his last years, he forwent travel to Australia and China, but made short trips by car to Germany and more extended ones to Italy, his last destination.

I visited UG in many of these places, at his invitation, and always was treated with great hospitality by UG. Here are some highlights.

#### First Trip, Gstaad and Bangalore, 1986

Late in 1985, UG suggested I should visit him in Gstaad. I told him that I wanted to bring my 12-year old daughter with me, and that I would also like to go to India, since it would be so much closer—less miles and less cost. But, I said I wouldn't go to India unless he was there, because half the fun of going to India would be to visit him there! So he promised to be there at the time I would be there.

It was arranged that Shyamala and I would go for about two weeks, spending 6 days in Gstaad, and then also go to see friends in Marseille, Paris and Heidelberg, after which I would send Shyamala back to the US. I would then go on to India, spend some time visiting family members, and also time with UG in Bangalore. My wife, Wendy, and one year-old son, Kiran, would remain at home in Seaside.

#### Gstaad, 1986

UG stayed in touch with us constantly by sending transportation timetables, picture postcards, and whatnot. The initial travel was difficult, with Shyamala getting airsick on the plane and in the Frankfurt airport, and me having to clean up after her. In the airport I had difficulty finding a money exchange bureau, then getting us on the train to Berne. Making a call to UG involved some fumbling and help from a German man, as I didn't understand about the extra "0" in the number (I didn't know I wasn't supposed to dial that). Once the call was successfully made, I informed UG of our arrival time, and also of Shyamala's sickness, but when I returned to my seat, Shyamala suddenly got better.

We both were starved. We had to change the trains in Basel carrying our stuff across the train tracks. That was another hassle. Finally, around 7:30 PM or so in the evening we arrived and were met in the train station by UG and Paul Sempé who drove us to Gstaad in an hour and a half. It was dark, so we couldn't see much. Once arrived, we had some soup and bread, which revived us. Kim was cooking for UG and Valentine (and others too). We were given two small rooms upstairs to sleep, and we were ready to rest.

The next day, I had a better picture of the Chalet Sunbeam as well as the surroundings in Gstaad. It was two-storied Chalet, with the landlord, Herr Grossman and his wife, living upstairs. Also from a side staircase you could go to an upstairs apartment and a room for guests. There was a bath with a

shower downstairs. The Chalet stood on a small hill and you could see the town main street, tennis courts and the surrounding magnificent mountains all around covered with green grass which was mown by the owners of places in the summer time. In winters, Gstaad was a ski resort place and in summers there were world-open tennis tournaments. The place was abuzz with tourists in summers. The weather was pleasant with occasional showers. Gstaad was a delight to tourists.

I met many people visiting UG that were new to me, but whom I would see many times again on future visits. These included Paul Sempé, Marissa, Salvatore, Henk Shoneville, Robert Geissman, and Herr Grossman, the rather peculiar owner/resident of the chalet. Paul was once a pacifist and used to listen to J. Krishnamurti regularly. Salvatore and Marissa were also once followers of Krishnamurti. Henk, who ran an Advaita ashram in Amsterdam, once took me out for a beer and complained about how badly UG would treat him in spite of the fact that he did all the arrangements for UG's visits in Amsterdam. Paul Sempé would discuss Descartes with me. Being a Frenchman, Paul was quite enamored by Descartes. Once, UG was trying to listen in, but I was too self-conscious to speak freely. Of course, UG was critical of Descartes.

Shyamala was entertained by Marissa and Kim. Marissa's teenage son, Lorenzo, being there was very helpful. They all took good care of Shyamala. Kim took Shyamala on a hike on the mountains and they all played Dungeons and Dragons. I remember Marissa even doing my laundry.

In the morning of the second day or so of our arrival, UG took us to Mount Egli and took our picture there with our camera. That was touching. He left us there, asking us to take the lift to go up on the mountain. We did, and Shyamala and I walked on the Alps. Shyamala said, "I am not going home. This is my home!" I was pleased with her response. When we got back down to the town, it was 2:30 or so in the afternoon,

too late to expect lunch at UG's. So we decided to have lunch in a restaurant downtown. We went into an Italian restaurant and ordered some minestrone soup. I had to make sure, in my broken French, that there was no meat in it. (I used the word "*viande*".) Shyamala thought the soup was delicious.

Generally, the food we had with UG in "Sunbeam" was good—the usual UG menu of soups with cream, bread, cheese and yogurt.

We went on car trips to various places. Paul Sempé drove us to Zurich one day, where we ate lunch in an Indian restaurant. In Zurich we met this German doctor and his psychiatrist wife (they were young) whom I had occasion to meet again much later. Paul also drove us to see Berne and Lucerne. The night before that drive, the weather was predicted to be dismal. The television showed a picture of the whole of Switzerland overcast with a forecast of rain. But the next day, it was sunny. In Berne, UG walked around the shops with us, and bought us some freshly-squeezed orange juice and chocolate for Shyamala. Only when we had returned to Gstaad did it begin to get cloudy. Observing this, I asked UG, "Should we say it was UG's miracle or simply that the weather man was mistaken?" UG replied quietly, "Let's say that the weather man was mistaken."

During our stay, Shyamala and I took pictures all over the place. Once Shyamala's camera fell on the street. I later had to supplement my pictures with Chandrasekhar's either because mine were lost or there was not enough film left.

I think it was on this trip I asked UG if he would be interested in reading the article I wrote about J. Krishnamurti ("Fragmentation, Meditation and Transformation"). It was published later (in 1988) in the Journal of the Indian Council of Philosophical Research. UG said that he would always be interested in reading what I had to write. So, I gave it to him. He read it overnight and the next morning he nicely put it

under a couple of other books or papers so that it would not be easily noticed. I asked him what he thought of the paper. He said I made clear some of the difficulties which the reader might have in understanding Krishnamurti, and the conversation ended there.

I commented to UG at one point how all the people who gathered around UG for his sessions (I had Robert Geismann and Bernard, the mailman from England, in mind when I made the remark) were so mature. And UG's reply was astonishing: "The Old Man (meaning J. Krishnamurti) prepared them all." That told me the regard with which he held J. Krishnamurti, contrary to all appearances.

Sometimes, UG would flare up on one person or another. I saw him flare up on Kim and another time on Paul Sempé. I remember Kim once saying, "You want me to leave now?" Then UG would say, "If you want to..." and soften. There was no apparent reason to flare up on Paul either. UG's rationale was always, "This gun shoots wherever and whenever it sees the movement of thought."

One of those days, may be on another trip, I saw UG yelling at Herr Grossman, calling him bastard or whatever, because Grossman had just raised his rent. And of course, UG didn't like the idea. Grossman was quite money-conscious and, in spite of his riches, lived very modestly.

Grossman tackled me once when I was climbing down the stairs. He stopped me for at least 40 minutes or an hour and bored me with his talk about Rosicrucian teachings.

People would often gather informally in chairs outside on the small lawn area in front of the chalet, with the backdrop of the town below and mountains behind. One afternoon, I was standing there, and UG asked me to please sit down. I told him I didn't mind standing. He replied that it hurt him if I stood. Without making a fuss, I sat down.

Our stay in Gstaad was filled with trips, conversations and new acquaintances. It was memorable.

Another car trip we had was by Salvatore, the architect. We went to Geneva to receive Chandrasekhar at the airport (he was returning from the US after a training course in Detroit). It rained and hailed heavily in Geneva and on return we found a dent on Salvatore's car from the hail.

On the day of our departure, we were driven (I think by Paul Sempé) early in the morning around 3 AM to the border train station and dropped off there to go to France via Milan. Shyamala and I put the luggage in the cloak room and went out to a restaurant for breakfast. We got on the train, and it went through a very long tunnel on the borders between Switzerland and Italy. When we got out of the tunnel it just stopped raining, everything was wet and fresh. The mountain sides were green. The train stopped at a station. Everything was fresh and green: the wet pavement reflected the sun. It was one of the most beautiful sights you could see. We continued on the journey to Marseille where we were met by my old friend Paul Albert.

After a couple of days with Paul and his family, then five days in Paris and four days in Heidelberg, I returned with Shyamala to Frankfurt. I sent her back to the U.S. and took a plane to Bombay, India.

### **Bangalore, 1986**

After visiting my relatives in Bombay, I went to Hyderabad to visit my brother. From there I tried to contact Chandrasekhar in Bangalore by phone to find out about UG's arrival and stay. I couldn't locate him, so I left a message. Chandrasekhar never answered my message.

I then went on a trip south, first to see Kumaraswami Raja in Annamalai. Raja was a professor of linguistics in Annamalai University. He used to be a close friend of mine in Visakhapatnam where we both worked in the University. He was very much into J. Krishnamurti, having read many of his books. Many years ago he had helped me go to the U.S. by encouraging me to send my papers and submitting them in the philosophy department in UC, Berkeley. I spent a couple of days with him in Annamalai, met his new wife Saraswati and his son Mohan. I played all my Amsterdam tapes of UG for him on his tape recorder. Hank had given me these tapes in Gstaad. He had made them himself; he was actually selling them to others, but he gave a set to me free of charge. The tapes must have made an impression on Raja. He said, "This must be another Krishnamurti looming on the horizon." After a couple of days of visiting, Raja dropped me off at the Annamalai bus station about 10 in the night for me to travel to Bangalore. He promised he would come to Bangalore a day or two after I arrived there, and I asked him to put himself up in a hotel and come to 40 K.R. Road, Chandrasekar's house, where UG was living.

The next morning, after a sleepless night and with a back that felt broken, I arrived in Bangalore. I hired an auto rickshaw and went to 40 K.R. Road. Just as I was getting out of the vehicle I saw UG walking away on the street in an Indian dress (*lalchi* and *pajamas*). I hailed him; he turned around and recognized me, and took me into the house. He and Chandrasekhar showed me the room where I was going to sleep. It was next to the street, but quite decent. They arranged for a smoke device to keep the mosquitoes out. Usha, UG's daughter, was there and also Valentine, living in the downstairs room at that time. There were a couple of servants and a constant traffic of people, Brahmachari, Kalyani, Radhakrishna, Nagaraj (the personal assistant to the Postmaster General), Shanta, her children Mittu and Prashant, Gopikrishna and others. I chastised Chandrasekhar for not answering my phone messages, but UG calmed me down,

saying that since I was there anyway, it didn't matter. There was also a mention of *Sudha*, my translation of Chalam's Telugu poetry and Chandrasekhar was critical of it and seemed not to like it.

I stayed in Bangalore for six days. I was planning to stay there for less, but UG arranged my itinerary, insisting that I stay there for six days. (I had stayed for six days in Gstaad, I must stay here for six days, went the reasoning.)

There were all kinds of visitors there. Kalyani was one of them. She would sing and dance and beg for money. She was well to do, being the sister of a civil service officer. Later, she died of breast cancer or something. She was apparently pretty psychic and a bit crazy. All kinds of stories about her are told in *Stopped in Our Tracks, Series I*, by Chandrasekhar.

Shanta Kelker was a frequent visitor. I held her arm once while UG was watching. She was having an affair with one of the gurus in town on the sly, and UG would constantly chastise her for that, asking her what would happen to the children. The guru was apparently a no-good guy and eventually UG was able to wean her off of him.

There was the bicycle shop owner Niranjan, Radhakrishna, the tea merchant, Ramachandra and his partner, Rechal Das, financiers to the movies, Chandrasekhar, the architect and his wife, Gopi Krishna and his wife, Brahmachari, the would-have-been Sanakaracharya of the Kudali Math, Satyanarayana, the statistician/astrologer, etc. etc. We all sat on the floor or on a cot, while UG sat on a chair. There were few chairs. Lots of gossip and joking around made for a party-like atmosphere.

Mahesh Bhatt was also there, staying at the Woodlands hotel. A couple of days after I arrived, we went to see him there. And Mahesh ordered some beer. Brahmachari, the *swamiji*, was there. Then Raja was ushered in, as he had arrived at 40 K.R. Road and they brought him over. Apparently, he was

given the room which Usha was occupying, UG asking her to sleep in the living room instead. He, myself, Mahesh and Nagaraj, all drank beer in UG's presence—generally unheard of. Brahmachari who would not normally approve such things, nevertheless joined the merriment minus the drinking. Apparently Raja had been asked to take up a room there in K.R.Road house, the room which was being occupied by Usha, so he didn't have to stay in a hotel.

Another night, UG asked me to join him to go to Mahesh's room where a drinking session had been arranged. We took an elevator to go to Mahesh's room. Mahesh wasn't in his room. But UG had a key, and on entering the room we could hear a big band playing next door downstairs. It was so loud that I thought UG would do something to quell the noise. He went into the bathroom and closed the curtain there and came back into the main room. As he was sitting down in the armchair he swung his arm broadly. A minute later the band noise stopped and never came back again. Mahesh and I had did have a couple of drinks in the room, and then the three of us went downstairs for dinner. I can't remember Raja or anyone else being there at that time.

Nagaraj was so addicted to smoking. He was taking "French leave" all the time from his work to be with UG. He wanted to quit smoking but couldn't. UG would advise him that he shouldn't quit; he should keep smoking. If he quit, UG warned, it would be a great shock. Some time later Nagaraj even called me at home in Seaside and asked me for tips to quit smoking. I told him to "just quit". Anyway, apparently he did, and he died soon after. UG, I heard, went to visit his family to console them.

In the house there were two servants taking care of Valentine. Whenever UG walked in I noticed how the faces of these servant maids would expand with broad smiles. They were happy to see him. Of course, he always remunerated them

lavishly for their work. Why wouldn't they be happy? Besides, UG's aura was such.

One night, Chandrasekhar and I brought *vadais* and hot chutney from a restaurant nearby. We all ate them to spare the women cooking in the house.

During my stay, I was offering to spend some money on this or that, but UG would always stop me, saying, "Wait, your turn will come." When we were on a shopping spree, one time UG sent me and Mittu ostensibly to shop for comic books for Kiran, but the outing was apparently arranged to give a blasting to Shanta in our absence. I did buy a bunch of comic books, including a couple for Mittu as a gift. We went into a cloth shop looking for a *sari* for Wendy. UG let me pay for a piece of fabric for him and he helped me to pick a nice *sari* for Wendy, a blue one.

The time in Bangalore was the last time I saw my friend Raja. While there, he once participated in a conversation with UG. As usual, the topic was enlightenment. UG is usual downplayed the idea of "waiting for something to happen." Although I never saw Raja again, I wrote to him a couple of times, but never heard from him. I learned a couple of years later from his son Mohan that one evening around 5 p.m. he went for a walk downtown and never returned. His family and friends advertised in the papers and other venues searching for him. No one knew what happened to him.

I mentioned this later to UG and mused aloud that someone might have murdered him. UG replied, "Murdered, no!" I didn't know how to take it.

As my time in Bangalore was coming to a close, I remarked to UG that it seemed about 90% of the people who came to see him there were really there for the supernatural effect of his and not for his teaching. He replied, "Why 90%? All of them!"

After the six days had passed, I said goodbye. Suguna made some *Upma* for me (as it was too early for dinner) and I ate it. As a parting gift, UG gave me some incense sticks to give to my family.

### Bangalore, 1990

On one of his visits to Seaside, UG invited Wendy to come to Switzerland, with our two children, 4-year old Kiran and by then a 17-year old Shyamala. I told him that if we went all the way to Switzerland, it would be only a bit longer to go to India, but it would cost too much to go to both places. UG said that it would be more interesting for Wendy to go to India. I pointed out that I wouldn't care to go to India if he weren't there, so as before, he said he would make a point of being there when we were there. So, the trip was arranged.

The four of us traveled from Seaside first to Madras, and then took another plane to Bangalore. Julie and Chandrasekhar received us at the airport.

At 40 K.R. Road, our family was given a special big room upstairs and was treated like royalty. The food was great. And I remember going for a walk with UG (Wendy following and taking a picture) in the Lalbagh gardens. And also, UG invited us all to the M.T.R Restaurant where everything was made with ghee.

We stayed in Bangalore for 10 days. On the third day, it was June 25, my birthday. For that day, I arranged that Julie would take the family in a taxi to Mysore and show them around while I spent time with UG in Bangalore. But at 6 in the morning, just as I went downstairs in my pajamas to get some coffee, I learned that Julie had backed out of going—she couldn't tear herself away from UG! UG suggested that I should take them to Mysore, after all, they were my family. I

agreed, and got ready in 15 minutes. I did have a great birthday celebration, with a lovely beer-and-cashew-nut repast in the luxury hotel located in the Brindavan Gardens near Mysore.

One morning, UG arranged for me to go have a Nadi reading (I think it was called the *Agasthya Nadi*). I had anticipated this possibility even while I was back in the US, as there was talk about it then. So I had my horoscope that had been done by my late father sent to me from Hyderabad and I took it with me to the reading, along with information about Wendy's birthplace and date and time. We had both our readings done. Brahmachari and Chandrasekhar were with us, as well as Wendy, and I think Shyamala and Kiran. The session took place I think for no more than an hour. At the end I gave the Nadi reader a hundred rupees. The Nadi reader had long matted hair and read the palm leaves inscribed with archaic Tamil (I think) text which he translated into contemporary Kannada. Chandrasekhar recorded it and typed it up that night. There were some predictions about my being famous and rich in some sort of international business, about my living till I was 93, that Wendy was my second wife, and that my mother was going to die in the next year or two, due to her past *karma*. The reading was right about Wendy, and perhaps my mother, but not about the "international business." Neither I nor UG ever believed that I would be good in any kind of business. At the end of the session, I was prompted to ask three questions. I asked, as one of them, whether I would get enlightened (or, when I would get enlightened.) The answer came that I would be enlightened when I was 93. When this was reported to UG, he chastised me for my question. I said I just asked out of curiosity, although, I told him, I believed that in some sense I was already enlightened. That put an end to the conversation.

One afternoon, there was big gathering at 40 K.R. Road. The upstairs room was packed with people. A little girl from a Telugu family was asked to perform classical dance for UG.



Her teacher was accompanying her with her singing. It was painful to watch. The dance was so long and the girl was literally in pain. Julie shot a video of this and other events. At some point in the late afternoon everyone moved up onto the rooftop terrace. Evan Valentine was carried up the stairs in her wicker chair. There Shyamala charmed everyone with a dance, and also her dramatization of a Dr. Seuss's poem "What Was I Scared Of?" It was quite nice. While everyone was chatting, Shyamala and the other girls, Mittu, Aruna and Archana, were teaching each other some dance movements. Mittu and Prashant were Shanta's children. Shanta is the author of *The Sage and the Housewife*. Aruna and Archana were Chandrasekhar's daughters. Bharati, UG's elder daughter, was also present. The women had a grand time decking Shyamala with *saris*.

Another day, I invited everyone for lunch at the Woodlands Hotel. We all ate pizza and other foods. Indian food was served, but in another part of the restaurant where you ate in the Indian style.

The night before we left, we saw UG off at the airport. He left to go somewhere. The same night, after 10 o'clock, Chandrasekhar took me to see his friend Satyanarayana, the statistician, who was also an astrologer, for a reading. Satyanarayana was kind enough to give a detailed reading. I did take some notes. The reading didn't seem all that striking to me, when I looked over the notes later.

Apparently, Satyanarayana was pretty psychic too. He could cite phrases from a page of a book, along with the page number, of UG's (I think *Mind is a Myth*) before it ever came to be published. Apparently, his father was a monk; I noticed his picture in one of the rooms.

On our final day, we were all invited for lunch by Ramachandra and Rechal Das. They were partners and billionaires. There were snacks and beer and all that. But we

didn't see their families. There was some philosophical talk, part of it turning around who would succeed UG. I felt that they got interested in me because somehow they suspected that I might be the one to succeed UG. Not a chance! (In fact, I commented once on UG in everyone's presence: "UG is an odd ball. I don't want to be like an odd ball!") After the lunch, Ramachandra dropped us off at the airport.

From there we flew to Hyderabad, where we visited my brother and his family for several more days. In Hyderabad, my family was treated for dinners and parties by UG's daughters Bharati and Usha. UG's grandson Kamesh drove us around showing his place of work, the Defense Research Laboratories.

We then briefly visited several other places, Bombay, Guntur, Delhi, Agra, Banaras and Madras, partly on a lecture tour, before returning to Seaside.

### **Carmel, 1991**

Although this period of four weeks did not involve traveling for me, it was the only time that UG stayed for more than two or three days in the area where I live. The occasion was to provide Mahesh Bhatt a place and some assistance from me and UG to write his biography of UG (*UG Krishnamurti, A Life*, published later in 1992 by Penguin Books, India).

UG sent some money from Europe, asking me to find a place for him and Mahesh to stay while they visited the US with the plan of Mahesh writing UG's biography. Wendy and I found a vacation rental house in Carmel for them and rented it for a month. They arrived and set up house there. I brought in my 286 PC computer and a dot-matrix printer. The idea was for me to help Mahesh write the biography in the afternoons when I wasn't teaching in the college. For a whole week I came, but there was no movement, as Mahesh didn't make even the first stab at writing. I was beginning to doubt if the

biography would ever happen. But soon after, he picked up speed and would dictate material to me and I would type it into the computer while simultaneously editing where it was needed.

There were few visitors – UG made sure of that. There was this odd and odoriferous couple whose story I recounted in the chapter on “UG’s Teaching Process.” Larry Morris came for a couple of weeks to help with the writing. UG himself had newspaper and magazine clippings as well as some old letters with him, and he would dictate some of those to me. At times, he and Larry (and I too) would work together on a paragraph or two. Also, Douglas Rosestone visited, giving an account of the night of the calamity, which was duly recorded in the biography. [A few others mostly from the San Francisco Bay area and Santa Cruz managed to drop in for short visits.]

Mahesh was intense in his work. When he was not working, he was talking to his daughter on his birthday or to some others in Bombay about his films. He never cared much about what he ate or drank and lived practically on what UG provided him. At nights, when he was alone, he would write his stuff and dictate the material when I was on the computer.

The last night of the writing of the biography, at about 10 p.m., the computer keyboard promptly broke down. Not knowing what else to do, I called the person who had sold me the computer. Fortunately not only did he answer, but he said he could replace the one I had with another one right then! I told Mahesh I would go down to this man’s shop to fetch the replacement keyboard and Mahesh said he would go with me. After returning at about 10:30 PM, I told Mahesh that it was my job now to put all the material of the book together and he could retire for the night. But Mahesh insisted that he would sit with me: in his movie-making work he was used to things breaking down in the middle of the night and to sitting with people working with him late into the night. I started working.

Around 2 AM, UG suddenly walked in from his bedroom and declared, “I still sense a block here. These two chapters (whatever they were) should not be separate. They should be merged together.” I told him that then the resulting chapter would be too long; some material would have to be cut. I think the material that could be cut was mostly about Mahesh’s relationship with Parveen Babi. Mahesh said that he couldn’t do it because the material was too close to him. So, I said I would do it and in about 10 minutes time the chapters were merged and cut down to size. This was another of the many instances where being with UG meant things could change instantly, at any time; one could not hesitate or ponder, but had to move quickly.

The book was ready to be printed by 6 AM. I sat down with UG to design the cover page and was wondering if UG had a picture of himself to put on the cover page. He went into his bedroom and returned with a very nice picture (not the one on the published book). It seemed to fit the cover perfectly. As the book had to be finished immediately, I called my work and excused myself for the day, and set about printing the biography using double-strike printing on a dot-matrix printer. The two hundred pages took about five and-a-half hours. By 11:30 AM the manuscript was ready to be taken to the printers to be copied and bound. I was exhausted; so I rested for a couple of hours in the middle of the day.

The next morning, Mahesh and UG left the house in Carmel, dropping by our house for breakfast on their way to Corte Madera. I told UG that the work had been hard, but I loved every minute of it. I also said that my work was my “*guru dakshina*” (gift to the guru). UG replied that if there was anybody like a guru, he wouldn’t call himself that, or something to that effect. Anyway, the writing of the biography was a memorable experience.

## Yercaud, Mysore, Bangalore and Madras, 1994

While I was visiting UG in San Rafael some months earlier, UG invited me to go to India that winter of 1994 and he even provided me with a ticket. I was to spend a month in India, about three weeks with him and a week with all my extended family in Hyderabad.

My brother had died the year before (in November 1993) from a heart attack in Hyderabad. I hadn't gone to his funeral, so I thought it would be a great idea to visit my sister-in-law, his widow, after a year of his death to offer my condolences.

After one night in Madras, I first spent about two weeks in Yercaud with UG, a night at Bramachari's ashram in Mysore, a few days in Bangalore at Chandrasekar's, then a week with family in Hyderabad, and then went back to Madras to spend another week with UG before I left the country.

I flew from L.A., I think, on Malaysian, directly to Madras. UG not only had sent me the ticket, but also arranged for Chandrasekhar to meet me at the airport and for us to go to Mr. Malladi Krishnamurti's house. I was quite impressed by the cordiality with which the Malladi's received me. They had supper ready for me. I slept, took a bath in the morning and had some coffee. I learned that Mr. Krishnamurti was the roommate of my childhood friend Parthasaradhi when they both studied at the Indian Statistical Institute in Calcutta. (I later told Parthasaradhi, who, like me, has lived in the U.S. for many years, about him and I was able to connect the two.)

Well rested, the next morning, Chandrasekar and I took a train to go to Salem. We traveled in an air-conditioned compartment where seats were already reserved for us. We ate some *idli* sold by vendors on the train for breakfast and talked to our hearts' content.

When we arrived in Salem after about 4-6 hours of travel, UG and the Major (Dakshinamurti) were waiting at the station to receive us. We went into a nearby restaurant for lunch. UG chided the major for the measly tip he gave to the waiter.

Later we arrived at the Radha Estate, in Yercaud. Yercaud is a resort town located on a hill near Salem. Driving there involved quite an uphill curving road with sharp hairpin turns which the Major negotiated well. The house had a West Wing and an East Wing; UG, I and the Major were in the East Wing. In my room, as I opened my suitcase to pull out some small gifts (like almond rocca), I heard UG talking about them as "junk". Of course, I was hurt a little. Yet he appropriated the whole box of the almond rocca, only part of which I had intended to give to Chandrasekhar and Suguna (and the rest to my family), and never even mentioned a thing about it. UG gave me some rupees in exchange for dollars (with his usual "commission" - as this was his usual practice and how he made some money, the exchange rates varying, depending on the customer!).

Nartaki, an old friend from my days with Chalam and Souris, who also knew UG and Chandrasekar, and who was partly responsible for my meeting UG, also came to see me (I had written to her before), and, of course, UG. She was also put up in the West Wing.

I think it was during that trip that Brahmachari showed a sudden interest in me which he never had before, perhaps because he had read my paper on non-duality by that time. He showed some respect for what I had to say. One afternoon we went out for a walk and he told me stories from his past about UG.

My room was comfortable enough, and there was a bathroom where I could get hot water and wash my underwear and hang them up to dry. I remember one morning I came out after my bath, not quite fully dressed, and UG was sitting in the living

room on a sofa or a bench, clad in white clothes. I was standing in front of him watching him in reverence. Earlier, when I was taking my bath, I had been having plenty of negative thoughts going in my head, but now when I stood there, my mind was swept clean of all those negative thoughts, and I could feel a nice clean energy running through me. UG looked like a freshly blossomed flower.

One evening, after dinner, UG was asking all the foreigners (it must have included me) to go to the West Wing, I teasingly said something to the effect, “We all belong over there!” UG took it as if I was feeling hurt. The next afternoon, he himself made some coffee with cream and brought over to me. I knew he was making up for his remark the previous night. The coffee was absolutely delicious.

I saw him also catering to a drunkard over his drinking habit by giving him money each time he came by or UG passed him on the street.

One evening, UG again started his tirade against Chandrasekhar for gathering of so many personal letters of people to UG, along with photographs of UG, and videos and audios of UG talking with people. UG’s claim was that others might access those letters, gleaning personal information the authors or involved parties wouldn’t want seen. Also, he maintained that the photographs and videos were the general property of people (of everyone) and Chandrasekhar had no business keeping them for himself. Another claim I heard was that people who keep these videos etc., might eventually use them to make money. That night things came to a head with a movement to destroy the photographs. UG started throwing pictures (if I remember right, he only did that to a few) into the fire. I said I would help him and threw one of them into the fire myself. Everyone was aghast at what I did. Later, on several occasions, I would brag about how I had committed UG’s picture to flames.

Early in my visit there was a talk about taking me to a Nadi astrologer somewhere in Salem. Godfried and Bodil had already consulted that Nadi. The Nadi reader had told them about their previous lives, including their past names, and everyone had been duly impressed. Arrangements were made for us all to go in a hired van. I was mildly interested. On the morning of the reading, I was taking a bath, getting ready to go, and UG shouted from the living room addressing me, “You’re not really interested in going, are you?” I said, “No, not really.” Then he cancelled the trip, on that pretext! That’s UG’s style. He can throw surprises at you at any turn!

One cold night, the fireplace was lit. UG’s room was right next door. There was a lot of smoke coming out of the fireplace, and quite a bit of it was being drawn through a small window into UG’s room. UG, however, continued to sleep in his room with his door closed and did not come out for hours. Later, he bragged about this and would say, “Fresh air is only a psychological necessity!” “Right” I would say to myself sarcastically. In fact, I remember in Palm Springs and in the Crow’s Nest in Mill Valley, people practically choking and rushing out of the room gasping for a breath of fresh air. Suffocation is not a psychological problem!

One evening Brahmachari went for a walk with me into the village and we sat on top of some rocks. The views from there were magnificent. We exchanged notes about our experiences with UG. I did go for several other walks. I remember walking around a church, and I saw a huge resort development under construction.

It was while I was there that one afternoon, Chandrasekhar asked me if I would look into the translation he had made of Mahesh Bhatt’s biography of UG into Telugu. I said I would and asked him whose idea it was, his or UG’s. It was UG’s, he said. UG remembered that I had some experience in translating when I worked for the Telugu Encyclopedia many

years ago, and probably thought that it would do some good to the translation if I looked into it.

There was this lawyer of the Supreme Court of India, Sushil Kumar visiting from Delhi. He wore a Rajnishi's style *sannyasi* ochre robe. Obviously he was a *sannyasin* before. One morning there was a big meeting in the living room with several people around. Sushil Kumar was quite brilliant. A big repartee session went on between him, Brahmachari and UG. Mahesh was also present. I think someone even filmed it. It was simply hilarious. People roared with laughter.

That same day or the next day, Sushil Kumar and UG were standing in the porch involved in some discussion. I was present. At some point UG for some reason turned the discussion over to me. I answered to the best of my ability, I think, to the point.

On the New Year's Eve, Dakshinamurti, Chandrasekhar, Suguna and I watched the TV while UG was resting in his room. The celebration was quite interesting. Among other entertainment items, there was a woman from Malaysia singing in Tamil who was quite good. It was quite amazing to me how many channels (including Western channels like CNN and BBC) you could get on the TV in India.

After the New Year's, it was time for us to leave Yercaud. Brahmachari had left before us. We were going to visit him in Mysore at his *Ashram* (which is really a house where he taught Vedanta or what not to a few *Brahmacharis* (bachelors). They cooked food and ate there. There were several rooms there; the house was his family house and probably his share of the family property. His brothers, according to UG, were king makers. They were noted for corruption and taking bribes for getting favors done. Brahmachari had connections with liquor dealers and could get you illicit liquor!

I rewarded the servants well for their work before we left the house in Yercaud for Mysore. The Major drove UG, Nartaki and me. We dropped Nartaki off at the bus stop to take a bus to Tiruvannamalai where she worked in the Ramanashram. It was in the morning around 8 a.m. We then drove for quite some time through a National Forest, up in the hills. The forest was like a jungle, but had wide enough dirt roads to go on and lots of trees, but it wasn't a dense forest. We might have driven through the forest for about an hour. We played several tapes of Balamuralikrishna in the car.

We arrived at Brahmachari's Ashram at about lunch time. Brahmachari made me wear a *dhoti*, and we sat on the floor for lunch. The food was cooked by Brahmachari. It was quite tasty. There were cots with mosquito nets in the neighboring rooms. After lunch, some astrologer came by and a hilarious conversation followed. UG and Brahmachari were talking to each other through that astrologer, joking, of course. I interrupted saying, "Why are guys talking to each other through him, instead of directly?" That added more to the hilarity. I think we slept there that night and the next morning we left for Bangalore, which, if I remember right, was about a six-hour drive. Brahmachari came by to send us off after blessing me and receiving UG's blessings.

I stayed in Bangalore at Chandrasekhar's place, in Purnakutee. There I saw Gottfried and Bodil again as well as Frank Naronha. That was the first time I met Naronha. He was trying to touch UG's feet and UG was preventing him by trying to touch Naronha's feet in turn. So you could see both of them ended up pushing each other's arms away from themselves. It was funny. When he was making some appeals to UG (about his job or something), I said to Naronha: "You don't have to ask him, whatever is good for you, UG will do it." UG looked at me and echoed questioningly, repeating, "Without asking?"

Chandrasekhar brought out his translation of Mahesh's book, and I started making corrections with my limited abilities. UG and I discussed the correct translation for "Calamity" and we finally settled on "*vipattu*". I spent several days making the corrections. In the process, Chandrasekhar also brought out his notebooks of handwritten journals of his encounters with UG. I looked at them and told him that they deserve to be published in English, as many Westerners wouldn't know about most of the things that had happened around UG in India in the early years.

One evening, Brahmachari brought a poem of his (*dandakam*, it was called, I think) which he wrote in Kannada and wanted us to translate it into English. He, Chandrasekhar and I sat together for about two hours and did the translation and got it typed up (Julie might have been there and typed it up, I can't remember.) It is now included ("Who is this UG?") in Chandrasekhar's book, *Stopped in Our Tracks, Series I*.

My next stop was Hyderabad, where I visited my sister-in-law and other family relatives and friends for a week, out of UG's sphere, and then went on to Madras where UG was waiting in the airport, along with Chandrasekhar and Major. We again were put up at the Malladi's, where I had a grand time.

Chandrasekhar played a tape of Jnanachakravarti's astrology readings and some music. We were invited for breakfast at Madurai Mani's place. The *idlis* were great and on top of it Mr. Mani sang. The Manis are a domiciled Telugu family. Obviously, the man is well known. His music was good, except it wasn't my favorite.

After three nights, Chandrasekhar, Suguna, the Major, UG and I went out scouting for a place to spend the next three nights. After looking at a resort place one day and not being satisfied with it, we returned to Madras. The next day, we decided to go to Pondicherry; we went to the Ashram Hotel there and found there were no vacancies. So we headed out of

Pondicherry. About 15 kilometers away, UG spotted a hotel from a distance and declared that that was it. We went there, and found it was the Government-run Ashoka hotel. It was pretty clean and was standing on an immaculate beach with a fantastic view from the back where you could sit on chairs and watch the ocean, the beach and the lone boat parked on the beach. Major and I occupied one room, Chandrasekhar and Suguna another and UG a third. The food wasn't great, but we tipped well anyway. Once, UG asked how much I tipped and I mentioned 10% or something and he made no comment. Chandrasekhar was going to pay for the hotel, but I insisted on paying for it.

On the second day, I arranged for a ride back to Pondicherry to meet with my French friend, Paul Albert, at the hotel where he was staying. Albert was living in Pondicherry at that time trying to do some field work in linguistics with a local tribe. The Major drove and Chandrasekhar and Suguna went with us. UG opted to stay back at the hotel. I caught Albert in the restaurant of the hotel. Looking at the picture on one of the books, Paul remarked that UG looked like a movie star. I introduced Chandrasekhar and the Major to him. They were to come back in the late afternoon and pick me up after I had spent the day with Albert. I drank some beer with him and then we went into the local native tavern with food stalls lined up and local wine served. There were hordes of flies on the foodstuff. Paul said that if it weren't for the flies, he would have loved to eat the food. We walked a little. We went up to his room which was clean. He made a tape copy of a couple of 45 rpm albums of Sita and Anusuya's folk songs and gave it to me as a gift. Alas, I lost the tape and I don't know how. Then we went for a short walk along the street.

Late afternoon, my three friends came to pick me up. Paul said *namaskaram* to Suguna and we all left.

One night, while we were there was a beautiful full-moon night and all four of us went to the beach. Suguna was complaining

about the personal things in her life, particularly about how she didn't want see or hear about Kaka whom Chandrasekhar once married and divorced on UG's prompting.

We returned to Madras. I called Satchidananda Murty, my former philosophy professor at Andhra University, on the phone. I had called him once earlier from Yercaud. He had already met UG once in Albuquerque, so he asked if UG would come to his village and receive his hospitality. Of course, UG politely declined. Instead, I made an appointment to see Murty there in Madras at the hotel where he was staying. He was in Madras on some official business.

I asked Malladi if he could spare a couple of copies of the organizers he had gotten made for his company, which he graciously gave me. I took one of those and a copy of one of UG's books as gifts for Murty. UG was getting his hair cut at the Taj Mahal Hotel. UG, Major, Chandrasekhar, Suguna and I had some coffee there after the haircut and then drove by Murty's hotel, where they dropped me off. I went and knocked at Murty's door. He opened but looked pretty annoyed as I was there a bit earlier than the appointed time (I was supposed to see him at 12 Noon, and it was about 11:50 AM). He let me in anyway. Other teachers came, and I spent the afternoon in their company, taking an auto rickshaw back to the Malladi's after also attending a lunch and a meeting.

At the Malladi's, the food was delicious. UG, the Major and I were all put upstairs. Mahesh was visiting UG at that time. And also a lady from Sri Lanka, called Sylvia, I think.

Parvati Kumar, a wealthy retired chartered accountant, once came with his wife and probably about fifty foreigners he was taking on a tour going somewhere in the South to one of the Masters' places. Malladi's house had a collection of the pictures of the Masters. I once heard the whole family doing some chanting in Sanskrit at the shrine downstairs. The sound of it sent shivers up my spine. Parvati Kumar prostrated

before UG, and, of course, UG, withdrew his feet, saying they were dirty. Kumar is into some occult Vedic thinking and has published in poor English plenty of literature concerning it. UG is considered a Master in the lineage of Masters by Kumar's group to which the Mallad's also belong.

That night, the whole group Kumar had brought was asked for dinner. UG and the rest of us were invited too. UG was made to sit on an elevated seat. He introduced Mahesh Bhatt as "Public Enemy No. 1," and Chandrasekhar as "Public Enemy number 2," and I added that I was the Public Enemy Number 3. Anyway, we ate dinner. UG gave a small speech, and not saying very much, got up and mingled nicely with the people around and pretty soon we all left to go upstairs, leaving the group to their own devices.

The last night I was there, I was leaving in the middle of the night to fly back to the U.S. from Madras. UG was supposed to leave the next night. I asked him where he was going. He said he had four plane tickets in his pocket—one to go to Australia, a second to go to the U.S., a third to go to China and Japan and the last one to go to Europe. He said he would first go to Singapore, and then decide where he would go from there. I am sure he made his decision tossing a coin. That's some traveler!

UG was debating whether he should go with me to the airport to see me off. I told him, why he should put himself to driving in the car at such a late hour in the night. Around 10 PM, he decided to go. At the airport I got everything taken care of and was about to go to board the plane. As usual, I shook UG's hand and saluted him. He tapped me on my shoulder and made some kind of blessing sign with his arm as he was leaving. It had to be a blessing!

That was the end of my trip to India in 1994.

## Hemet, California, and Gstaad Switzerland ~ 1995

At the end of 1994, UG and gang visited us in Seaside for a couple of days, staying through the New Year. As usual, he stayed in the modest Magic Carpet Lodge (a Best Western motel) down the street that UG liked to stay in when he visited us. During that time, UG insisted that I go travel with them in Southern California right after the New Year. There was no specific destination. Rather, he wanted to make good on his threats to find a new “base” in California: he was “finished” with the Bay area.

So, soon after, I flew to LA and was received by UG at the airport. My daughter Shyamala was also there to meet me at the airport and spend a little time with me. We all got into a van driven by Julie. While Julie was driving out of the parking lot she ran into competition with another lady for space on the driveway and neither of them would budge. UG kept yelling at Julie, “Don’t let her in, the bitch!” and so on and Julie was egged on further. Finally, after both women took considerable risks, Julie prevailed. This scene certainly fazed out Shyamala.

We drove to a nearby hotel where the Malladi’s were waiting for us with *idlis* and other goodies. We had our lunch with them. Shyamala was introduced to Krishnmurti and his wife Prasanna. I believe Larry was with us on the trip too. But I can’t distinctly remember. Shyamala left us to return home.

We spent the night in a hotel, UG, Larry and I, I think, occupying the same suite. In the morning we set out on our trip with nothing but a cup of coffee or tea and some peanuts from the plane. And, looking for places to stay, we drove toward San Diego, via a valley where we didn’t find anything suitable. We had lunch in an Indian restaurant in San Diego. Then we were driving again when UG asked us to stop and picked up one of those papers where hotels, apartments and other accommodations were advertised. He found a Best

Western motel posting a price of \$19 a night in a place called Hemet. He couldn’t have been happier!

We immediately drove and found ourselves in a small non-descript town some distance southeast of Los Angeles. The rent at the motel was actually somewhat higher, probably around \$29 and the apartment suites were even higher. Julie rented an apartment, Mario and Lisa one and the Guhas another. And Larry too I suppose. I was to crash in UG’s suite, sleeping on the living room sofa bed which would be folded back into a sofa in the daytime for people to sit on. The arrangement was that I would pay the suite rent for one month (that was the scheduled duration of our stay) and in his turn UG would cook for me.

Sometime while there I coined a nickname for Hemet: “Hemet Damn it!” which UG liked.

In India, Mahesh was going to write a press release on pornography and censorship and he sought UG’s help. To help in the matter, although I didn’t have a computer with me, UG dictated his pronouncement on the subject to me, and I wrote it down by hand. It was entitled, “The Role of Godmen in the Next Millennium.” I edited it and then fair-copied it in all capitals, and Julie faxed it to Mahesh in Bombay. It was an indictment of censorship, showing how it never works. A key sentence in the piece reads: “If we admit that our interest in spirituality is not essentially different from our interest in varieties of food, varieties of girls, and every other form of pleasure, then everything falls into its natural rhythm of life.”

While we were in Hemet we made several trips to various places. One time we went to a billionaire’s place (I can’t recall his name.) The man had once been a professor of mathematics or economics at the University of Chicago. Once, Julie took UG to visit him in Chicago. He had quit his job there, saying that the income provided by his job kept him poor. Instead he became a high-level investment broker and



made 4 billion and was on the way to making his fifth billion. His place in one of the valleys in the Los Angeles area was hidden away. We had to drive down a long driveway which had several signs warning, "Armed Response!" He had two ferocious dogs and lived alone with a whole lot of booze and vitamins and huge TV screen with almost 1000 channels. He looked like a lonely man.

We later went to another place of his where he was having a huge house built with big lawns and bronze sculptures on the lawns worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. There was a separate annex being built which he was offering to UG to live in. But UG wasn't too enthusiastic about it as the place was located in a remote area and it would be difficult for people who want to visit him to have access to.

While I was in Hemet, Wendy mailed a copy of *Vemana*, the book of Vemana's verses translated by me into English which had just been published in India. UG immediately got a hold of it in the car and started reading from it as we set out to go on one of our "mallings" trips.

At one point, UG was making arrangements to go with Mario to the airport in Los Angeles for Mario's departure back to Europe. Mario was to drive there, I was to go with them and then drive UG back to Hemet. UG suggested that we visit my daughter Shyamala after dropping off Mario, as she lived nearby. We called her, offering to take her out to lunch. She asked if she could invite a few of her friends to meet UG. That was fine with UG, so it was arranged.

When we arrived the next morning at the airport, I had to get help from Mario even to start the car – needless to say I was nervous to drive in that busy city. But I did anyway, and drove UG and myself carefully to Shyamala's apartment. Kash, her boyfriend then (now her husband) was there. As Shyamala didn't have any coffee or cream with her, so she had to send Kash to get some, and then we had some coffee. Meanwhile,

about ten to fifteen of their friends, mostly interns from medical fields, ophthalmologists, psychiatrists, and others gathered there (Kash was in medical school at the time). One of them offered to go to a nearby South Indian restaurant and bring us all lunch. By about noon, the table was filled with a feast with all kinds of goodies and we had a great communal lunch, instead of merely taking Shyamala out! And UG, in his usual fashion, charmed all of them with his answers to their questions and with his one-liners, anecdotes and jokes. UG's magic at work again! After a couple of hours, UG and I drove back to Hemet.

On his next visit to the US, UG did change his base to Palm Springs.

In 2005 I and my family all visited UG in Gstaad. On this trip our family also went to Heidelberg on our friend Rima Holland's invitation to spend a few days there. One event I remember particularly is the following:

UG asked Julie and Mario to take our whole family on a trip to Italy. They did. We stopped in a border village after passing through the big tunnel going to Italy and had a six-course elaborate lunch, (and we weren't allowed to pay – Julie paid for everything) including aperitifs, digestives, wine, portabella mushrooms and what not. It was so fancy. I realized that the Italians (exemplified by Mario) were just as picky as the French (and the Brahmins) about eating.

We took the freeways (which are toll ways in Italy) and went to Milan. We went into some stores and shops, had coffee in a shop that also sold ice cream, and went into a big cathedral where there was a dress code (you had to wear shoes and a shirt and whatnot). There was a big water fountain in the huge plaza in front with lots of pigeons and people. We took some pictures there and headed back to Switzerland.

We came to Stresa, a resort town on the Italian-Swiss border, where UG had spent a couple of months with Valentine many years ago. Obviously, UG had asked Julie and Mario to show us that place. It was on the Lago Maggiore, a big and beautiful lake. The place was very touristy. We walked around on the cobbled lanes and went into shops, stopped in place for a delicious pizza and an ice cream place across the street for a fancy ice cream.

It was after dark when we left to head back to Gstaad. We drove through another long tunnel. When we stopped to pee, we got out of the tunnel and saw the full moon. And it was beautiful. It was so fantastic driving through the magnificent high mountains on a moonlit night with Mario driving effortlessly and perfectly all the way. It was around 2 AM when we got home.

### **Palm Springs: December 1998 ~ January 1999**

The final event I would like to write about here is my ill-fated visit to UG in Palm Springs at the end of 1998 and beginning of 1999. That December-January, I had a falling out with UG in Palm Springs. That was the same winter when he gave \$10,050 to Kiran for both his grand piano and drum set.

I traveled to Palm Springs first and then about a couple of weeks later Wendy and Kiran joined me.

At first, UG fixed a place for me in a condominium (in a fancy gated compound called Whitewater) with Mahesh. I was doing the cooking there for Mahesh and myself. Once UG asked me to feed Bob and Paul as well, and then when they came along with him into the condo, UG started his talk about how he didn't like the stink and stench of an *ashram*. I just about pounced on him for his contradictory messages.

A week or so later after we had moved to another apartment, UG asked me if I could feed Mahesh for the next ten days. I said fine. But I wasn't just cooking for him; occasionally the whole gang would come in for lunch. And I had to make something special for UG. I was making mashed canned garbanzo beans or something for him. I would take about an hour or so to prepare the lunch. UG was watching over all this. He didn't like my getting so involved with cooking. I should have seen it coming.

Ten days later, Mahesh left, and Wendy and Kiran came and we were all put up in one room in the main house next to the cottage where UG lived. Chandrasekhar and his wife Suguna were also there, as were Lisa, who lived there, the Guha's, who were also visiting, and Julie.

I was supposedly to share the kitchen with Chandrasekhar and Suguna. I quickly made some garbanzo beans with a few spices and lemon for Kiran. I didn't take more than about 10 minutes. Meanwhile, UG was sitting there outside the kitchen watching and at one point he said, "Get out of there, they have to do their cooking." By that time I finished and said I was just getting out. Then a minute or so later, he said again to get out of there. I got furious. I was already out of the kitchen. I said, "UG, I am out of there! I'm done." He realized that I was really done and he couldn't say anything more.

I continued on, "I won't get into the kitchen! The three of us will eat outside from now on." UG replied, "You're guests here. I don't like your eating outside." I said, "Why are you sentimental about it? This is a decision I came to after thinking about the practicalities. After all, I am earning my own living. It's not a problem for me." His speech faltered and became weak. It was clear that he was disturbed.

Here is a quote from Chandrasekhar's notebooks (*Stopped in Our Tracks – Series III*, published on UG's website) about UG's reaction:

*UG faltered in his speech and his voice was weakened, reflecting the disturbance in him. "You haven't eaten anything? Why is your voice like that?" asked Moorty. UG had already cooked his oats and eaten them.*

*I then went to UG's room. "Why should Guha and their family eat here? Why should Julie eat here?" he said. But it was he who wanted them to stay.*

*I can't wait to see how far this saga of eating will go on today. "I am not going to have any more meetings or talks from now on. I never invited the Germans. They can do what they please," UG said. He turned to Larry and said, "America is finished. This is also the end of the Palm Springs chapter. I am not even going to India." Then he turned to Lisa and said, "Why do we have this big chair here? It's a waste. Return it to the owner. I must vacate this place by the end of January. I'll tell Lynn. There won't be any more meetings. There won't be any talking."*

*He talked like that, rather incoherently, for a while. This incident is proof that he too reacts to situations by being sorry for what happened and being hurt. Although he says "I never question my actions," it's clear that he is affected by what happens in such contexts. The principal actor of the drama, Moorty, however, sat quietly like a cool cucumber. The three of them ate after we finished.*

Then I stopped using the kitchen. I told Wendy to take care of the cooking. I got my food and ate in the living room for a couple of times, and then I figured it would be better if I ate in the Lucky store at the end of the street. This went on for about three days (just before New Year's Eve. On New Year's Eve, Dr. Lynn, Lisa, Wendy and I had a celebration with expensive champagne).

In one of the gatherings in the house, I said to UG, "I know when I am not wanted." He replied, "You are very much wanted. If it comes to that, all these people, Chandrasekhar and all, can go." Although surprised by the reply, I wasn't too convinced by it. The fourth day morning, I was telling myself in the bed that I had to leave the place. I was finishing up putting Chandrasekhar's *Stopped in Our Tracks* in a book form in Word Perfect. I was still struggling with the headers and footers. As UG entered the main house, I declared that I was leaving that afternoon (Wendy and Kiran were leaving that day to go to San Diego). UG looked very surprised, turned to me and said, "Why?" I said, "I don't feel very happy here." And that was it; there was no further conversation.

I went to his cottage to wind up the computer business and put all the files Chandrasekhar needed on a disk to give to him. Meanwhile, UG walked in, and I said that he didn't owe me anything for whatever I did for him, I did all the web business because I didn't make any distinction between his work and mine, and finally that I would look after his web page until he found someone else. UG replied that he wasn't concerned about that.

I told Wendy I would get a ride with her to the bus station that afternoon; she could drop me off there and move on to San Diego with Kiran. I would take a bus to Los Angeles, then to Salinas and Monterey. I said at the bus station to Wendy, "It's my life. You have to let me do it this way." The operator didn't have change for a hundred dollars. But he let me in and I bought the ticket at the next stop. I paid \$70 without knowing there was a cheaper fare; the sales clerk didn't tell me about it. In the L.A. bus station I had a sandwich for dinner and sat there watching people while I waited for the bus. I was quite impressed by how a black woman treated another homeless person. That was quite moving. She was so compassionate. There were two buses, and I think I took one of them knowing full well that it would arrive in Salinas around four in the morning.

When I landed in the Salinas bus station there was no immediate connecting bus to go to Monterey. I walked with my bag (and pillow) on the streets for at least a mile in that cold weather (It was 30 degrees or 40 I can't remember—but it was cold) until I found a breakfast place. I ordered some serial with milk and went and washed in the bathroom. I asked the waitress for directions to the Monterey bus station. One of the fellows there advised me where the stop was, but said I should go back to the Greyhound station instead of to the bus stop nearby, as it was dark and not safe to wait there. I walked back to the bus station and waited for another hour or so. Then I took the bus; I was dropped off in Seaside at Fremont and Ord Grove streets.

After eight days of internal turmoil, I did finally break down and call UG in Palm Springs and apologized, saying, "I'm sorry, I made such a mess out of things." UG said, "No need to apologize," and quickly started making arrangements for Chandrasekhar and Suguna to spend a couple days in Seaside.

Later, UG and I met many times, but the air between us was never so clear again. I did visit UG again in Gstaad in the summer of 2000. (That's when I edited Bob Carr's autobiography). The question did come up in my mind, more than once, what in the world was I doing sitting there, day in and day out.

The next summer, UG extended the same invitation, even offering to send me a ticket for my travel, saying that I didn't have to spend a penny. But I turned down the invitation. He said that he was terribly disappointed. I said, "For a long time I thought that no one understood me better than you." He enthusiastically replied, "Yes, that's true." I continued, "But I don't feel that way any more." He then said, "Come over here, we will thrash out the matter." When I declined, he said, "Give it some deep, serious thought." He called me twice in this context.

I didn't go to Gstaad again until the summer of 2004, although I had been seeing him off and on in the US in various places, including my own. In 2004, I heard that he fell in the bathroom and was hurt. Being concerned, I called him a couple of times. I told him I planned to go to India for one last time to say goodbye to everyone. UG said that if I was going, he will be there too. The second time I called him in Gstaad, he said, "Why don't you come and spend some time here." I accepted the invitation and went to Gstaad to spend six weeks with him. That was when I also made arrangements to spend four weeks with him in Bangalore along with Wendy and Kiran at the end of the same year.

He did come to see us in Seaside in the beginning of 2006. But after that, he never visited the US again. My last visit to see him was before his death. The story of that visit of mine is recounted in the following chapter. You will notice that in spite of the air between us not being cleared, there was still that friendship, affection and mutual respect between us, as there always had been.

## A Few Other Travel Memories

### Sleeping Arrangements

It was probably on my first visit to UG in Palm Springs. I was to sleep in his living room as usual and UG was saying to me that he would prefer that he slept on the couch and I in his bedroom. Of course, I would have none of that. I told him I would arrange the sofa pillows on the floor and sleep there (as the couch was not even enough or was too soft). He took it upon himself to bring sheets and pillows and arrange my bed himself. I remarked to him smiling, "UG, you are doing everything short of taking me to bed and singing lullabies!" Once Guha told me that UG said only two people could sleep

on the couch in his living room (referring to Chalet Sunbeam in Gstaad): Mahesh Bhatt and Narayana Moorthy.

One night in Palm Springs, UG slept in his room with his door locked and the heater turned way high (probably around 95 degrees). I couldn't sleep ~ it was so hot plus I had to pee. But I couldn't get into the bathroom as it was in UG's room. So, I went outside and peed in the plants. The next morning I told UG, and he said that he hardly ever slept at night and that I could easily have gotten him up.

Later, I started getting picky about where I slept.

On a visit to Lake Havasu, I was to stay in the same hotel suite as UG. There was so much party noise from downstairs that I suggested to UG that maybe we should look for another room for me. And with Larry's help we did go around looking but didn't find anything satisfactory. So I ended up in UG's living room again, with ear plugs this time, loaned by Larry.

I think from then on UG changed his policy. On my further visits to Palm Springs he never asked me to sleep in his studio apartment. I slept in other places.

Once in Gstaad, in 1996, I remember UG noticing that we needed an extra mattress for me to sleep on upstairs. Without my knowing it, UG went downstairs to the storeroom and singlehandedly carried a twin mattress upstairs. I only found out as I saw him coming up the last few stairs. I was so embarrassed to see him doing that. But it was too late!

### **Children, Movies, and Censorship**

It was in Chalet Sunbeam in Gstaad, I believe. We were watching a movie every night to spend time. The movies were either brought in by Julie from the US or rented by her in the nearby town. Sometimes the movies had foul language (the

four-letter word said hundreds of times), violence and explicit sex. But UG never disallowed children to watch the movies (the children present at this time were Shilpa and Sumedha, Guha's daughters, and perhaps also Claire, Susan's daughter). "They will be exposed to them later in their lives anyway," was his justification.

A most moving time was when we were watching a movie on Larry Flynt, the "Hustler" maven. The movie was quite painful to watch at moments, as Flynt's girlfriend was suffering from drug addiction and whatnot. It was dark in the room, except for the light from the movie. Everyone was absorbed in watching the movie. But I looked at UG's face, and I could see distinctly tears rolling down his cheeks. Who could say that UG never cried?

### **Memorable Car Rides**

I had the most memorable car rides while I was visiting UG. UG always made sure that I sat in the back (he always occupied the front seat by the side of the driver).

In California, the ride to Idyll Wilde was very interesting: The road up the hill was windy and the climb steep. Larry, Susan, Mario, UG and I and some others all went there looking for a house to stay while we were still in Hemet. It had snowed there earlier and was rather cold. We parked the car at the main intersection of the town and got out. Everyone else was shivering, but UG got out with not even his hands in the pockets of his thin jacket. There was sludge on one of the streets. UG was more sure-footed than I was, so he gave me a hand when I stumbled crossing the street. When they looked at a house on the corner of a street, I went with him inside and remarked while he was toying with the idea of renting it, that he and others could stay there, but I would stay outside under the tree, and if I died in the cold, they could drag me out and

throw me away! That probably poured cold water on any enthusiasm he might have had.

While in Switzerland, I remember going on such fantastic trips with UG and others that I doubt if I will ever have such experiences again. One was driving through Villars, the place where Krishnamurti lived a long time ago with his brother. I remember stopping there and have coffee with Larry and Susan and whomever.

A second trip was to Lugano and the Italian borders where we saw Lago Maggiore and (I am not so sure now that they are near each other). The views were phenomenal.

A third trip was when we all went to the Lichtenstein Principality. The small town was bordering on three countries, Austria, Germany and Switzerland. We stopped to have lunch in the local MacDonald's. I treated everyone to veggie burgers and what not. We circled around the where the ruler of the country lived. On our return trip, I was with UG in a car driven by Vibodha. We drove back on the Upper Alps and the views of the mountains and valleys were so fantastic that I will never forget them. Vibodha was such a perfect driver. Mario, I think, was driving the other car. He too was a great driver, and also (contrary to UG's denunciations) a great cook.

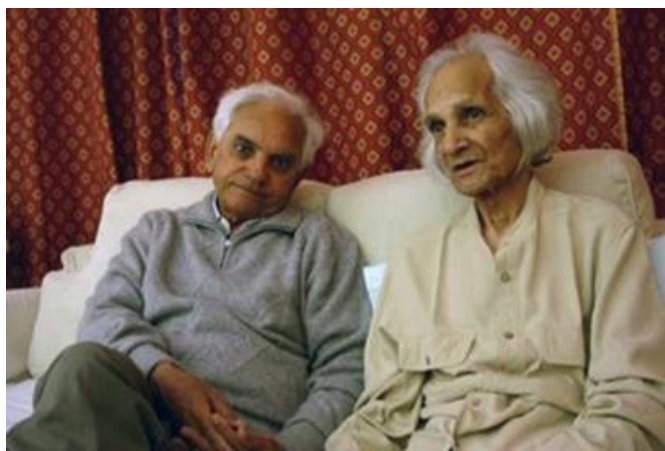
Even as recently as August 2004, we went in a two-car caravan to Chamonix, France, to see the glacier coming down Mont Blanc. Not only the views there phenomenal, but I never saw water flowing so fast in a river.

## 4. My Last Visit with UG

In the beginning of February, 2007, when I heard (I guess from Julie Thayer and Paul Arms) that UG had fallen again in the bathroom in his apartment in Italy, I was concerned about his well-being (I was told that this time he had been badly hurt) and I called him. (He was hurt once before in 2004 in the same fashion, falling in the bathroom.) UG told me he was doing OK and expressed his wish to see me. I called again a week later. Larry answered the phone this time and said that I should come and see UG. I told Larry that I would try to come in the summer. He said, "No, no, you don't understand. It's rather urgent; you should come now." UG picked up the phone and said, "I have to see you before I die. If I don't see you, I'll have to die in great pain!" I told Larry, "Let me look online and find a flight. Then I'll let you know." The phone went back and forth between UG and Larry and I could hear UG saying in the background, "Why should he pay? I will pay for his trip." Larry repeated that to me. Later UG asked Sarito and Mario to arrange for my travel as well as for an apartment where I could stay while I visited UG in Vallecrosia, Italy.

I left Monterey, California, on the morning of February 14 and arrived late night of February 15, in Nice, France, to be picked up by Mitra, a friend of UG, and driven to Vallecrosia. Because of my missing an earlier connecting flight and some time-zone confusion Mitra had to wait for a couple of hours at the airport. He was so helpful in transporting my suitcase whose handle was broken en route.

The first morning after I arrived, Larry came to pick me up at the hotel where I was staying, after I had called UG's place using Mitra's cell phone.



[Photo: Courtesy of Lisa Taranto]

When I entered UG's "cove" with Larry, UG was lying on the couch and sat up to greet me. He looked frailer than even the last time I had seen him at my home in California in January 2006. As I approached him to shake his hands after saluting him in the Indian fashion, I could feel myself entering into a vast field of energy enveloping me. I sat down next to him, still holding his hand. Then came that strange feeling I had had a few times before – I could feel no separation between him and me! It was the same energy in both of us! It was the same field in which everyone was engulfed. No wonder UG could bind so many people to him!

Just as I expected, the room was filled with people. There was a constant influx of visitors, some of whom would leave after staying a while. The apartment was heated beyond normal levels – we all knew that UG liked to keep his surroundings quite warm, almost hot. The heat had the added effect of people not wanting to stay in the room too long. When UG had to answer a nature call, Louis would politely clear the room so he could assist UG.

UG expressed his appreciation of me: "You made me what I am today!" I replied, "Nonsense, UG, if anything, it's the other

way round," or something to that effect, knowing full well that he was exaggerating in his usual fashion.

Later, Guha told me that after I left the room UG had remarked, "Moorty played a major role in my life."

[On another occasion, I was expressing my appreciation to UG and said that I was glad to have met him and spent almost a third of my life with him. I also said that he played a major role in my life. Then I started bragging about myself: I said that I had integrated death into my life; it didn't matter to me if I died the next day. He said that he was ready to die right then and there. I said, "Me too." And then I started bragging again about my integrating death into my life. UG sarcastically replied, "Sounds profound!" Served me right!]

\* \* \*

Vallecrosia is on the Italian Riviera between the towns of Ventimiglia and Bordighera and is about an hour's drive from Nice, across the French border.



UG's apartment was built for him by his friends Lucia, Anita and Giovanni within their villa compound in Vallecrosia, Italy.

It was right behind one of the main streets of the town and was an annex to the two-story main building. Sandwiched between these two was the kitchen with a dining ante-room with steps leading upstairs and a door which led to the back street. The villa had spacious gardens with lemon and orange orchards and a grass lawn. There were reclining lawn chairs as well other chairs and a couple of tables. The grounds were periodically kept clean by the very hard-working Lucia. As you entered from the main gate, you went on a paved path through an arch to reach UG's apartment. Outside this apartment, you could see dozens of shoes on the stone floor. At times, there was also a black cat hanging around.

In the ante-room there was a window overlooking the grove, a table and several chairs, and places along the walls for people to leave their belongings. Even here people always left their shoes outside. They put their computers and other paraphernalia on the table. For the computers, there was a slow and temperamental broadband connection which could only handle a couple of connections at a time. People sometimes had trouble getting on the Internet, but with Mitra's and others' help they sometimes had better luck.

A glass door let you into UG's apartment. The red curtains to the wide glass windows on the walls were almost always closed to prevent the intense daylight from bothering the resting UG. On the right of the entrance was UG's bedroom, with his bed and his few belongings such as clothes, 'archives' and other papers.

The living room was rather small; it had a fireplace and good light fixtures which gave plenty of light when needed.

On the left was the entrance into the small bathroom and a cooking place with a microwave, a stove and a refrigerator.

\* \* \*

My hotel apartment was on the sixth floor in an apartment building with a pizza restaurant and shops on the first floor. It had a grand view of the Mediterranean from my bedroom and another spectacular view of the Mediterranean as well as of the beach road with tall buildings on one side and tall lamp-posts with double hanging-lights, on the other.

\* \* \*

After I arrived, I learned the details of UG's fall in the bathroom which had happened about five or six weeks earlier. According to his own account, UG fell in the bathroom, got injured on his leg, his head hit the sink and began to bleed, and he fainted. When he regained consciousness, he heard knocking at the door in the living room. It was around 5 in the morning. He slowly crawled his way on the floor to the door and was somehow able to open the door. It was Avner making his early morning call. He saw UG's condition and helped him to the couch.

Since then UG had round-the-clock caretakers, the most constant of whom were Louis and Melissa<sup>13</sup>. But many others were at his beck-and call, performing sundry chores: minding the fireplace (Avner from Israel), taking care of accounts (Sarito from Germany), cooking and feeding (Melissa, Trisha, Larry and Susan, Anandi, Lakshmi, Kathy from Hungary, Lucia, Golda from Australia, Paul Arms and Viresha, and so on), outdoor chores such as transportation, airline bookings, finding places to stay for people who visited (Mitra and Mario) and last but not the least, photo and video shooting (Lisa and Avner and others). People took turns to cook. There were some phenomenal gourmet meals, all of them vegetarian, especially from Melissa (her great soup!) and our hostess,

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<sup>13</sup> And, of course, Paul Arms was always in the background, to be of service whenever he could.



Lucia. Golda made her famous *chai*. It is thanks to Lisa and Avner that we have a record of many of the happenings around UG in his last days. The recording abruptly stopped because for one thing, Lisa had to leave with me on March 9, and for another, about ten days before he breathed his last, UG asked Mahesh to go out of the room and announce to everyone to "go back to where you all came from, and not sneak around in corners trying to see me!"

In spite of the looming tragedy, there was a sort of festive atmosphere in the air. (It must, however, be mentioned that at the times when UG was resting, you could notice that people sitting around him looked quite solemn and somber.) People were joking around UG and UG never quit his ranting and raving and teasing and scolding people. His hyperboles, particularly about himself, knew no bounds. In the anteroom next to the kitchen, in the kitchen and outside on the patio, people were chatting away, e-mailing, chatting on the Internet, transferring videos and photos they had taken on to their computers and so on and so forth. The place was abuzz from morning six to evening about 8 pm.



When Louis was drawn into the scene to be asked to read something or do some other chore, he would always add his irreverent humor to whatever he did or said: he would even rock UG in the couch by holding the side of the couch up. He would do his improvisations or mimic Larry lying with outstretched legs on the sofa, shaking his legs, and such. He would sing the songs he composed about UG, mostly poking fun at UG, or he would show his drawings or read from the book he was currently writing on UG. Whatever he did he would sprinkle it with his creative humor.

Sometimes, Larry would be asked to do his stand-up comedy or read from Chandrasekhar's book or something someone else had written. Or UG himself would read either from the "archives" or from the Internet clippings collected by Lisa. Or, there would be an astrological reading by Nataraj. The cell phones would constantly ring with callers asking to speak to UG. And there were daily sessions of UG's pulse reading by "the doctors": Dr. Paul Lynn, Dr. Susan Nettleton (now Morris), Ramateertha, Doris and Vibodha. There would be periodic medical consultations about UG's condition, which were more in the spirit of entertainment than serious consultations, because UG never really consulted doctors in his later life.

One of the pieces of entertainment (there were many) was performed by Chin Meyer, a German standup comedian from Berlin. I saw several acts of his, of course, done at UG's request and instigation, all of them centering on UG's *Money Maxims* which Chin had translated into German. He would read the English version and sing his German translations. The Germans that gathered there, particularly Nataraj, appreciated the translations very much. As I don't know German I couldn't appreciate them. Later, Chin showed me a video of his performance on the Internet and gave me one of his picture postcards. Apparently, he is well known in Berlin.

To add spice to the scene, occasionally Leonidas chocolates, specially brought by friends from Germany, or some other goodies would be passed around.

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There were occasions when UG would ask that all his papers to be brought to him, including clippings Lisa had collected about references to UG on the Internet; he would read from them, or ask Larry or someone else to read from them. Or, Vibodha would be asked to read a piece from the UG “Archives” on the computer, UG constantly chiding him for not finding a piece quickly enough. Sometimes, there was a letter or two and they would be read. Once Sarito was reading a letter from someone who mentioned how UG “touched me where no one else has touched before,” and she broke down crying. Someone else had to finish the reading. She was actually crying for everyone there, for each and every one of them was touched in a similar fashion. UG had a special, albeit a different, relationship with each one of us.

And in one of those sessions, UG started tearing up many of those papers and asked people to throw them in the fire in the fireplace. Included in those papers were Yashoda’s funny “letters” from the Dalai Lama, Ramana Maharshi and other celebrities and Robert’s UG-into-Marilyn-Monroe morphing photos.

\* \* \*

No one could have served UG with so much devotion as Louis. It’s not that others wouldn’t have served him well. But he did it all willingly, with gusto and a great sense of humor. UG was always grateful to him for his service; he even bought him an Apple laptop with a printer at considerable expense and had them delivered there in Italy. UG would even say that he would give Louis the remaining three hundred thousand

dollars, if he would only “pack him off.” But neither Louis nor anyone else would do any such thing!

You could sense that UG was experiencing pain, although he would not express it except in rare moments. His cardio-spasm was acting up too, as a result of which he was eating even less than normal, which was miniscule to begin with. A small amount of rice sticks, *idli* or *upma* or a few sips of orange juice or scalding hot water. He would frequently throw up, mostly liquids. Paper or plastic cups and paper towels or napkins were always on hand to help catch the vomit and clean up. It was obvious he was losing body fluids. His energy levels were diminishing. At times, he would just lie down with his head on the arm of the couch, supported by a pillow and his arms thrown back, and practically gasp for breath. Sometimes, he would just doze off.

A couple of nights I thought his life energies were leaving him. Those two nights, I didn’t see how he could make through the night. But to my utter amazement he would pull through by the next morning.

I was encouraging him to get up and take a few steps, with support, of course. He tried to do that and was even able to walk a few steps across the room holding Louis’s hands. He even pretended to make a few dancing steps, to everyone’s delight. All that seemed fine until one morning there was a major setback: apparently, around 4 AM he was taken to the bathroom (he was normally transported to the bathroom by being placed in a chair and moved); he stood up and, according to Louis, Louis’s attention was distracted momentarily when he looked at Melissa trying to say something to her, and when he turned around back to UG, he noticed that UG’s eyes were rolling in their sockets, and he fainted and collapsed on the toilet seat. Louis had to carry him back to the couch in his arms. As far as I know, UG never took another step after that.

\* \* \*

Right the second morning of my stay, just as I entered UG's room, UG put me to work in his usual fashion: "Why don't you make some *upma* today?" I agreed and immediately recruited Larry and Susan's help. UG in his teasing fashion forbade Larry to cook. But Larry and Susan did go out to get the necessary groceries for the *upma*. Susan helped me with the cooking. I made a little *upma* specially for UG, as he doesn't eat food with many spices, particularly ginger, with a little extra salt, to suit his taste, and sent it to him with someone (I think it was Avner). Avner came back with UG's comment on the *upma*: "Why did Moorty put so much salt in it?" I sent Avner back with my reply, a counter-question: "Since when has UG started complaining about excess salt?" Apparently, when Avner relayed my question to UG, UG smiled.

\* \* \*

Just to stay away from the heat in the apartment, as well as not to crowd UG too much, I would sometimes get out of there and sit in the ante-room next to the kitchen, doing this and that. I helped clean up Lisa's laptop since she was complaining about how slow it was. Soon, thanks to her publicity, I ended up doing the same for Avner's and Paul Lynn's laptops. I also made CD's on request, copying some of the Indian music I had played earlier to everyone in UG's room.

\* \* \*

One morning, there was a talk of the "Swan Song" that UG had earlier dictated to Louis which was now only on Louis's computer. UG wanted me to edit it (one of his "chores" for me). It took me an hour or so to edit it. The English needed work and the piece wasn't all that coherent. I tried to make it a little better. I transmitted it by e-mail to Louis who printed it out on Sarito's printer. I think it was read to UG and the rest of the audience. The piece is now posted on UG's website as well as in several other places.\* \* \*

Another morning, UG was talking away and was trying rather unsuccessfully to remember a Sanskrit verse about Vedantins, Naiyayikas, Bauddhas and other philosophers. I told UG that it was possible to get the exact verse from the Internet. He said "Do it." I went into the ante-room and fished for the verse on the Internet. It didn't take long. I wrote it in the Devanagari script and showed it to him. He said he would be more comfortable reading it in the Telugu script. So I wrote it in the Telugu script on another sheet and he was able to read it with ease. I told him that the verse was written by Sri Krishna Chaitanya, the founder of the Chaitnaya movement, and related the legend of the conversation between him and Raghunatha, the Navya-Nyaya philosopher who was his fellow student. Chaitanya apparently was also a good scholar in Nyaya except that he didn't believe that logic would help one to attain liberation. So while saying this, as they were crossing the river on a boat, Chaitanya threw the logic manuscript he was holding in his hand into the river.

\* \* \*

Mahesh Bhatt arrived about a week or so after I did. When UG was asking Mario to look for a place for him, I told UG that I had a room vacant in my apartment which no one was using, so why not he stay there. UG agreed and put him up there. The night Mahesh arrived, he kissed me on the forehead and thanked me for the fast editing job I had done for him recently (on his journal concerning UG). There was not much conversation between us. For the week or two he was there, (I would say about 10 days), I would make coffee for him in the mornings and offer him some cashew nuts or a little piece of bread. Then he would leave early in the morning to see UG and spend the rest of the day in the villa.

Mahesh had a central role to play around UG. He had a special relationship with UG. UG would let Mahesh touch his feet with his head, (or UG would rub Mahesh's head with his

foot), kiss him on the forehead, make violent gestures (in jest) or crack crude jokes at him, and whatnot. He would chide UG saying, “You say you are dying, UG, but you are not going to die!” I too thought this was the time to put aside all my background and pride and prostate once and for all in front of the energy called UG. First, he tried to prevent me. But I protested saying, “You would let Mahesh do all that, why can’t I?” and forced myself on him. After he left once, Mahesh returned again later, at UG’s behest, after I had left Valecrosia.

\* \* \*

Usha, UG’s daughter, arrived in the latter half of my stay, after being stalled in Bombay when her Italian and Swiss visas were delayed. Apparently, there was a screw-up in the bureaucratic process, thanks to the ineptitude of Mahesh Bhatt’s travel agent<sup>14</sup>. Chandrasekhar and Suguna, who were supposed to arrive with her, had a worse fate. Their Italian visa was not only delayed, but Chandrasekhar had to go through an interview at the Italian Consulate.

Usha’s arrival was a major event. Everyone was, of course, glad to see her. (She was UG’s “darling daughter.”) As soon as she came in, she sat next to him and started nursing him ~ massaging his legs and feet with oil ~ as a daughter would minister to her father’s needs. She made some *upma* or *idli* for him. She wanted to give him a bath on a stool (she was going get stuff ready for it), but UG would have none of that. (UG had not had a bath in a month or so. Yet, there was not the slightest smell on him! He looked clean like a whistle!).

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<sup>14</sup> Of course, Mahesh was chastised for not helping Usha, Chandrasekhar and Suguna with their visas. But Mahesh protested saying that he wasn’t asked to.

I renewed my acquaintance with Usha. (I had met her before both in India and the US.) She wanted lessons in computing. I gave her a couple, teaching her the basics of fingering on the keyboard, setting up and accessing e-mail, writing replies to e-mails, and such. Having been a teacher herself, she was a fast learner. When I left, I said she should continue her learning with the help of Chandrasekhar or someone else. I don’t know if she ever did, because later, when I wrote her an e-mail, I never got a reply.

\* \* \*

As I said before, Chandrasekhar and Suguna weren’t able to come with Usha. Mario and others were pressing me to stay on. I too was telling people how sorry I was that I wouldn’t be able to see Chandrasekhar, having come that far. I had another reason to see Chandrasekhar: I had just finished translating the third series of his book *Stopped in Our Tracks* and I wanted to give him a CD of the book personally and talk to him about both that and his Second Series. I had also finished translating the Second Series recently and brought a hard copy of it to present to UG.

Of course, people had been reading passages from the Second Series to the crowd that gathered around. Guha apparently had read the chapter on the Upanishads in that book. UG expressed his appreciation of that chapter to me and mentioned what a good a scholar Chandrasekhar was. (I conveyed that comment to Chandrasekhar later.) I told UG that the following chapter in the book called “The Upanishads and UG” was even more interesting and that he should read it. I don’t know if he ever read it or anyone read it to him. The book was going on its rounds and people were reading parts of it. In fact, UG’s granddaughter Kusuma, who was also visiting from the US, and Lisa proofread it and caught some typos in it. Lisa asked me to read the last chapter in the book which I had titled, “A Prayer to UG.” She made a video of my reading.

As usual, the reading was interjected now and then with UG's exclamations and "editorial comments."

Finally, word got around to UG, and about the 26th of February, when I went to see UG that morning, he asked me, "Could we persuade you to stay a little longer?" I said fine. I extended my stay till the 9th of March. Sarito called the British Airways, and I talked to them and rearranged my flight right then and there.

\* \* \*

Chandrasekhar and Suguna didn't arrive until the 8th afternoon. Mitra and I went to Nice to receive them at the airport. I only had that half-day to spend with him, as I left on the morning of the 9th.

When we arrived at UG's, as usual, there were a lot of shoes outside, and the living room was packed with people. I think first Suguna entered and then Chandrasekhar. As she went in, Suguna broke out crying, "UG, why is this happening to you?" or something to that effect, in Telugu. Then you could hear UG answering in Telugu with his own crying voice, "Why are you crying?" That was most heart-breaking to everyone around. UG's affection to her was boundless. She is a pure soul!

\* \* \*

One day, being tired of his talk, I asked UG, "UG, what prevents you from dying now?" UG replied, "I want to go, but the body doesn't let me!" He had made that statement several times before. I tried to interject, "If you care about what the body is trying to say, you should pay attention to it, nurture it and bring it back to full life, instead of neglecting it and letting it go!" But he reacted rather sharply, speaking of my "schoolboy logic" and so on.

One thing remarkable about UG was his attitude toward his condition: You might sometimes hear him groan in his pain or gasp for breath, but he always remained unconcerned about his health and well-being. He never, even once, worried about what was happening to him. I heard him roar once: "Do you think I care about whether I live or die?" He was never the "frightened chicken" which he accused people of being when they were afraid of disease or death.

After giving an account of the money left with him, UG was constantly saying that he would give the remaining \$300,000 to anyone who would pack him off. Then there was plenty of joking around that. I told him that I would do that and he could give the money to me. He said, "No. You wouldn't do it." I said, I could strangle him or give him "the kiss of death" and whatnot. Louis was doing his own part in the joking: he would say he could make minced meat out of the body of UG, make patties out of it and distribute them to everyone, to put catsup on and eat. And so on. This joking would go on endlessly.

One morning, I had prepared a scheme for a "mortal combat" with UG and was waiting for Mahesh to arrive on the scene so he could record the conversation. (Mahesh had been taking copious notes so he could write a book on his days with UG later.) This mortal combat would be a kind of answer to UG's repeated statement, "I want to go, but my body doesn't want to go." When Mahesh arrived, I was massaging UG's legs along with Usha (I wanted to try a certain massage, Bowen style, which I learned from Linda, my ex-wife). As I was massaging, I stood up and said "Here are the three conditions (terms) for the mortal combat: 1) It's a combat of debating until one of us dies; 2) We only use rules of logic and nothing else; and 3) No bullying on UG's part." I am not sure if anyone was amused by my idea.

My complaint to UG essentially was that if he treats his body as something separate from him (or if it is the same as him, as

a matter of fact), he should listen to his body and do its bidding, since he often claims that the body can take care of all its problems. I said that he as “UG” was not letting his body take care of itself. (He did admit that “UG” was a nuisance.) If he did, he would listen to the body’s demands. The body was demanding nourishment and freedom from pain, and wanted to get some help in that direction. It wanted to get well. I added: “It’s ‘UG’ I want to kill and let his body take care of the problems. It’s that ‘UG’ who is subjecting the body to all the diet philosophy and other kinds of ‘crap’ and screwing it up!” UG right away agreed “it” was “crap”!

I don’t think UG heard any of that. But that’s how he is. In a sense he was right. He in fact told people later that UG was already dead. He was just waiting for the body to go. And he would give no encouragement (except the minimal food or elimination) for the body to linger or carry on. And that’s precisely what happened: he let the body wither away slowly on its own. It took a long time and he was deteriorating day by day, until finally he gave up when no one was around. He made sure that the three who were attending him (Mahesh, Larry and Susan) were out for a short while for a cup of coffee and then he breathed his last.

Ten days before that, after everyone else had left the room, he had asked Mahesh to go out and tell everyone to “go back to where you all came from and not sneak around in the corners trying to see him.” Larry and Susan also left, but when they arrived at the airport in Nice, they were called back. Usha also was sent away; so were Chandrasekhar and Suguna. (I believe that if I had stayed on I would have met the same fate.) Mario and Sarito were asked to hang around in town to do any chores that were necessary. Guha had come back after going earlier to India with Lakshmi and their children, saying goodbye to UG, in spite of UG telling him not to return<sup>15</sup>. He

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<sup>15</sup> Julie writes to me saying: “UG told Guha he could come back just before he died, he definitely did not come against his wishes, he

didn’t have the heart to stay away, but when he came back he still had to stay out along with others. So he hovered around in town with his cell phone (every one of these people had a cell phone).

UG gave clear instructions to Mahesh that there would be no funeral. And there was to be no ceremony of any kind. His body was incinerated locally. Of course, Susan was on hand to take care of any death certification process that was needed, as she is a medical doctor. I don’t know what happened to the ashes that were collected from the incineration.<sup>16</sup> I heard that Mitra was asked to take the few of UG’s personal belongings to Gstaad and I do not know their final disposition. I also heard that Sarito was left in charge of the “German funds” to be disbursed according to UG’s wishes<sup>17</sup>. Mahesh was left in charge of the other funds, mostly to be given away to deserving young girls of Indian origin studying abroad. There was a “will” which UG had dictated to Mahesh and which was read aloud in some gatherings, but I don’t think it will have any legal validity. As for the apartment which was already paid for by UG in Gstaad till the end of August, UG invited any of his friends to come and stay there and enjoy themselves.

Sometime toward the end of my stay, Yashoda collected money from those present to buy a tree and present it to Lucia and Giovanni, the hosts, in token of the appreciation of the group

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would never have done that, and Mahesh told Guha he could stay on nearby until the end, just as it was Mahesh who asked Mario and Sarito to stay on, not UG. ” I stand corrected.

<sup>16</sup> I learned later from Mahesh’s his yet -unpublished journal *A Taste of Life* that on Mahesh’s request UG’s ashes were scattered soon after in the Mediterranean Sea by Lucia, UG’s hostess, as Mahesh had to return to India right away on some urgent business.

<sup>17</sup> Sarito has written an e-mail saying, “UG never asked me to do that!”

that had gathered there for their gracious and wonderful hospitality. They would plant the tree in their yard in memory of UG.

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The night before I was to leave, I gave a little talk addressing everyone present there: I told how I appreciated everyone taking such good care of UG, especially Louis. What Louis did for UG no one else could do, including myself, I said. Everyone worked together like a family, I continued, like an orchestra without a conductor: everything got done and no one was there to tell them what to do. I mentioned the names of various people from various countries and I also made references to some who were not present, particularly to Julie Thayer.

\* \* \*

Why were all these people so attracted to UG? On the one hand, they considered him as their spiritual master guiding them in their lives. On the other hand, thanks to their belief in his “supernatural” powers, they were looking to him for help in worldly matters as well, to become successful in career, love or money, or for success in other areas. Some regarded him as an invaluable friend, who was always loyal to them and who couldn’t be replaced by anyone else. Some were simply in love with him. Many of them regarded him as a father figure, giving them that love and affection which they received from no one else. Their respect, love and obedience abounded to the point that they totally disregarded any apparent abuse by him.

Nothing explains better all these relationships than the one crowning factor, namely, that UG represents to many the end of a search: you feel with UG you have come to the end of the road. There is nothing beyond. No wonder he became such a reference point (to use Julie’s expression) for many of us. Such was UG’s magical spell on those around him!

UG did ask several people, including me, to visit him one last time before he died. But some he didn’t. It’s not clear what his logic was behind this. Whatever it was, it was clear that when people didn’t come to visit him, he never showed any disappointment. You are always left with the impression that his invitations were extended to people for their benefit, and not for his, just to give them one last chance to be with him.<sup>18</sup>

I cannot but be impressed by the mutual cordiality which people expressed to one another in this group. Not just respect, but affection and friendship. I know that at least some of them will remain friends with me even after UG’s death. With the others I feel that I could renew my friendship any time I might choose or when an opportunity might present itself; then it would be like I saw them only yesterday.

\* \* \*

I told UG and everyone present that whichever way he decided, whether he decided to stay or leave, we would respect his decision. If he decided to live and carry on, I would be glad to see him again in Seaside. On the other hand, if he decided to leave, that would be his decision, and we would respect that.

I thought, in the back of my mind, that UG might want to ask me to postpone my departure further; but that wasn’t forthcoming. And it wasn’t so clear to me that UG was going to die; there was some possibility that he could kick back, as he had once before, a few years ago<sup>19</sup>, and hang on. But, I didn’t

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<sup>18</sup> I know several people did want to come, even made arrangements, but they couldn’t for various reasons.

<sup>19</sup> UG fell in the bathroom and hurt himself once before, about four years ago, and was nursed back to normalcy by Louis, Sidd, Paul Arms and other friends. Apparently, it took him five weeks then to recover.

want to sit there on my own initiative, keeping a death watch. For some reason, that didn't make such sense to me. For one thing, UG said several times he wanted to leave everyone here and ask someone to drive him to Gstaad where he would settle all his affairs and simply disappear.

On the eve of my departure, I said my goodbyes to all friends. I asked UG if he would be available at 5:30 in the morning to say good bye. He said, "Why 5:30, you can come at 5:00. I will be up most of the night anyway." Lisa was going to leave at the same time and travel with me to London where we would be going our separate ways, I to Seaside and she to Palm Springs. Mitra was to take me to UG's with my bags at 5:00 a.m. I hardly slept that night. By the time we arrived at UG's, Chandrasekhar and Suguna, Larry and Susan, Guha, Golda, Lucia were there. So were Kathy, Avner, Usha, and several others. I said good bye to everyone once again. I prostrated one final time at UG's feet to show my respects.

\* \* \*

I feel, and I am sure that he was not unaware of it himself, that irrespective of all my ambivalences and ambiguities, there is a fundamental feeling of non-separation from UG.

I can't say I really miss UG. Sure, he is gone. But the unity I felt, the identity, the energy, they are not gone. It's just like I always said, "Whatever real is there in UG it is here now!" I am not real fundamentally. And what is real is always there with or without UG, and with or without me.

One could ask whether I feel the same non-separation between myself and other people as well. The answer is, in principle, yes. But most of the time it doesn't surface, because my conditioning and background keep operating and prompt me to react to what others say or do, thus creating a division between me and others. In UG's case, however, my reaction mechanisms were at least temporarily, on some occasions, suspended. There was no room for them to arise, at least for

that moment. Then it's not that I actually felt that there were two non-separate people, but rather that I felt as if there was just that field of energy, which I could feel any time I moved outside of my reaction mechanism.

You could feel the same way in intense moments of love, when the separation between you and your lover is gone. Then it's not that you feel you two are united into one, but you touch on the underlying energy field which exists everywhere and in everyone and in you and me. Of course, we can't remain there. The world has to go on and have its play and we are part of the play. We act and we react to other people. We get involved and then we get disengaged. But fundamentally there is only that energy!

\* \* \*

Goodbye, UG, my friend!

\* \* \*



## Part 2

### Papers on UG

## 5. Science And Spirituality:

Any Points of Contact?

### The Teachings of UG Krishnamurti: A Case Study

*[Paper presented at the Krishnamurti Centennial Conference held at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, U.S.A., May 18-21, 1995]*

The following paper discusses some issues commonly raised in regard to the relationship between science and spirituality. In particular, I wish to examine the issue of the apparent similarities (or symmetry) between statements made by scientists and those made by mystics concerning the unity of existence (or of the universe). I shall argue that the positions of the scientists and those of the mystics are not comparable, and I wish to propose that the very premise that the mystic or the scientist has any sort of experience or knowledge of a state of unity, especially when seen in the light of the teachings of UG Krishnamurti, a contemporary teacher, is questionable.

I shall include in my discussion references to a few well-known contemporary scientists, e.g., David Bohm, Rupert Sheldrake and Stephen Hawking. In addition, I shall use some statements of UG Krishnamurti as a reference point, and I will raise some questions concerning his statements as well. I shall also discuss the issue of the survival of the soul after the death of the physical body and compare the views of Rupert Sheldrake and UG Krishnamurti. To complete my account of UG, I shall report some of his views which are more or less relevant to science and its methods and conclusions, as well as make some remarks as to how UG functions in day-to-day life without the burden of thought. I shall conclude my paper with some of my own remarks on UG and his teachings.

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UG Krishnamurti (referred to in the rest of this paper as "UG", as that is how he is addressed by those who know him personally) is not only quite radical in his teaching, but he also makes constant remarks about the radical transformation he had undergone in 1967, when he was 49 years old (he was 76 at the time of writing this paper), and about the altered way he currently functions in day-to-day life. Whatever changes he went through at the time of his transformation made him free from the "stranglehold" of thought, and in some sense he is "selfless" or "mindless". His remarks about the way his body functions, the manner in which his perceptions, visual or otherwise, occur, and his remarks about other matters, are quite pertinent to the topic of this paper. Also his remarks about the possibility (or rather the impossibility) of understanding the universe or of having any experience of unity generally attributed to the mystics question many of our own assumptions in this area.

## I

Religion, of which spirituality is considered an essential aspect, has in the past come into conflict with some of the theories and conclusions of science. Three major areas of conflict are: the time of creation, the manner of creation, and the constitution of the human being, particularly with regard to the question of whether there is anything in the human being, such as the soul, that survives the death of his physical body. The most conspicuous instance of this conflict is that between creationism and evolution. Most people, at least those who are not totally committed to the teachings of the Bible (or Koran), consider the conflict settled in favor of science. As to the first of these concerns, i.e., the age of creation, again, unless one is a total and literal believer in the Bible, one would have to agree with the current teachings of science that the beginnings of the universe lay in a much more remote past than 3000 BC.

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Some religions, in particular Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism (and perhaps also Confucianism), have, at least sometimes, claimed to have no particular conflict with science, particularly in the areas of age, origins and manner of creation. Hinduism, for instance, is quite compatible with the idea of evolution, although it would allow that creation takes place out of some primeval matter at the beginning of each cycle of creation-sustenance-dissolution. It has its own version of evolution, which agrees with the scientific theory that evolution is from the simple to the complex and from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous. It would also rather vaguely agree that the age of the universe is, say, some billions of years.

In whatever manner these issues are settled between religion and science, there is another area of contact between the two which seems more attractive and amenable to mutual interest and investigation ~ and that is the interface between science and spirituality. The points of contact here seem to be much closer and more intimate. René Weber, in her *Dialogues with Sages and Scientists*, maintains that both the scientist and the mystic seek unity in the universe or reality. "A parallel principle derives both science and mysticism ~ the assumption that unity lies at the heart of our world and that it can be discovered and experienced by man." (Weber, p.13). While the scientist, according to her, approaches the question of unity through his scientific method and reasoning, the mystic approaches it through self-knowledge. While the methodology of science is quantitative and mathematical, the methodology of mysticism is meditational. (Weber, p.8). Weber admits, however, that there are other differences between science and mysticism: scientific method is cognitive and analytical; it studies the universe piecemeal. It claims its results to be objective and value free. (Weber, p.8). The mystic's unity is experiential ~ it is union with the infinite (for instance, the "Thou art that" of the *Upanishads*). (Weber, p.9). While the scientist seeks to unify, he leaves himself out of this "equation" (Weber, p.10), in spite of the fact that in quantum mechanics

the observer and the observed are "admitted to constitute a unit." According to Weber, the scientific community has not yet caught up with the full meaning of this declaration. (Weber, p.10).

The search for the 'singularity' before time, as in the physical theories of Stephen Hawking, is an expression of this search for unity, just as the "super-implicate" order in David Bohm is another such expression. Professor Bohm claims that the quantum mechanical field theory implies some such notion as his super-implicate order. (Weber, pp.34, 37) In his view, the relationship between what he calls the super-implicate order<sup>20</sup> and implicate order is similar to the relationship between consciousness and matter. They are two aspects of one "process". (Weber p.38) Bohm disputes other physicists who claim that his theories do not have much scientific value because they do not yield any empirically predictable results. Yet he claims that his theory is not mere speculation but "is implied by present quantum mechanics if you look at it imaginatively." (Weber, p.37) But when he is asked the question of whether there is any super-super-implicate order, he answers that "we can't grasp that in thought .... We're not saying that any of this is another word for God. I would put it another way: people had insight in the past about a form of intelligence that had organized the universe and they personalized it and called it God. A similar insight can prevail today without personalizing it and without calling it a personal God." (Weber, p.39)

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<sup>20</sup> "...a super-information field of the whole universe, a super-implicate order which organizes the first level into various structures and is capable of tremendous development of structure." (Bohm in Weber, p.33).

Bohm observes that Sheldrake, a biologist, admits that the evidence for the latter's morphogenetic fields<sup>21</sup> is very limited and "requires a lot of experimentation." (Weber, p.96) His own and Sheldrake's theories are "about as testable as any other theories. There is no way to disprove a hypothesis of this level of generality, although it's possible to conceive of evidence accumulating which would make it look unlikely. As far as the implicate order is concerned, since that's even more general, it would be much harder to discuss evidence. The only 'evidence' I can present is that it's a way of looking at the subject which brings it all together. And I think it has a promise of being truthful..." (Weber, p.96)

Bohm disputes the scientific idea that the ability of a theory to predict and control nature proves its truth. "It merely proves that we can turn this crank and get the right answers in a certain area. If you restrict yourself to these areas, your theory naturally appears unassailable." (Weber, p.105)

In general, both Bohm and Sheldrake seem to embrace the idea that the universe ultimately developed out of some sort of consciousness or intelligence. They both deny that either matter or mechanism explain nature and the universe. They both believe that meaning (mathematics for David Bohm) and order are part of nature and that we can study that order through mathematics or scientific theory. And yet, Bohm clearly gives the idea that thought is incapable of grasping the ultimate origins of the universe, because previous scientists (like Poincaré, or Einstein) didn't know what the source of their mathematics was, and therefore they called it mysterious. (Weber p.147) It is Bohm's view that, inasmuch as he is studying the mathematical order of the universe, and

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<sup>21</sup> "The theory of morphogenetic fields proposes that there's a field, or a spatial structure, which is responsible for the development of the form (in living organisms)." (Weber, p. 75).

inasmuch as mathematics is meaning and meaning is a property of consciousness, the scientist is ultimately, like the mystic, studying consciousness. "In some ways the pure mathematician is going into one of the aspects of consciousness." (Weber, p.149) He says that although the scientist is "inspired by the experience of matter, nevertheless once it has entered consciousness he is trying to find something that goes on in consciousness which has an order of its own." (Weber, p.149)

Physicists like Hawking, although critical of the speculative fancies of scientists like Bohm, do, on grounds that their theories are not falsifiable in Karl Popper's sense (Weber, p.210), admit that "most of theoretical physics is connected with an urge to understand the universe, rather than with any practical applications, because we already know enough to deduce practical applications." Hawking admits that the theories about the laws governing the four fields are not consistent, although they are all adequate "to predict more or less what will happen in most normal situations." (Weber, p.210) They differ at the level of predicting very high energies, energies much higher than we can simulate. We require physical theories to be consistent; thus we require nature to be consistent. Hawking also thinks that "Time and space and everything else are really in us. They are just mathematical models that we've made to describe the universe." Consequently, Hawking says that the distinction between studying nature and merely our models of nature is not a meaningful distinction.

Thus it's clear from the ideas presented above that the difference between scientists like Hawking and scientists like Bohm is only a matter of degree, not of kind. They both would like to arrive at an understanding of the universe. And both are interested in arriving at a theoretical understanding of the universe which aims at unity. Both rely on reasoning and thought, even though Bohm, due to his inclinations toward mysticism, admits that thought is incapable of understanding

ultimate reality. Both would go beyond merely experimental predictability. The difference between the two seems to be that Hawking would restrict himself to reconciling the conflicts in the various scientific theories concerning the fundamental fields, whereas Bohm would want to go further and try to understand the theories and achieve a unity beyond current physical theory.

According to Weber, the mystic, on the other hand, is engaged in "splitting his self-centered ego and the three-dimensional thinker that sustains it." (Weber, p.11) He, "in changing himself, changes the subtle matter within in some radical way for which no scientific explanation is at present adequate." (Weber, p.12) For the mystic, a theory cannot comprehend reality, for it puts limits on the unbounded. (Weber, p.14) The questions of the why's and the wherefore's of the universe lead, for the mystic, to the idea that the universe originates in consciousness. (Weber, p.15) "Subtle matter gives birth to and governs dense matter, but all matter forms a continuum. ... At its most subtle and inward point (if there is such an end point) matter and consciousness become indistinguishable." (Weber, p.15) Professor Weber thinks that this subtle matter can be "approached through non-ordinary states of consciousness" as experienced, for instance, in Tibetan Buddhism (Weber, p. 15). "A traditional meditation in Tibetan Buddhism enables the meditator to experience the unity of space, matter, and consciousness." (Weber, p.16)

Regardless of Bohm's and Hawking's statements that they only study models in physics, that, in other words, the physicist is merely studying himself (i.e., the mathematical models in his mind, rather than reality itself), it is clear that in some fashion the study does not and in principle cannot include the scientists themselves. It's not just that theoretical physics, as Weber claims, has not yet somehow come to understand the implications of quantum mechanics. It is not even that, as the "Copenhagen Interpretation" of quantum mechanics states, we do not actually study reality, but only our interpretation of

reality. It's just that no matter what theory a physicist arrives at, it must, as a theory, preclude the person of the scientist as part of the unity. A theory is a thought, and as a thought, it must preclude the thinker. It is precisely this separation that the mystic is trying to transcend. It is merely a concession on Bohm's part to mysticism when he says that thought cannot reach reality or that the physicist studies consciousness. These statements made by him are not consistent with his being a physicist, for they are not compatible with science or its method, particularly its rationality.

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For a teacher like UG, on the other hand, what is problematical is not only that our theories of the universe, of space and time, of causation, or of evolution are merely our interpretations of reality, but also that the self (of the scientist, from the scientist's point of view) is itself a product of the putting together (in the mind of the scientist) of various sensations or memories through (his) thought. In that sense, the self or the subject who does the scientific study, and who is normally taken for granted, is himself an "interpretation".

The mystic, in his turn, inasmuch as he is a mystic, is more interested in what Weber calls union with reality. Such a union may result in transcending one's sense of separation, a transcendence which the mystic had been seeking through his methods of self-knowledge and meditation. However, the mystic's pronouncements concerning his experiential discovery of the unity of existence, of the universe, or of Godhead are not in any way comparable to the physicist's theories of the universe, for the mystic's statements have no scientific, that is to say, publicly verifiable (or falsifiable) content, as do the scientist's.

It is true that in some sense both the scientist and the mystic do seek unity. Perhaps the very search for understanding is born out of a sense of separation which is caused by one's

thought processes, and which presents, in one's consciousness, the clear separation between oneself as the observer and the world (including oneself, inasmuch as one is aware of oneself as a being in the world) as the observed. But there is a fundamental difference in the approaches: the scientist is not satisfied with a mere "experience" of unity, whatever that experience may consist of, but seeks unification in theory. The mystic, on the contrary, is sure that no theory will ever result in a unifying experience. Furthermore, when the mystic does "experience" such a unity, the quest for unity will no longer be there. Not only the quest is gone, but the seeker is gone in a very fundamental sense. It is in this context that UG's teachings have relevance.

UG says that the basic questions concerning the universe or ourselves (or reality, if that's what you call it, and, we may add, questions about the meaning of life) are the self. And these questions try to maintain themselves as the self. And, moreover, they do not allow for any complete answer, for the answer would put an end to the questioner. In fact, the same thought process which created the original separation between the thinker and the world would endlessly keep asking further questions about whatever answer is given.<sup>22</sup>

Furthermore (and this goes quite contrary to many mystical traditions), UG says there cannot be any "experience" of unity or union with reality. According to him, a claim to any experience presupposes not only an awareness of the experience as an object, but also recognition of it as an

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<sup>22</sup> We have learned this quite clearly in Kant, as when he shows how reason generates paradoxes when it is applied to the universe or the soul beyond the limits of possible experience ~ paradoxes such as that the universe has an unconditioned condition or first cause and that there must be a cause for that cause.

experience. And these conditions are enough to destroy any possibility of there being a unity, let alone an experience of unity, because any recognition implies a duality or division between the subject and the object. How can there be an experience of unity where there is a subject left out of the object of experience?

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Is it possible that there is indeed an experience of unity, but when the experience occurs, there is no awareness of it, yet it could be recalled as such sometime later? UG denies that such a possibility exists, because, in order for there to be a memory of an experience, there has to have been an initial experience (or knowledge) with an awareness which implies a subject-object distinction. In other words, he denies that it is possible to have an experience without a subject-object distinction; were it possible to have such an experience, he denies that we could have a memory of it. When there is no such distinction (as should be the case with the so-called experience of unity), there can be no recognition of that state and therefore the state does not constitute an experience; and for that reason there can be no memory of it later.

Nevertheless, when UG describes his own process of “death” or a “thoughtless” state, he admits that there must be in that state some awareness of what was going on, or he would not be able to talk about it. This admission leads us to wonder whether, after all, UG is not concurring with scientists like Sheldrake and Bohm in their assertion that consciousness is the ultimate reality and is the “unity” of the universe. UG’s admission would be somewhat akin to that of the scientists in another sense also, namely, that it is somewhat speculative (although perhaps not to him), for in the awareness of his own thoughtless state there must be some thought operating (according to his own admission, or else he would not be able to report about it), and his statement about consciousness being everywhere would, therefore, also be somewhat

speculative. He may have superior knowledge (superior to what we have) in this matter, but, to us, his statements expressing such knowledge must, like the statements of the scientists, sound speculative.

Is it possible, then, that when the mystic talks about the experience of unity (say, his experience of Brahman or of Emptiness) that there is just a unity of consciousness (let us say, just awareness) without any awareness of that awareness (or a “minimal” or “implicit” awareness, as UG himself seems to suggest in his own case when he undergoes his experience of “death” or similar extraordinary experiences (see below), and that a full-blown subject-object division comes into the picture when that experience is recalled and named? In other words, is it possible that, although in the mystic the continuity of consciousness is broken up in such a way that there is no self (the continuity of consciousness or experience or memory is what creates the self), there is still a physiological lingering or trace of a previous experience? And is it possible that, although there might not be any explicit subject-object distinction at the time of experience, a memory of it becomes possible later because the physiological trace is translated at that later moment as a memory experience, and as a consequence, one recognizes and names the experience (albeit calling it nameless)? It may well be that the experience now is remembered as one of formless emptiness or of energy or of ecstasy. In any case, it would be remembered as being free from any of the delineations of ordinary experience.

Suppose it is possible for the mystic to experience unity in such a fashion. In what way would this unity be compared to the unity posited by the physicist? Is it not possible to interpret this unity (or the experience of it) as just a subjective (although uplifting) experience of the mystic? Does this imply that there is unity (such as of consciousness, or whatever the scientist might be speculating about) in the universe as a whole? If there is any unity in the universe in the scientific sense, then it is not something the scientist can observe (for the scientist always has

to remain outside of it as the observer). And if it can be observed, then we can't know if it is the unity of the universe or not.

Given such a paradox, it seems to me that the unity professed by the mystic and that professed by the scientist are not comparable. In fact, I think we got into the trap of comparing these only because of the ambiguity in the term "unity". The unity for the physicist has to remain a conceptual and objective unity. And unity for the mystic has to be an experience where there is no observer, and hence there would be no distinction between objective unity and the subjective experience of it.

## II

For UG there is no such thing as reality; whatever our thought constructs as reality is all the reality we know or can know of. While the Copenhagen interpretation of Quantum mechanics says that what we know is only our interpretation of reality (including the reality of the scientist), the interpretation does not, however, doubt the reality of the scientist who makes such an assertion. UG, on the contrary, says that the thinker, you, me or UG, are all constructs of thought. That's all we can know. And this idea is quite consistent with the general tenets of mysticism. UG merely draws the consequences of this thesis consistently.

The above remarks also apply to our understanding of reality as being bound by the laws of cause and effect. Current physics (because of Quantum mechanics or of Heisenberg's principle of uncertainty) may revise our notions of cause and effect. UG, on the other hand, sees any attempt to relate events in terms of cause and effect, along with the attempt to "understand" reality, as part of the project of making the self. Causation is the self's means of controlling the world and of thus maintaining itself and its own continuity. It is more than an effective way of surviving in this world and decidedly more

than a way of ordering events with a view to understanding "reality".

For someone like UG, then, the quest of science would reveal itself as a mere technology which delivers various products, rather than an endless attempt to understand reality. Science is valid to the extent of its results. Outside of that, according to UG, it is just an endless spinning of wheels for the purposes of the scientist's self-aggrandizement.

UG, in fact, does not separate the scientist from his science. As he calls the scientist's enterprise into question, he is also calling the scientist's person into question, inasmuch as he is exposing the personal motivation behind any scientific enterprise. Just as he does with people from other walks of life, he is attempting to frustrate the self-centered efforts of the scientist in the way of self-aggrandizement. He has no positive teaching of his own in this matter ~ he only seeks to frustrate the efforts of the scientist, and he does not attempt to fill in that gap with any other suggestions.

## III

Generally speaking, religion has problems in accepting the current hypotheses (and implications) of science concerning the constitution of the human being. While science does not explicitly deny any specific teaching of religion (nor is it interested in investigating religious claims), its investigations of the human being are limited to the physical, biological, psychological and social or cultural aspects of man. Science does not easily lend itself to a belief in anything else, particularly in a soul which may survive the death of the body. This ~ the belief in a soul ~ seems to be essential to most religions for a simple reason: besides a commitment to a belief in some supernatural being, religion is also committed to a belief in personal morality, with its implications of personal sin and redemption. Without the idea of salvation or liberation and some blessed state that would be associated with



it, religion would probably not have much appeal. These conceptions of salvation and liberation, of heaven or *nirvana*, have to be correlated with the opposite conceptions of sin or bondage, or some state of suffering (caused by his fallenness), from which man has to be saved.

Science is generally resistant to the idea that in the human being there could be a soul above and beyond the body, or some entity besides the body and its structures, an entity which survives the death of the body, for the fundamental reason that scientists cannot conceive of any memory or personality traits existing without the support of the brain or the body. Whatever is psychological (or spiritual) in man must seem to be rooted in the physical. After all, physics is the most basic of all the sciences.

Rupert Sheldrake, however, is one of the few contemporary scientists who maintain that such a survival of something beyond the body is possible on the ground that it is possible for memory to exist without the support of the brain. (And David Bohm concurs with him on this possibility.) Sheldrake argues that just because we do not know of any memory without the brain, it does not follow that there cannot be any memory outside the brain. For all we know, the brain can act as a conduit through which memory (or consciousness) manifests itself, much like the antenna and the wiring in a radio act as conduits for the electromagnetic waves to be manifested as sound. Thus, just as the radio signal can exist (in the form of electromagnetic waves) outside the radio with its antenna and wiring, memory can exist outside the brain.

It's clear that Sheldrake is speaking from a vitalist persuasion in biology, which is not shared by the majority of biologists. They think that his claims are not supported by scientific method and that hypotheses such as Sheldrake's are mere conjectures and have no predictive value. Sheldrake denies this. He thinks that his "hypothesis of formative causation [his

morphogenetic field theory] is testable. It can be tested through experiments that I propose...." (Weber, p.78)

Let us compare these views with UG's views on the human being, particularly his views on memory and consciousness.

UG says that memory is not necessarily located in the brain:

*They say that memory is in the neurons. If it is all in the neurons, where is it located in them? The brain does not seem to be the center of memory. Cells seem to have their own memory. So, where is that memory? Is it transmitted through genes? I really don't know. Some of these questions have no answers so far. Probably one of these days they will find out. (NWO, p.161)*

In UG's conversations, we can see that, for him, thought is somewhat akin to memory. Thought, memory and knowledge are all ways in which our past experience operates on the present "input", including recognizing, interpreting and comparing data. These processes create our sense of time and also our sense of the self. If we ask the question, "Where do memories or thoughts come from?" UG answers it as follows:

*Where does thought come from? Is it from inside or outside? Where is the seat of human consciousness? So, for purposes of communication, or just to give a feel about it, I say there is a thought sphere. In that "thought sphere" we are all functioning, and each one of us probably has an "antenna", or what you call an "aerial" or something, which is the creation of the culture into which we are born. It is that that is picking up these particular thoughts. (ME, p.111)*

UG seems to warn us that science may not be able to study consciousness or the field from which these thoughts or memories arise:

*All the experiences - not necessarily just your experiences during your span of thirty, forty or fifty years, but the animal consciousness, the plant consciousness, the bird consciousness - all*

*that is part of this consciousness. (Not that there is an entity which reincarnates; there is no entity there, so the whole business of reincarnation is absurd as far as I am concerned.) That is why in your dreams you dream as if you are flying like a bird.... How it is transmitted, I don't know, I can't say, I am not competent to say. But this seems to be the means. There must be some means of transmission...much more than the genetic: the genetic is only part of it. Consciousness is a very powerful factor in experiencing things, but it is not possible for anybody to find out the content of the whole thing ~ it is too vast. (ME, p. 114)*

About phylogenetic memory UG says:

*I can make no definitive statements about the part genes play in the evolutionary process, but at the moment it appears that Darwin was at least partially wrong in insisting that acquired characteristics could not be genetically transmitted. I think that they are transmitted in some fashion. I am not competent enough to say whether the genes play any part in the transmission. (NWO, p.171)*

There seems to be some parallelism between Sheldrake's morphogenetic fields and UG's field of consciousness of which human consciousness is a part. Racially and individually, we seem to be “tuning” into that field. Of course, neither Sheldrake nor UG is clear about the specifics as to how this takes place. UG (much like the Dalai Lama) leaves the matter to the scientists, although he is skeptical that they will ever be able to study consciousness as such. Sheldrake, being a scientist, hopes his theories will be verified by experimental methods someday. But, at the moment, neither Sheldrake nor UG have any confirmation from science for their views, and, as such, these views remain speculative. UG may be more certain of his ideas than Sheldrake, however, but to his audience, the veracity of his statements remain just as speculative as Sheldrake's.

## IV

While UG frustrates all of our attempts to understand human consciousness, he, at the same time, describes the way he functions and what happens to him in a thoughtless state. These descriptions pose a challenge to science. Not that he would let scientists study him. (At times he does, but that depends on the scientist he is at the moment talking to):

*There are no persons and no space within to create a self. What is left after the continuity of thought is blown away is one disjointed, independent, series of interactions. What happens in the environment around me, happens in here. There is no division. When the armor you are wearing around is stripped away, you find an extraordinary sensitivity of the senses that respond to the phases of the moon, the passage of the seasons, and the movements of the other planets. There is simply no isolated, separate, existence of its own here, only the throb of life, like a jellyfish. (MM, p. 145)*

*...It [the death process] defies description. But I can mention that in this death state, the ordinary breath stops entirely and the body is able to “breathe” through other physiological means. Among the many doctors I have discussed this strange phenomena with, only Dr. Laboyer, an expert in childbirth, gave me a sort of explanation. He says that newborn babies have a similar way of breathing. This is probably what the original word pranayama meant. This body goes through the death process on a daily basis, so often, in fact, that every time it renews itself it is given a longer lease. When, one day, it cannot renew itself, it is finished and carted off to the ash heap. (MM, p.145)*

*....After the breath and heartbeat come to almost a complete stop, somehow the body begins to “come back.” The corpse-like appearance of the body ~ the stiffness, coldness and ash covering ~ begin to disappear. The body warms up and begins to move and the metabolism, including the pulse, picks up. If you, out of scientific curiosity, wish to test me, I am not interested. I am simply making a statement, not selling a product. (MM, p.146)*

*This whole process of dying and being renewed, although it happens to me many times a day, and always without my volition, remains*

very intriguing to me. Even the thought of self or ego has been annihilated. Still there is something there experiencing this death, otherwise I would not be able to describe it here. (MM p.146)

When the separative thought structure dies, these glands and nervous plexi take over the functioning of the organism. It is a painful process, for the hold of thought over the glands and plexuses is strong and has to be “burnt” off. This can be experienced by an individual. The burning or “ionization” needs energy and space to take place. For this reason the limits of the body are reached, with energy lashing out in all directions. The body's containment of that energy in its limited form brings pain, even though there is no experienter of pain there. (MM, p. 147)

This painful death process is something nobody ~ not even the most ardent religious practitioners and yogis-wants. It is a very painful thing. It is not the result of will, but is the result of a fortuitous concurrence of atoms. (MM, p.148)

How all this fits into your scientific structure, I do not know. Scientists doing work in this field are interested in these changes, if they are described in physiological rather than mystical terms. These scientists envisage this kind of man as representing the end product of biological evolution, not the science-fiction superman or super spiritual beings. Nature is only interested in creating an organism that can respond fully and intelligently to stimuli and reproduce itself. That's all. This body is capable of extraordinary perceptions and sensations. It is a marvel. I don't know who created it. (MM, p.148)

Scientists in the field of evolution now think that the present breed of humans we have on this planet probably evolved out of a degenerated species. The mutation that carried on the self-consciousness must have taken place in a degenerate species. That is why we have messed everything up. It is anybody's guess as to whether anyone can change the whole thing. (MM, p.148)

Speaking further of how he functions without the domination of thought, UG says:

Then, the senses become very important factors; they begin to function at their peak capacity without the interference of thought except when there is a demand for thought. Here I must make one thing very clear: thought is not self-initiated; it always comes into operation on demand. It depends upon the demands of the situation: there is a situation where thought is necessary, and so it is there; otherwise it is not there. Like that pen you are using - you can write a beautiful piece of poetry or forge a check or do something with that pen - it is there when there is a demand for it. Thought is only for the purpose of communication; otherwise it has no value at all. Then you are guided by your senses and not by your thoughts any more... (ME, p.110)

The way UG functions is as a natural living organism, without the “stranglehold” of thought ~ he functions efficiently, from moment to moment, without any urge to be or do anything other than what he is or what he is doing at that moment. He explains how, in him, there is chaos and order simultaneously in every moment of attention; how his visual perception is two-dimensional; how one picture of whatever is occurring is replaced by another, totally disconnected picture as soon as some other thing in the environment captures his attention; how there is no connecting link between one event and another; how music can be mere “noise”; how, as an occasion demands, all the knowledge relevant to it is brought to bear upon it, and when the need is gone, then he is back to the “meaningless” or thoughtless state.

There is no way for another person to understand all this. To try and understand it, one would have to put it as information into one's own mental and conceptual framework, and then there would always be questions about this information springing from one's own experiences, prejudices and expectations (concerning oneself and one's life). Or, one could live like UG, in which case there would be nothing to understand, as the need to understand will have disappeared.

UG does make some startling statements about genetics, rebirth, disease, and so on. Some of these statements are hard to make sense of, because our present-day science has not investigated them, or they may sound false, because science sometimes seems to conflict with them. Examples of such statements are:

*For those who believe there is such a thing as rebirth, there is rebirth; and for those who do not believe in it, there is no such thing. However, "Objectively speaking" there is no rebirth ~ for what is there to be born again? ...*

*All chronic disease is genetic.*

(Here he seems to believe in some kind of physiological *karma* - there is nothing you can do about it, except bear with it and, if necessary, temporarily palliate it.)

*To experience pain you have to link one (momentary) sensation with another through memory and thought. Pain is necessary to the healing process ~ if you let it be, the body will find its way of absorbing or integrating it.*

The body never dies; it is only recycled ~ our (non-existent) self is the only thing that dies. If left alone, without the influence of thought, the body functions most sensitively, efficiently and absolutely peacefully.

We don't want to be free from our problems, for to be free from them is to put an end to ourselves.

## V

The most immediate question that might come to a reader's mind when he reads the above discussion of UG is: how does UG know whatever he is saying about himself (and his thoughtless state)? For all normal and practical purposes he seems to use his knowledge and thought like everyone else.

Either he is in his thoughtless state and he does not know it; or he knows his thoughtless state and he is not in it.

In ME (p. 46), UG describes his state as a state of "not knowing;" knowledge only comes into the picture when there is a demand for it. Once the demand is met, then he is back again in the state of not knowing. On the very next page (p. 47), speaking of the "tremendous peace that is always there within, that is your natural state," he says, "...This is volcanic in its nature: it's bubbling all the time - the energy, the life - that is its quality." Then, UG asks, "You may ask how I know. I don't know. Life is aware of itself, if we can put it that way - it is conscious of itself." Nowadays, UG would express the thought somewhat differently by saying, "Knowing and not knowing exist in the same 'frame'."

In looking at this "tremendous peace," If we substitute "unity" for "peace" we immediately notice the paradox: on the one hand, we cannot experience "unity," for to experience it is to recognize it; and that can only be possible when there is a duality or division. On the other hand, to make a statement that there is unity (or peace, in the above context) implies knowing it. And to say that unity (or life) is conscious of itself seems to be inconsistent with the previous statement. How can we understand this paradox?

I think that when a person is freed from the "stranglehold" of thought, in some sense the person (or the subject) does not exist as a continuing entity any longer. Not that the entity ever really existed before ~ only the illusion of it was there. Now that the illusion is not there, knowledge operates for a moment, answers the demands of the situation, and immediately and automatically slips back into the background.<sup>23</sup> When UG answers his audience's questions, he

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<sup>23</sup> Even to use the term "knowledge" is misleading in this context. Knowledge presupposes in our ordinary life continuity in the self

responds in words. His audience tends to make sense and meaning out of these words and is tempted to apply the same rules of logic that are normally applied to discourse. But as there is no “person” in someone like UG, there is no division (or sense of separation) within him; and whatever “unity” is there is expressing itself without the normal logic of “consciousness” or “experience”. Even UG’s responses to our questions have no meaning for him. It is not that they are meaningless. There is no consciousness of “separation” or of anything (or anyone) as being separate from himself. Hence, it would not be appropriate to call statements of UG expressions of “knowledge”, at least in the ordinary sense of knowing. Words, meanings, music, sounds, objects and such appear for a moment and then in the next moment (or “in the same frame”) recede into the background and become mere noise, two dimensional space, irritations or ‘blobs’. We, however, “interpret” the sounds coming from UG as meaningful and try to apply truth values to the statements coming from him. But, for UG, these ideas do not have “meaning”, or truth or falsehood.

If such is the life of a person free from thought or the self, we could call it a state of “unity”, but there is no one to realize or experience that unity, nor is there any knowledge or experience of it in the usual sense of the terms. UG tries to express this life in a fashion peculiar to himself. To his audience, who try to measure whatever they hear with their

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such that we can say, “I did not know then, but now I know it.” Such continuity is nonexistent in the case of UG. Yet in some sense UG’s past knowledge or experience is coming into operation here. But the knowledge is operating for the moment only, without being related to a reference point or to a project of the self, such that we formulate our desires and plans on the basis of such knowledge or seek the repetition of the current experience which is recognized as such and such.

normal yardsticks of subject-object, meaning-object dichotomies, however, such a life must remain a mystery.

At this point UG’s audience is tempted to ask:

*How do we understand such seemingly nonsensical utterances of UG? Why should we even be interested in such “nonstatements” of UG? Why should we pay any attention to UG or his teachings at the expense of disregarding the testimonies of the many mystics of the world making claims to knowledge (or at any rate an experience) of unity?*

I think the answer to these questions lies in the epistemological challenge UG poses to both the mystic and the scientist. If the critique he makes of both mysticism and science is extended to his own statements, it is true that we are led to some puzzles. But then, what if the above is the only possible way a man who lives in an undivided state lives, and traditional mystics did not always realize its implications?<sup>24</sup> Although UG’s utterances make no “sense” to UG (it is not that they are nonsense either), his audience cannot help but try to make sense out of them, for they are using the activity of making sense as part of the project of making their selves, in the sense that they relate his statements to some project (epistemological, spiritual or some other personal project) in their lives. UG, on the other hand, can operate in this world without having to fall into the dichotomy of sense and nonsense. To us, he appears to be a man like any other man,

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<sup>24</sup> Some mystics did realize the problems in expressing themselves. In my opinion, Shankara, Nagarjuna and Chuang Tzu all had an inkling of these problems and resorted to dialectical reason to “point the way” to an “experience of reality” without giving a positive verbal expression in statements which can be understood as representations of an experience of reality.

living, and carrying on in this world. UG, however, has no sense of who he is. He has no concept or image of himself, and hence even the question of whether he is alive or not-alive does not arise for him. He may momentarily answer our questions with counter-sounds or utterances. The problem of making sense, attributing truth and falsehood, or looking for the facts “behind” the words, is our problem, not his.

In view of the above discussion, then, shall we say that UG's thoughtless state is a state of experiencing the unity of the universe? As UG in some sense does not exist as a continuing person (subject, self), there can be no knowledge (which is a temporal “state of mind”) of such unity; and in such a person there is no awareness of unity, or its opposite, viz., disunity or division. Unity and division are concepts which presuppose continuity in consciousness. For UG's audience, on the other hand, any such unity must remain a concept, for as far as they are concerned, they will never know what is in UG except as a concept, which always necessitates its own opposite. For instance, the audience might be tempted to theorize that when UG is in a thoughtless state he is experiencing unity and that when that state is temporarily disturbed, there is disunity or division. But how can they ascertain the truth value of such statements?

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(Abbreviations of UG's works referred to in the text of the paper are as shown below.)

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## 6. Thought, the Natural State and the Body ~ Deconstruction of Spirituality in UG Krishnamurti

*[Paper presented at the 17th International Vedanta Conference on September 21, 2007 at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio.]*

UG Krishnamurti (known to his friends as “UG”) has been teaching across world for some 40 years ever since he had undergone what he called ‘calamity’ in 1967, in which his life processes ceased for about 45 minutes (he was brought back to life by a phone call from a friend) and he was cleansed of all his past experiences. The continuity of his person had been broken into pieces; gone was any central coordinator or a reference point. Since then, to quote Terry Newland in his *Introduction to Mind is a Myth*, “What is there is a calm, smoothly functioning, highly intelligent and responsive biological machine, nothing more. One looks in vain for evidence of a self, psyche or ego; there is only the simple functioning of a sensitive organism.” (p. 12)

UG passed away on March 22nd of this year (2007). With his radical approach to philosophical questions and issues of living, he left an indelible impression and had a deep personal impact on many of the people who had met him.

After having known UG for over 25 years, it is now time for me to put together my thoughts on his teaching. In the following, I will not only summarize his views on thought, the natural state and the body, but will also present, in the last two sections, my reflections on his teachings and make some conjectures based on my own personal life. The last two sections are somewhat tentative. Because this paper is mainly exploratory, it should be viewed as “work in progress.”

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UG was not a systematic philosopher in any technical or academic sense. As a matter of fact, he abhorred technical jargon, especially psychological jargon. He did not leave behind any theory or body of teaching. It is doubtful that one could extract any consistent and coherent system of ideas from his teachings. One could aptly describe him as “a teacher without a teaching.” What he taught came in short discourses, dialogues and one-liners, most of which have been published in several books and in a biography of him by Mahesh Bhatt<sup>25</sup>. In the following, I have organized UG’s teaching into a number of topics.

The uniqueness in UG’s teaching lies in his demystification of spirituality. While discounting all spiritual experiences, he provides a rather naturalistic explanation of spirituality in terms of what he calls the “natural state.” He maintains the impossibility of attaining the “natural state” through search, effort, seeking or any other strategy employed by our thought process.

Spiritual experiences are, he says, like any other experiences, only more glorified. They do not solve the problems of duality or suffering. There is no such thing for UG as a non-dual experience: it is a contradiction in terms. In order for you to know non-duality as an experience, you must somehow be there. That means the experience is not truly non-dual.

None of the means which tradition has handed down to us to attain such a liberated state of non-duality delivers the goods. Meditation, renunciation, prayer and worship are all done

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<sup>25</sup> UG Krishnamurti – *A Life*, Penguin Books India (Private) Ltd., 1992.

with an ulterior motive and can never free you from duality. You are always there measuring your progress. As long as “you” are there, you can never be free.

**Thought:** The “you” is thought-generated. Thought is memory, your cultural and individual past, operating on the present situation. Each thought splits itself, as it were, into two: the object thought about and a fictitious, non-existent subject. It creates the illusion of the subject, the thinker. Since there is no thinker as such, we can never know the thinker. The thought is the thinker. There is no other thinker.

Thought cannot understand reality. Reality and life are constantly changing. Thought, being dead and static, can never understand or know them. We know or understand anything only through experiences molded out of our past. If thought cannot understand reality, nothing else can, either. You can never know anything directly, without the mediation of thought or knowledge. If we could, then there would be no need to understand anything.

For UG, thought is only useful for communication. The structures that thought produces, its theories and hypotheses are only useful in producing technological tools and gadgets. The theories and hypotheses are mere fictions created by thought.

Thought superimposes itself upon the biological organism, creating a parallel world, the world of thought, which consists of all the things we strive for, our pleasures and pains, our knowledge and values.

**The Cultural Input:** UG says that all typically human problems arise out of the values that the society or culture around us has imposed upon us, what he calls the “cultural input.” Our desires and goals are all passed on to us by the culture around us. This culture wants us to become the “perfect man.” It induces us to emulate the models which

history has produced, models like Jesus and the Buddha, or to strive for utopias such as the Kingdom of God or Nirvana that those models have presented. The cultural input gives us the notion that by living this way we will gain permanent happiness.

Thought is the mechanism which enables the experience of the past to repeat itself through images and words by creating a future, which is only a modified past, and prompting us to strive for it. Ideals thus projected into the future falsify our present condition, making us feel as if there is something wrong with it. We are in constant conflict between what we think we are and what we want to become. We feel restless, inadequate and unfulfilled, and we constantly search for a meaning in life to fulfill us.

Thought presents us with various goals and prompts us to strive for them to gain permanent happiness without a moment of pain. But permanent happiness is an illusion; it does not exist. In our attempts to realize our goals,<sup>26</sup> including spiritual goals, we begin to transform ourselves. Furthermore, the process of seeking self-fulfillment is endless, resulting in suffering for the individual and destruction in society. Our seeking leads us to a search for security, power, wealth, sex, love, spiritual liberation and so on. As we strive to attain our goals, we have conflicts, fears, jealousies, exploitation and wars. These are generated by what UG calls the self-protectiveness of thought.

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<sup>26</sup> In the following, by “goals” I do not mean the goals necessary for day-to-day living, but goals for self-improvement and self-fulfillment – goals which involve the “self” in some fashion or other. While the former set of goals will have no relevance and cease to be once they are achieved, the latter persist in our consciousness and create endless striving. Indeed, the continuity of the “self” is perpetuated by the contemplation and striving for these goals.



Instead of a peaceful living organism, we now have an individual torn by conflict, stressed out, competing, conflicting with other individuals and groups, causing suffering for himself and for the society. As long as we are driven by thought and its goals and structures, our problems are inevitable. The problem is that we take our thoughts and goals to be too real. They are all fictitious and generated by the society around us. Since the goals conflict with each other, we are constantly in conflict. "We want all this and heaven too," to quote UG.

Then we ask how we can become free from all these goals. The "how" is a mischievous question; it implies another goal, this time one of "thoughtlessness" or absence of goals. All our effort is utilized to strive for goals.

To become free from the "stranglehold of thought," to use UG's expression, all effort must cease. A clinical "death" must occur. But you cannot bring it about. If and when it happens, the organism will function smoothly without the interference of thought and its artificial goals. Thought then falls into its place as an instrument of communication and problem-solving.

**The Body:** For UG, the human organism is unique. No other organism is like it. It is unparalleled in nature. UG maintains that the body is a tremendously intelligent organism capable of living in the world without any help. It does not need any of our knowledge, education, goals, pleasures and happiness. It does not care to achieve anything or to improve itself. The only needs of the body are survival and reproduction. The body has no need for transformation or liberation. "There is nothing there to be transformed," UG says.

The body is always in a state of peace, not a dead peace concocted by thought, but a living and dynamic peace. Through our conditioning we constantly seek pleasures. But the body is not interested in them. Pleasures take it away from

its peaceful harmonious state. Pleasures are indeed pains, in that sense. For that reason, the body constantly tries to get rid of them.

According to UG, the body has the needed intelligence to take care of any problems, such as ill-health, that it might confront. It has the needed resources and the power to recuperate and renew itself, given a chance. When all else fails, it will die gracefully. Medical science only prolongs the agony of pain; it does not cure it. In a sense, the body is immortal, because at the time of "death," its atoms may be reshuffled and recycled, but the body is always there in some form or other.

UG calls the mind the "interloper" or "squatter". He says that through its pleasure-seeking movement, it constantly interferes with the functioning of the body and disturbs the peace and peak functioning that are already there.

UG holds out as a possibility that when one becomes free from the stranglehold of thought through some "calamity", which might happen not because of any of our effort but in spite of it, the body falls into its natural rhythm; then thought functions harmoniously without creating a surrogate life. Such a body is in the "natural state." According to UG, when one falls into this state, the body and the senses will resume their full function and sensitivity.

**Means:** UG does not supply any specific method to become free from the stranglehold of thought. Instead, he wants us to see the futility of striving for all our goals for self-fulfillment. He asks us to find out what we really want. If we are free from all those fictitious goals and realize that there is no such thing as permanent happiness and no meaning in life, our lives become simple and easy. Otherwise, we are wasting our life and talents in futile pursuits. As UG says,

*You are not ready to accept the fact that you have to give up  
~ a complete and total surrender.*

It is a state of hopelessness which says that there is no way out...

*Any movement in any direction, on any dimension, at any level, is taking you away from yourself...*

*It hits you like a ton of bricks. (Mystique of Enlightenment, p. 21)*

With UG, there is no talk of mysticism or mystical experiences, oneness, nonduality or such. Rather, he speaks of returning to the natural state where there is no conflict.

**Teaching Process:** UG was a teacher who constantly operated from a state of nonduality: his actions were not born out of calculation or premeditation; they were spontaneous. His dealings with people were directed constantly toward drawing them into the vortex of nonduality where there are no distinctions between bondage and liberation, or indeed, even between life and death. UG did not distinguish himself from others. He was not trying to achieve any results, nor was he trying to change anyone. Yet, his dealings had that effect on people, viz., they were constantly prodded to question their belief structures. His only aim seemed to be to destroy the mental structures people had so carefully and assiduously built for themselves, without attempting to replace them with any of his own. He would say, “You can walk, you don’t need any crutches.”

**Reflections (A):** Ground Zero: 1. Does UG’s teaching not leave us dry and empty, without any hope? Doesn’t it seem to advocate that we have to give up all our goals? If so, why live? If there is nothing we can do to achieve the “natural state,” then why even talk about it? UG may have deconstructed spirituality, but hasn’t he deconstructed life itself, leaving it dry and empty?

Is UG asking us to revert to the state of the animal, to start at the beginning, as it were? To be sure, he says there is no going back. In fact, his own life after “calamity” was much more than survival (albeit without reproduction).

He says that whatever you are, you have to live in this world. Living in this world requires that you develop and utilize your talents, that you make a living of some sort, and that you live with some sort of arrangement with your society. You have to compete with others, make money, work at a job or whatever else you have to do. But UG never tells us, of course, what to do. You cannot derive any “directive” from what he says.

Then what is he saying? Why did he keep talking to people until the end of his life? What did he hope to accomplish?

I don’t think he intended to achieve anything. The nature of his being was such that he always talked; he always commented on whatever was happening around him. Of course, his talking might have had the effect of disillusioning some people about the goals they had been pursuing, making their lives less burdened, but that was a consequence which just happened. He didn’t plan anything.

2) So, what role do thought and thinking play in daily life? I have to use thought to solve problems for sure, to plan ahead and to organize my life – in short, to lead a successful life in this complex civilization. If I don’t, I would be reduced to an animal state. Then, in precisely what sense do I have to become free from the “stranglehold” of thought? Only in terms of being free from the religious or spiritual goals (or other goals for self-fulfillment) – that I have to have this, or that I have to become that, or that I have to seek this pleasure or avoid that pain.

But if I have pain and I want to solve the problem of pain, would I not be using thought to solve it? Wouldn’t that be the same as avoiding pain? UG never made this very clear – on the

one hand, he encouraged people to go see a doctor (“You can give your ailing body a helping hand.”); on the other hand, he said he himself would never see a doctor and encouraged people not to take any medicine or see a doctor for their troubles. I don’t think he was very consistent on the matter. However, one must admit that he was mostly consistent with himself about his own life, in the sense that he never saw doctors. He said pain is a great healer. You have the problem of pain, he said, only when you link two sensations (of pain) through memory and then say, “I have pain.”

3) Even toward the end of his life, UG seemed to believe in the basic status of the body. He would say something to the effect, “The body doesn’t let me go,” or “The body is not ready to go.” If the body and its solidity are put together by thought, it’s not clear how he would take the body as basic or real. Of course, he could say that these statements too are just interpretation. Or, more appropriately, UG’s statements could be taken to mean nothing more than preventing you from believing anything as real; his statements are just teaching tools to demolish our mental structures

4) To act outside the self-centered framework is to act outside the framework of thought. But we don’t know if such action is possible except when we act impulsively, habitually or reflexively, or in situations of emergency. UG, on his part, said his actions were not based on thoughts or ideas. He never told us how they arose or how they were possible. He said none of his actions were initiated by himself. They were always prompted by something “outside”, a person, circumstance or a thought. It is as though he was simply drawn into action by a situation. What he says reminds us of *wu-wei* in Taoism.

5) Somewhere, we must find peace and fulfillment without having to seek any goals. Of course, I can’t solve any social or political problems or problems of the world. Then what good am I without contributing anything to the world? A counter question here would be, I didn’t create all those problems, why

should I bother to solve them? Who asked me to? (As UG would say, “Who gave me the mandate?”) On his own part, he said that he was perfectly at peace with the world. Given the way we are, the world “couldn’t be any the different.”

All this discussion is based on the question of how to live in this world or what policies of living we should have. The answer is that there is no answer to that question. We don’t need to know how to live in this world. We are actually living.

6) The virtue of UG’s teaching is that through the process of his questioning he unburdens us not just from our cherished beliefs and prejudices, but primarily from our goals. Whether or not we are completely free from them is up to us. When we are, we can live in peace.

**Reflections (B): One Blind Man’s Elephant:** 1) UG hints at a life which doesn’t involve symbols, meaning and interpretation. This living is in contrast to the life of striving for goals and fulfilling ourselves through them. If we let all our goals (for self-fulfillment) go, then perhaps we could view everything, including ourselves, as a unitary energy – that we are the energy aware of itself in a non-dual fashion.<sup>27</sup>

2) Let us say that I am disillusioned<sup>28</sup> about all these goals that I seek to fulfill myself. And when I am free from the goals, I am also free from my attachment to things and therefore from my fears as well and the consequent self-protectiveness. Thus when I can let go of everything, including life itself, I can land

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<sup>27</sup> I discussed the issue of how we know this in my unpublished paper, “Science and Spirituality,” (pp. 17-18) available on UG’s website.

<sup>28</sup> Disillusionment can not only be unsettling but also traumatic and can happen in stages.

in that state of total peace (Energy). Then hopefully I would not be causing the problems which are generated by my striving for self-fulfillment.

Of course, theoretically I may still be a problem-maker in the world, but that is something for the world to judge and respond to. Also, perhaps, in the heat of the moment, I could be acting rashly or emotionally; but I would have no grasping nature nor would I accumulate property beyond my needs or protect it with all my might.

3) When you let go of everything, you are the Energy. This letting go of all concerns may occur through various means which have been known to tradition: passive awareness, contrary (or opposite) thinking, looking at the situation more objectively, reversing roles, going behind or stepping out of feelings and experiences, and so on. Yet no seeking is necessary and nothing needs to be changed. There is this state of just being awareness or an organism, an awareness or being whose energy may last only a moment. And the energy released thus vitalizes the body. It may not affect the individual organs in any specific manner (like in acupuncture); but it certainly refreshes the body.

4) Suppose we let go of everything: then, as I said before, we will recede into the body or, rather, into an energy field where there are no distinctions or divisions. But that too, as I was suggesting above, is only a temporary state. At least, just out of the sheer necessity to respond to the needs of the body and the world, we have to engage in thought and then again we get caught in a state of duality.

So becoming free from the stranglehold of thought must just amount to becoming free from the goals that thought generates for self-fulfillment. This does not preclude us from using thought in solving problems of day-to-day living.

As UG would say, life would then become simple and easy. One is not involved in anything except for the moment. Goals and meanings (including the meaning of the world, things and people in it, as well as values and points of view) are only temporary and tentative. When you are not in the world of meaning, then, as UG often said, thoughts are mere noises in the head and time ceases to be.

5) Now we can see how when a person is in this Energy or awareness, he (or she) could be passively watching things, persons and events in the world as a passing show; or, he could be merely aware of his memories or images come and go. And for one split second, he could become one of those images or memories. Then, the world of meaning and all that is associated with it would again exist for the person. Yet, he could once again withdraw from that world and recede back into the field of energy. It's interesting to note here that when we are in the world of meaning, we often confuse our mental realities, which are mere symbols with meaning attributed to them, with actual realities, and respond to them as if they were real.

6) This being "in-and-out" of energy occurs in full awareness; there is only periodic disengagement. When the present context is finished, when the "me" is no longer needed, then there is disengagement and the "me" is gone. The ending of the context happens in many ways, as for example, when a person visiting leaves or when a task is accomplished. Then one is back at ground "zero". There is no awareness that one is even living. Nothing matters. When a need occurs, such as having to mail a letter, or being hungry, or having to go to the bathroom, then the particular thoughts and images come into play, and the self is temporarily involved again. But, since there is no desire to continue, there is no conflict in either "being in" or "being out;" there is no duality here.

7) But there is a fundamental difference between the disappearance of the ego temporarily and one becoming an

automatically-run organism where the will simply has withered away permanently. But such a thing is not in our hands. There is nothing we can do to make it happen. We can't even "wait" for it. All the strategies, even to passively wait for it to happen, are thought-generated and willed. Yet, that's what true liberation is: to be totally and permanently freed from the ego. Unfortunately, there is no protocol for it, no program and there is nothing anyone can do to achieve it. Yet, from what I can see from my time with UG, it seems to be a possibility.

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### Postscript 1

Each thought is from a certain point of view. As long as a point of view is there you will keep thinking. The point of view is itself another thought. When you can trace the thought to the point of view and question the point of view, the thought is gone. The point of view may be just any hang-up or hook-up (or attachment of some kind).

**Playing the Skeptic:** The big skeptical question is that this whole approach reduces one to ashes. One might claim that something might take over and that might act in some fashion. But the plain fact of the matter is that you won't be there to know or experience or enjoy or suffer it. Take enjoyment, for instance: What I notice is that you couldn't even use the term

"enjoyment" anymore, when the experience only lasts a split second and then something else is there in its place.

And when you recede into the awareness, an awareness with no point of view, it looks like everything in life is falling apart and people, actions, events, relationships etc., don't make any difference. Then I could as well be dead!

Then what is the virtue of all this teaching? Just that I'll supposedly be free from suffering? To be sure, psychological pain is pulverized, being broken up into pieces. But physical pain is always there drawing itself to your attention. You are never going to be free from it. It doesn't even matter if you don't concatenate different sensations into a state of mind which has continuity or you do.

### Postscript 2 ~ Answer

These skeptical questions are based on a point of view, namely, that life must have some value and that it must amount to something. In other words, the skeptic is not willing to just go! If he does, there is no problem remaining!

## 7. Being with UG ~ His Teaching Process

UG's teaching process cannot be separated from his person. With that in view, in the following I report mostly how UG related to people around him as a way of demonstrating his teaching process.

It's not possible to make any generalizations about either UG or his teaching, as for each generalization you make about UG you are bound to find many exceptions. At best one can paint on a broad canvass a mosaic of many concrete instances from one's own experience and dealings with UG.<sup>29 30</sup> Others undoubtedly will readily come up with their own different experiences. I wouldn't even bother to mention here the many instances in which people experienced UG's healing of their pains or saving them from accidents or illnesses or other dangers, as they are not only countless, but they are entrenched more in the realm of the subjective.

**Being around UG:** To be around UG can be quite a challenge. UG always maintained that wanting permanent happiness without a moment of unhappiness is the source of our misery. In his own life, things constantly changed. If you spent a whole day around UG and went along with all the changes he went through or put you through, you would emerge at the end the day totally exhausted and wiped out. You wonder how anyone could live through so much change

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<sup>29</sup> Although the following is based mostly on specific instances, I have not, except occasionally, made references to specific names lest anyone might take it personally.

<sup>30</sup> When Mahesh was writing his biography, UG himself said, "After the Calamity, there is no biography to write." There are only isolated instances with no connecting link between them.

in a day without ever looking back. I have not seen another person like UG who could do that! Being around UG and moving with him were in themselves a great learning experience.

**UG's Teaching Process:** *[This paragraph is mostly a repetition from the previous chapter. I am doing it to provide continuity.]* You cannot separate UG's teaching from his person. UG was a teacher who constantly operated from a state of nonduality: his actions were not born out of calculation or premeditation; they were spontaneous. His dealings with people were directed constantly toward drawing them into the vortex of nonduality where there are no distinctions between bondage and liberation, or indeed, even between life and death. UG did not distinguish himself from others. He was not trying to achieve any results, nor was he trying to change anyone. Yet, his dealings had that effect on people, viz., they were constantly prodded to question their belief structures. His only aim seemed to be to dismantle the mental structures people had so carefully and assiduously built within themselves, without attempting to replace them with any of his own. He would say, "You can walk, you don't need any crutches."

UG was not aware of any distinctions: yet, he appeared to make all kinds of distinctions: he seemed to punish, praise, brag, exaggerate, play games with money, challenge, etc. etc. He even seemed to act through various conditionings and prejudices of his own.

After his Calamity, the question did occur to UG how he should talk to people or relate to them: he thought to himself, "I will tell it like it is; I will talk about the way I operate." From then on that became his primary mode of communication. Sometimes, he talked constantly about himself and his past experiences. He often spoke about himself and his Natural

State. He spoke of how it was being constantly in peace and how there were no problems there.<sup>31</sup>

He used this approach until the very end of his life, although later on he mixed in details from his past, his encounters with J. Krishnamurti, and other talk about himself. This served the purpose of pulling the minds of his audience away from themselves. He would often talk for hours, to the extent that people would doze off intermittently, and their minds would be dazed after he finished. They were temporarily removed from their daily concerns, thoughts and worries. As a result, people might have been, at least for the time being, cleansed of their past.

UG talked about his main ideas concerning thought, self, conditioning, liberation, meditation, calamity and so forth. He would engage and answer people's questions. On some of those occasions, he sounded as if some ancient teacher was speaking in a strange voice across centuries of time; and you felt as if you had heard him in another lifetime as well as this.

UG taught during all his waking hours and perhaps when he retired too, as you never knew what happened when he went to bed. He used to say he lay awake in bed most of time so as not to disturb others in the apartment or house. What things might have transpired in that bedroom! We used to joke about UG saying that he ruled the whole universe from his bedroom (while everyone else was asleep!).

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<sup>31</sup> A few times when I was alone with UG, he would describe something to me, whether it be his current state of the body or the senses or some way of looking at things such as the tree in front of you being only two-dimensional. I couldn't always make sense of what he said. Sometimes I would give my interpretation and he would either agree or keep silent.

UG left no holy cow unslaughtered. If he even as much as sensed someone was hung up about a tradition, a country, a religion, a nationality, a spiritual tradition or a teacher, idea or belief, he would pour his verbal abuse on that subject. Many people who gathered around him were former followers of J. Krishnamurti or Rajneesh. Most of his verbal attacks were on J. Krishnamurti and the next frequent victim was Rajneesh. He added Ramana Maharshi, Sri Ramakrishna, Jesus, Buddha and others later on to his list.

UG also left no demons buried. He poured out praise for people like Hitler: his famous one-liner was: "There were only two good things that came out of Germany: Cambazola cheese and Hitler!"

In spite of all the vituperation he showered, UG never showed any malice. After everyone left, there were many times when I was alone with him. Never once did he mention the topic of abuse after everyone left. In fact, there was once an occasion when he talked to me appreciating J. Krishnamurti!

After watching him over many years, I am convinced that his attacks were intended to unhook a person from his hangups and dislodge him (or her) from his fascination for a certain guru or his or her uncritical repulsion to evil.

There were also times when he threw *koan*-like questions at people: he would ask you, "If someone asks you, 'what does UG say?' or 'what is his teaching?' what would you say?" Then, without waiting much longer, he would answer the question himself: "Any answer you give, any movement your thought makes in any direction, is a false answer."

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In later years, he resorted to reading a passage or two from one of his books or "the archives," consisting of letters people had written to him and newspaper and magazine reviews, or what someone else had written about him (Mahesh Bhatt's *UG Krishnamurti – A Life*, for instance). Or, he would ask to

play a video or audio tape or disc. He did not play them just to entertain people, but as part of his teaching. This had the added benefit of giving him a bit of rest from his constant talking.

**Astrology, Palmistry and Nadi:** UG was notorious for his seeming interest in astrology, palmistry and *nadi*. If he noticed that someone could read palms or horoscopes, he would right away extend his arm to the person to read his palm or ask them to read his horoscope. His pet questions were always about money and travel. Many times, the readers would also talk about how long he would live or where he would die, and so on. A whole book of these readings has been put together.

When astrologers made predictions about UG, for instance, that he would face a certain danger on a certain day, he always brushed aside what they said and did whatever he wanted to do anyway. Those astrologers then claimed that the planets had no influence on him because he was a liberated man.

In my opinion, his interest or belief in these matters was perfunctory. He was more interested in the astrologer or palmist than his reading. I witnessed how he once involved an American astrologer in such deep discussion about his horoscope that the astrologer not only noticed his own shortcomings but was at his wits end to respond to UG's technical remarks.

When UG himself read someone's hand (which he did ~ he had learned palmistry in the US in his youth), his readings were always vague and general, like, "Nothing comes easy for you; you have to work hard for things," "You have a pot of money hiding somewhere," or "Where are you hiding all that money?" "You will live a long, long life," etc.

Sometimes I suspected that he might even have been influencing an astrologer's readings to come out the way he

wanted, by communicating indirectly with the person whose palm was being read. But I can't prove any of that.

**Care and Compassion:** On occasion, a grieving person would come to him, having lost a dear one recently; or, upon hearing the news of the death of someone, UG himself would go and visit the grieving person or family. Typically, UG would not say many words to comfort the person, but would sit silently with the person. Once, a lady came to visit UG for a whole week, having just lost her 11 year-old son, and sat in the room with him each day. To everyone's relief, within a week, she was comforted and healed and left for her home with a smile on her face.

I had just had a cancer operation. (I consulted with UG before and he advised me to go through with the operation.) After the surgery, I had called him from the hospital room in Stanford to tell him how the operation went. When I returned home a couple of days later, UG and Mahesh took a plane and came and visited me in Seaside. UG made sure that no others visited us (which would normally be the case) at that time. When they came, I went into the living room and sat on a high stool talking to them. After a while, I felt exhausted, still suffering from the after-effects of surgery, and said, "You guys keep talking. I am a little tired. I will go and lie down in the bedroom." And after I lay in the bed, UG came into the bedroom and sat next to me at the bed for a length of time and chatted with me. I was so touched!

Later, after he returned to Palm Springs, UG wanted me to go to Switzerland to his place and get a good rest there. He cashed his frequent flyer miles and a first-class ticket and got me a business class ticket and Wendy and Kiran tourist class tickets and told Wendy, "You drop this guy off in Gstaad, and then you can return to Seaside." Of course, Wendy stayed with me the whole time and we spent two months in Gstaad as UG's guests. I was kept busy translating Chandrasekhar's notebooks



at that time – that’s some kind of rest! But UG’s care and compassion were boundless!

I think it was on that trip or on another trip to Gstaad, I distinctly remember that in the big room upstairs we were given to stay, I needed a separate mattress as Wendy and my little boy Kiran were occupying the big bed. UG was told by the landlord that there was an extra mattress in the storeroom. Before I knew it, I noticed UG climbing up the steps with the mattress! A seventy-five-year-old man carrying a mattress upstairs all by himself!

Another time, while I was visiting UG in Palm Springs, as usual, I was asked to sleep in UG’s living room. There was a sofa on which I was supposed to sleep. I said I had trouble sleeping on sofas, and that I would rather put the pillows on the floor and sleep. He said he would rather that I slept in his bed and he would sleep on the sofa. I said, “No such thing.” He then went into his bed room and got blankets and pillows and arranged the pillows on the floor and made a bed with blankets and all. Then I had to remark to UG: “UG, you are doing everything to put me to bed short of singing lullabies!”

I heard of an occasion when UG encountered a paraplegic in a parking lot as he was entering Bob and Paul’s restaurant in Larkspur. The man was obviously suffering from cerebral palsy, I was told. Upon noticing UG, he apparently extended his arms towards him. For some mysterious reason, UG went toward him, held him by his arms, almost hugged him, and then quickly walked away. You never can tell with UG, what transpires between him and those who come to see him.

**Severing Connections:** UG on occasion did interfere with people’s lives and unsettled them in their beliefs or makes suggestions about their specific problems of living. There were times when he even meddled with people’s lives rather intimately, sometimes to their annoyance and reluctance; but ultimately many of them were grateful that he had. He actually

tried to sever some relationships, which he must have thought were destructive or otherwise untenable.<sup>32</sup> Sometimes, he would advise people, depending on the person, either not to meditate, or to meditate, or to teach meditation, or make more money, find a girl, do something useful with their lives, and so on. He was not, however, always successful, in the case of some people, in stopping a relationship or changing their lives in any basic way. Their problems remained in spite of his best efforts and despite his radical “ill-treatment” of them. It’s hard to assess his influence on people, as much of it is unspoken and intangible, or the effects would only manifest years later. But many individuals were surely affected and benefited by his paternal care.

He gave advice to people on practical matters of money, work, relationships, and so on. Some thought he was not competent to give advice on money matters, but in my opinion, he was very shrewd in practical matters and those who didn’t listen to his advice might have lost out.

UG insisted that people take advantage of and exploit their natural talents, whether they be beauty or intelligence or some other virtue, talent or advantage. He wanted people to succeed in this world, and he always chided people who were wasting away their time in “useless” pursuits, not doing what they could to utilize their talents. On the other hand, he would be all praise for those who made a good buck in the day.

UG often remarked: “All problems result from wanting two things at the same time. If you just want one thing, you have no problem.” And he sometimes added: “There is nothing you can’t get, if you just want one thing.”

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<sup>32</sup> Once he remarked: “I am trying to sever all your connections so that you can be related to everything around you.”

**Personal Problems:** Most of the time, UG refused to give private audience to people, even if they begged him for it. In general, he would not even respond to requests for advice, but there were exceptions: sometimes someone would ask a question or bring a problem and he would respond in such a way that the answer would be quite appropriate to the person's problem and would even contain a suggestion: generally to "accept" the problem or to do such-and-such or do nothing. Sometimes UG would analyze the problem in such a way that the analysis would expose hidden agendas of the person that were the source of the problem. At other times, UG would simply maintain a prolonged silence, which at times lasted as long as a whole hour. Then something got communicated and the person would leave in peace.

And if the person didn't mind speaking out about his or her personal problems in front of others, UG might discuss them: (Of late, he was wont to say, "You don't have a problem.") I remember on one occasion, he discussed a couple's problem of the wife's mother staying in their house. (I was the only other person present in the meeting.) He summed up his discussion, "You don't want her to stay with you, do you?" He made the couple confront their own resistance to the person. Yet he didn't point any fingers. He was very calm and non-judgmental in his remarks. After they left, he asked me what I thought about the discussion: I said, "You made the problem very clear to them." That's what he did. I was a witness to many such occasions.

UG was a master at laying bare hidden assumptions and motivations in people's psyche. No wonder people often shuddered to stand in front of him as they felt they were being stripped naked with his looks. They felt that UG's "truth serum" was at work.

When a friend of UG's was in dire need or crisis, often they reported that they either got a call from UG or he visited them at their place on some pretext. I myself remember the time

when someone suggested that I eat a bagel to take care of the problem of hypoglycemia, which turned out to be a serious mistake: I almost fainted. Then my phone rang and there was Guha's voice on the phone telling me that UG wanted to know what my plans were for the following summer.

UG's ways were indeed mysterious. No one could fathom them.

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**Reflecting People:** UG physically reflected people: I always felt that he could not only read my thoughts and feelings but he could feel what was going on in my body and even arrange a situation which would address that problem. Here is an example, once in Palm Springs, because of sitting on the floor in front of a computer for a number of hours, my back was in utter pain. I didn't say anything about it. But UG took us all out on a "window-shopping spree" and after browsing in the Sharper Image store, where he left me with one or two others, saying he would be back in about twenty minutes. Waiting, I sat in the massage chair for those twenty minutes until UG returned, and most of my back pain was gone! Of course, it could all be a coincidence! But knowing UG for so long, it's hard to believe that it was a mere coincidence.

At other times, he so reflected people and their problems that he would actually worry for them at that moment. When we went with a couple of others for car-shopping, he and I were sitting in the lobby of the car dealership. UG kept watching a sales woman pacing back and forth in the lobby, and he started worrying about her: "What will happen to her? What will happen to her? (Meaning how she was going to live that style of life.)"

I noticed, on another occasion, he was worrying about a friend's credit card problems: "How is he going to pay for all that? The bank will be after him." This went on and on for a whole hour that morning.

Once, UG and I were waiting for a friend in a restaurant in Berkeley. The man was a few minutes late. Meanwhile, UG started worrying about him, pacing up and down in the restaurant looking out for him. He did worry about people's welfare.

**Outbursts:** UG is known for his unexpected, almost “irrational” outbursts of anger: (He never found problems with his anger: he always called it an expression of “energy”.) His outbursts could be on some social or political issue, against a government or its policy, or against a politician, or against a person in the gathering. The outburst wasn't always intended for the person whom UG was addressing; many times it was directed obliquely at someone else in the group whom UG didn't want to address directly. There was a time when I actually felt that UG was dealing with me and my hurt while he was yelling at someone else. In a few minutes, I could feel my hurt simply erased!<sup>33</sup>

Yet, although he was in totally foreign places among foreign cultures and peoples, he would not criticize people's ways of living: he would always fend off criticisms by saying, “That's their way.”

**Power:** Few knew the role of power in human relationships as well as UG. He pointed out how relationships are mostly based on each person getting his or her way. Many times he himself was an absolute monarch, but only when he had a say

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<sup>33</sup> That man was critical of UG for allowing all “these Rajneeshis to gather around him and sit in meditation with closed eyes.” He was obviously missing the UG discussions from previous times, because now UG was going along with the Rajneeshis by sitting quietly. UG yelled at him in reply: “They too are people like you. You have your background and they have theirs!” Then the man timidly said, “I see your point, UG.”

or choice in the matter. (He had the manner of a prince dealing with his subjects. That was so evident when he gave gifts to people ~ children or adults.) Even then, he would sometimes yield to people's desires and pressures and some other times would be as friendly as anyone could possibly be. It all depended. Often he pointed out how if you don't care about what the other person (or authority) could give you or do to you, you could not only be fearless, but free to do precisely whatever you wanted to do. He always dictated his terms and encouraged friends to do the same, of course, depending on what they wanted.

One good reason why he stayed away from institutions, governments and people who held high offices was that he kept his freedom and didn't have to compromise with their rules and regulations. But there was another: institutions breed power and power-mongering. He did not allow any organization to be built around him just for that reason. (No one then could claim exclusive rights over his teachings!) He did not let himself be subjected to any scientific research on him, because he bemoaned the fact that the results of that research would only be exploited by businesses and governments for money and power. The Internet served as a suitable medium for publishing books on him or reports of his dialogs, because there they were released free of copyright and other commercial strings. He never voted. His argument, if I remember right, was, “I don't have to choose between two evils.” In fact, he never paid taxes, as he didn't stay in any country long enough to establish residency. His passport was Indian, and of course, he had to have it to be able to travel.

UG's own energy was such that you could never take him or your relationship with him for granted. When he (or “It”) was dealing with you, he (“It”) knew nothing personal. (And as I said before, there is no “person” there in UG.) He could attack you wildly or even throw you out!

**Debates:** They could happen in the context of answering a question or responding to what someone said: there would be a heated conversation, usually ending with UG abusing the other person, pointing out the flaws or fallacies in the other person's argument or attacking in some other fashion. But sometimes the other person would attack UG in a personal fashion or the debate would end in a stalemate. And UG never shied away from "wrestling in the mud" with any interlocutor. UG would say, "You say that and I say this. You take it or leave it." If someone asks, "Why you do talk?" UG would answer, "I talk because you are here, because you ask these "idiotic" questions. I didn't ask you to come here. You can as well leave." If the person says, "You invited me to come," UG might even answer, "The invitation is withdrawn; now you can leave."

There was a time when UG was visiting at my house and someone phoned and asked if he could come. After he came the person talked to UG confrontationally for a few minutes. Then UG sensed something that was going on in the man's mind and felt that he was carrying a set of agenda of points to debate. UG said abruptly, "Now you can leave." My wife had just given the visitor a cup of coffee which he was sipping, and she said, "Finish the coffee." UG said forcefully, "No, no, he can leave now!" The fellow was simply shaking in his pants; you could hear the rattle of cup in the saucer. He put down the coffee cup and left in a hurry.

I saw many contexts in which UG got involved in verbal wrangling with people: the argument would go on at length, UG working hard at breaking down the defense structures of the person he was dealing with, and he would not quit until the point of capitulation, like in arm wrestling. He would yell at the top of his lungs, (once, in the middle of it he turned to me with a twinkle in his eye and a smile on his lips, as if it was all a big joke!), pouring insults and abuse on his victim. At times, UG himself had to pay a heavy price for confrontation: there was a physical drain from which he would not recover

for a few days (a guy who routinely hardly slept for more than forty-five minutes at a stretch would not get up from bed until late the next morning). Unfortunately, you couldn't tell what the real outcome of such encounters was.

There were times that people would be at loggerheads with UG in argument; they would get furious and leave the scene. One of those persons, a Sufi teacher, called me back the next day wondering what had happened. Then he came once again later to be clobbered again! His Sufi philosophy was under attack. He never returned after the second time. When I saw him later in a supermarket, he remarked that UG seemed to represent some dark, evil force!

If UG was cornered into a contradiction of some sort, he would become helpless. On one occasion he said, "What do you want me to do?" or "what do you want me to say?"

On the other hand, his genius would manifest itself on some rare occasions. For instance, I noticed his discussion with a biologist once in Chennai. For a minute or two, I could follow their discussion. But then the exchange between them went so fast that I completely lost track of the discussion and the biologist himself was dumfounded. He probably never expected such a challenge from a non-scientist. I don't know if he ever returned.

There were, however, times when his professional audience, in this instance, scientists and professors from Oxford gathering in Australia<sup>34</sup>, weren't all that impressed. I remember one of them saying repeatedly, "It's absurd...." The man was obviously annoyed by UG's assertions such as "There is no such thing as matter...."

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<sup>34</sup> The gathering, recorded on video tape, was organized Professor John Wren-Lewis.

**Money:** When people are told about UG, a frequent question they ask is, “How does he get his money?” Some complained about UG’s money-hustling deals, but few doubted his integrity in money matters. There was a time once, in the early years of his coming to California, the friend who was taking care of UG’s housing needs, asked me to contribute some money toward paying extra rent to pay for the few days before UG arrived so he didn’t have to forfeit the place. He made me promise not to reveal the matter to UG, as UG would never approve of people raising money for him. I agreed and never told UG until recently, years after my friend’s death. UG’s integrity in money matters, in my opinion, was impeccable.

Nevertheless, he always pointed out to people that money and food were their deepest attachments. He knew that people treated money as an end in itself and amassed it beyond proportions. As for himself, money was as a mere instrument.

In later years, he changed his ways. Although he never directly asked people for money, his dealing with them bordered on hustling. I know the reason: in the early years, he collected and saved people’s money for them in a Swiss bank account and the money was later returned to them intact. On the other hand, the money people gave him as gift whether on his birthdays or on other occasions, and the money he “hustled”, went to funding children’s education or as gifts to the needy or to friends and relatives, but little of it went toward his own expenses. He himself lived rather frugally, in spite of the fact that he traveled in luxury class, paid for by his friends. People gave him expensive clothing, which he would in turn give away, replacing them with pieces of clothing given by others. Sometimes the clothing was passed on unused.

When he was young, he sold off the property he had inherited from his grandfather for a discount to the farmers who rented

the land and tilled it. Ever since then, he never owned property except once for a few months by mistake<sup>35</sup>.

**Nothing Personal:** UG would constantly test people. No one could take him for granted. Sometimes he would extol what a person did for a living, but the next moment around he would be critical of the same person. He might be the chummiest person at the moment, but at the next turn he might attack viciously. He didn’t spare anyone. In that sense, he had no personal relationships. In some sense or other he was loyal to many of his friends, but not all. Some broke away and never saw him again, and some just veered off and remained distant to him without openly breaking up with him.

It must be mentioned here that UG had a way of making everyone around him feel special. That’s a unique experience people had when they tried to relate to UG.

**UG also tested strangers:** Of late, he didn’t make it easy for people to see him. When they called to see him, he would put them off giving some excuse or other, or ask them to call later and so on. But there weren’t many who were serious and persistent that did not succeed in seeing him. UG was making sure that they were earnest.

On more than one occasion, he would draw a person into a discussion by asking for his response: He did this with me several times. It surely was something he used to communicate with the audience (he wanted my “moral support” he sometimes said), but also as a way of teaching me by drawing me out. (I didn’t always come forth with my views.)

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<sup>35</sup> He bought into a time-share in Lake Havasu once and soon realized it was a mistake – it didn’t deliver the convenience he thought it might provide for his periodic stay. He exposed the misleading nature of the sale to the seller and forced her to take it back.

To my mind, UG had not only a sharp intellect, but astounding artistic creativity: I didn't realize this until I saw him giving his suggestions about the biography Mahesh Bhatt was writing in Carmel, California, near where I live. UG was going so fast with his ideas, I completely lost him after a while. (Earlier, Mahesh Bhatt, after hearing his suggestions, had said, "UG, I can't write like that!"<sup>36</sup> The gist of UG's idea was to show how he, after his Calamity, had no life of his own and that he only lived in the lives of the people around him. That perspective would have been impossible to convey in a book!

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One thing I can say for certain: I have never seen another human being who could metamorphose so suddenly and completely that you felt as if you were seeing a totally different person before you. No matter how strange or difficult the situation was, or what had happened in the past, if the situation demanded it, UG would throw in all his resources into resolving it.

I remember an occasion when he planned to spend the night in Seaside in a motel and paid for the hotel room and all that. But something changed all that; a Polish fellow was driving to Los Angeles in his old beat-up car, and UG suddenly changed all his plans and drove away with him to Los Angeles! Of course, he had to forgo his hotel rent. That meant nothing to him.

**Getting Physical:** In his last years, UG started getting physically demonstrative. Before then, I thought he was physically shy: I knew many men, including myself, from my culture as being shy in that way. I had noticed the very first time I met UG in my house that he had shied away when I

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<sup>36</sup> UG's pat answer on such occasions was, "You can pack up and leave!"

tried to put my arm around his shoulder. The most he would ever do was to tap on someone's shoulder or shake or touch someone's hand (his touch was actually one of his means of communication). He would joke with his friends when they were parting, asking them, "You want some energy transmission?" and shake their hand.

But all that suddenly changed a few years ago when I noticed that he had gotten quite physical with Louis. He would get physical to the point of hitting him and beating or pouring stuff on him (making him eat and drink all kinds of weird concoctions – handfuls of sugar or chocolate, for example). He would not only beat him himself, but would ask people like Nataraj hit him on his (bald) head with a split stick (which wouldn't really hurt as much as an unsplit stick). Nataraj would obey and beat Louis on his head with the stick, keeping the beat while singing a song! Or UG would ask a child, a son of one of the visitors, to beat up Louis. And the kid would do that, that too rather viciously, to the point that I would leave the scene – I just didn't want to sit there and watch. (At times I would protest, saying "Stop it UG!" and UG would remark to everyone: "Narayana Moorthy can't stand it; he is leaving.") Louis had to admonish the father for not doing anything to prevent the child from hitting him.

You could notice the uneasiness in those who were watching. You would wonder what UG was trying to teach in such situations.

**Releasing Aggression:** But this procedure was not limited to Louis. I saw UG prompting little kids not just to beat up Louis, but would ask a kid to beat up his own grandfather. First, I thought it was just all part of UG's teaching through entertainment; now I am sure it was more than that. I didn't realize that until the same child hit me very hard with a ring of keys while I approached his mother, who was holding him, to say goodbye. I then saw that UG was dealing with the

aggression in the kids by giving free expression to it and releasing it (of course, under his supervision).

I again wonder what sorts of things were being dealt with in Louis!

After all his talking during the day and after everyone had left, UG would collapse in a sofa and instantly fall asleep. He worked hard like this day in and day out for years. There were times when he took breaks from this routine: then he would not have any meetings<sup>37</sup> but would go on car trips to different places, sometimes visiting people, or just going around shops in downtowns or riding in cars for long distances without any specific destination.

**UG's "Driving Tests:"** Sometimes his car trips became his method of teaching: There were times when he would subject the driver to highly risky situations. His driving "tests" thus became famous. He would expose people's fears and confusions to themselves. Except for a couple times, people never got involved in accidents. Even in those times they were never seriously injured or killed. I know at least a couple of people who felt grateful to him for saving them from serious accidents just by being in their car (always) sitting next to the driver's seat (the "death seat," as some called it).

While driving, the driver would be asking UG for directions or other instructions as he didn't have a prior of knowledge of where precisely UG wanted to go. UG would say, for instance, "Turn right," and just as the driver was about to make that turn, UG would say, "I think you should go left here," as if he wasn't sure himself which way to go. Then the driver would make preparations to turn left. But by then UG had already

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<sup>37</sup> He would ask that people be called on the phone and told that there was going to be "no shop today."

changed his mind and he would say, I think "It's the next exit." This changing of directions would go on endlessly to the point that the driver began literally to freak out.

Of course, sometimes the driver would get lost and stop and reach out for a map in his glove compartment. But UG would have none of that: "You don't need any maps; you use your eyes;" "Don't think, just watch;" "Don't use your head, use your eyes" – were his normal utterances. If the driver complained and said "We lost our way!" UG would reprimand, "You are never lost; you are always somewhere; keep driving!"<sup>38</sup>

The more the driver would fret, the more pressure UG would put him or her under, to the point that at the end of the trip, UG's blessings will always be waiting for them: "You can be sure that he makes mistakes. He doesn't use his head. He's a dunderhead. He took the wrong turn," and so on.

It's not clear what anyone would learn from all this haranguing, but I think UG's main concern was not so much to get anyone to the right place, or to plain abuse anyone, but to expose us to our own reaction mechanisms and push us to deal with them. I don't know if he ever succeeded.

One more thing should be mentioned here, to be fair to UG: UG normally never interrupted a person's driving with his criticisms until after the trip was completed. Then he would come out with his comments. But, his "driving tests," on the other hand, were a different matter!

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<sup>38</sup> Louis even wrote a humorous song about UG's driving instructions and sang it with the young girls, Shilpa, Sumedha and Claire: "Don't go left, don't go right, go straight!"

This happened not too long ago: Just as UG's birthday was approaching, as was his wont, UG unplugged the telephone (to avoid being inundated with phone calls) and took a bunch of people (including three children) in three cars to travel practically day and night moving from one country to another, through France, Germany, Belgium and Switzerland. People were huddled together in the cars, sometimes being hard-pressed even to get to the bathroom or get a decent meal or sleep. This went on for three days, and then they finally returned to Gstaad after the harrowing journey. Some birthday party! Only UG knew what was behind this trip, if anything, and what it accomplished! Of course, no one dared to complain.

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There were occasions when UG would take a set of people with him, looking for a place for a lengthy stay (a couple of days to a whole month). He would investigate different places, collect people's opinions and their conveniences, and finally find a perfect place to the satisfaction of everyone. UG was never afraid of the unknown.<sup>39</sup> Although people were a bit tense about where they were going or what they were going to do, they had an implicit trust in him, which always paid off.<sup>40</sup>

When UG went out, most of the times he ate with many others: he would always ask, "Who's going to pay?" Someone or other would volunteer. I did notice however, of late, when he sensed that this became a burden to someone, he would allow people to go "Dutch". His own meals in a restaurant were extremely simple, limited to a piece of bread (with butter)

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<sup>39</sup> See my account in Chapter 3 about how UG's plans to decide where he was going to next after leaving Madras.

<sup>40</sup> I know of many occasions when his decisions, particularly about travel, were based on the outcome of tossing a coin!

and soup or *rosti*, or some such ridiculously simple and small meal. He always had hot water after every meal to wash down the food.

**Going Along:** UG never directly opposed people's fixations or tried to change people's ways: instead, he played them up. For instance, the oblique way he dealt with people's attachment to money was to make them more money-minded, to encourage them to make more money, and to "talk-up" money practically all the time ("Money is at the top of my list and food at the bottom".) (Notice how his *Money Maxims*, which he dictated in about 45 minutes, has become so famous among UG circles.) At the same time, he made people shed money freely, including giving it to him (which he in turn gave away to children). His dealings with people's attachments remind us of the traditional Tantric ways of dealing with energies by going along with them consciously, instead of opposing them.

I remember an occasion when he once arranged for a drinking session between me and Mahesh Bhatt (Mahesh was drinking at that time) in his hotel room; he never criticized either of us for it. After a couple of drinks, of course, we all went downstairs to the restaurant for a meal. On the way to the restaurant, in the hotel corridor, I noticed UG staggering a little. I couldn't help joking: "UG, this is not fair. We do all the work and you get the effect!"

Mahesh later quit both his drinking and smoking when he was aghast at how his little baby daughter shunned away from the strong smell of smoke and drink when he drew close to her. He never touched either habit again. UG always praised Mahesh about that. "If you quit a habit, it should be like that ~ at once, not promising or practicing to quit little by little," he would say.

**UG Never Questioned Facts:** Before something happened, UG might sometimes plan for this or that, or ask someone to come or not to come, and so on, but when things actually



unfolded, whether by design or by accident, he always accepted the outcome. I never saw an exception to it.

Once, I was traveling with UG and others in a car driven by Major Dakshinamurti and on the way to Mysore City, the car had a flat tire and it was stopped. UG's first reaction was merely to ask, "What next?" He always asked, "What do we do next?" Of course, the Major changed the tire and we continued on our journey.

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In Carmel, when Mahesh's biography of UG was being put together, there was a couple who visited him for at least a couple of weeks. They had a garbage-dump-like truck that they parked in the driveway. At night they crawled into a barrel-shaped space in the truck to sleep. The man was some kind of a guru, but also technically savvy (a drop-out graduate student in computer science). They were on the run from the law, I don't know for what reason. The man (and perhaps his mate, who was a young woman who seemed to be under his influence and a disciple of his, and who seemed to be mortally afraid of him) had not had a bath in at least a month or two! As a consequence, they stank. Sarcastically, I referred to the couple "Mr. and Mrs. Stink," when I talked about them. The sofa on which the man sat acquired some of his odor and the living room was filled with the smell. But UG wouldn't say a thing about the smell! He let the couple be (they even used his kitchen to prepare food) as long as they were there. When they finally left, he went into his room, brought out a couple of incense sticks and lit them at the fireplace. That's UG!

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**The UG "Treatment":** This is a common experience to many. First, UG would be very enthusiastic about a certain person and extol him or her to the skies. But then things would start to cool down and UG would gradually start pointing out

problems in the person's behavior. Then, if that person came too close to him and did some "unwanted" things, like making repeated mistakes in what he asked to be done, or did something contrary to his specific instructions, or was dishonest in some way, he would now take the person to task. A huge harangue might follow. It could go on for hours. There was a time when he even ordered a pick-up truck to haul a person's belongings out of his apartment to be delivered to her apartment at her own expense! In another instance, he even pushed a person out of a moving car for her alleged misbehavior! There is no doubt that UG was giving the harsh treatment to drive home the person's problems and weaknesses to himself or herself.

But then, the next around, the person would be treated normally until there was another occasion for a flare-up. You would never get the feeling that UG had ill-treated that person earlier. Of course, the person would be mortally afraid that UG was keeping a watchful eye on her, and that would lead to more mistakes and more harangues. It could become an endless saga! Sometimes people around him felt that this treatment went beyond limits. Who knows what the final outcome had been or would be?

I know UG verbally belittled, abused and condemned more than one person for their superficiality, dishonesty and inability to exploit their own talents. He would continue to taunt them each time he saw them. And at times he would throw her or him out. But these same people would swear by how touched they were by UG's love and affection.

Perhaps this was part of the UG "training process."

But if you didn't come close to UG by being friendly with him or trying to do him favors, if you were just a visitor or remained distant otherwise, he would not touch you. Of course, visitors could provoke his ire when they challenge his

actions or ideas or a hot exchange might result when he has to attack their ideas. It all depends.

I also know that if he sensed that you were feeling hurt for some reason or other, he would make sure that you felt better (without your even knowing it) before you left. I am remembering one occasion in Vallecrosia during my last visit with him, when a young lady was leaving. UG sensed she was hurt. Her feelings were indeed hurt as some people there had been critical of her ways. As she was leaving she said something to the effect, "I won't be a bother to anyone anymore." UG said goodbye to her saying, "Everyone liked you."

He did praise people, but not directly, but only by saying that "everyone liked what you wrote or did or said."

**Pleasure-seeking:** Although UG seemed to enjoy himself when he was going places or having conversations or playing with children or being outdoors, in all my acquaintance with him, I never saw him being a pleasure seeker. He didn't crave for any foods or experiences or anything. If someone performed music in front of him, he practically paid a deaf ear: you could detect absolutely no reaction in his face. If he seemed to like a certain food and you offered it to him again, he would say, no, and comment: "Just because I liked something doesn't mean I want it again." He used to say that he wouldn't know what something tasted like the moment it passed down into his gullet from his tongue.

He was always proud to show off his refrigerator to people who visited him. Unless someone else was also using it, it was always bare, with little else than a can of frozen pineapple juice, a container of heavy cream and perhaps a bowl of leftover oatmeal.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Most of his life, UG ate very small meals, often a piece of idli with some spice powder and chutney or *upma* or rice flakes, when in India; or about half a cup of oatmeal with heavy cream and frozen

As I said before, UG attacked people's attachments to money and food. When he went to someone's place for lunch, he frequently admonished, "I don't like the stink and stench of an ashram." Yet, when there were several people around who hadn't had lunch or dinner, he would ask whether there was enough food for all of them and make sure there was, even if it meant that the person in charge had to cook!

When he went shopping for food, UG never bought anything more than what was needed for that day. He also discouraged, sometimes rather strenuously, others from buying excessive amounts of food and hoarding it "for the morrow." There was an occasion in Palm Springs when he ordered all the excess foods in the kitchen be collected and thrown in the garbage.

**The Shepherd:** I was visiting UG in Switzerland with my family. That morning I was still in bed. UG walked upstairs where we were staying and walked into our room. I sat up and greeted him. At that time or later, I remarked: "UG is checking his wares!" UG was constantly checking to see if everyone around him was OK.

**Champion of Children:** I remember an occasion<sup>42</sup> when Chandrasekhar's family had just returned from a wedding, and their two children were conked out in the living room, having been deprived of sleep the night before. UG stood guard at the

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pineapple juice, or a piece of bread with butter and some soup, or couscous with frozen broccoli or spinach added to it (with a little curry powder for taste), or bread and some European cheese, and other small meals, while he was in the West. Of late, friends always brought packages of Leonidas chocolate; those, as well as Swiss Lindt milk chocolates, were freely passed around in gatherings. He himself used to make extremely simple but quick and delicious meals and feed people at times. He always asked a few friends to come early in the morning for coffee and breakfast.

<sup>42</sup> That was in 1986 when I first visited UG in Bangalore.

entrance that whole afternoon and prevented anyone from entering the room lest they would disturb the kids' sleep!

He not only played with children wherever he went, he would give them money from his pocket, encourage their talents, and so on. Some children had great affinity for him. Yet, he would not hesitate to expose them to foul language, violence, sex or pornography in films. His reasoning is that they would have to deal with all that in later life anyway. Why protect them? Once, I did take him to task when he was encouraging a child to rebel against her teacher. I said, "What's the girl going to do when she gets out of school without education, if she is thrown out of school?" I think UG got my point.

Indeed, a similar point was driven home by a Korean monk who was in one of UG's meetings at my home: UG was attacking educating children in religion and all that. And the monk asked, how are the children going to grow up without any guidance or education? I think UG saw his point. (I can't recall the precise conversation.) He conceded.

**"Virus Research:"** With people giving him money, particularly for his birthdays, he accumulated enough to give it away to kids. He decided to give it to girls of Indian origin studying abroad, as compensation, he said, for all the suffering which Indian women were subject to for centuries at the hands of men. He now had a fancy idea of establishing a fund for research to discover a virus that would wipe out the whole of humanity! He wanted to establish scholarships for girls to be educated abroad.

Guha and I discouraged UG. One fine morning Guha and I stormed into UG's room in Palm Spring. I told him that what he was doing was not any different from J. Krishnamurti establishing foundations and other institutions. Guha and I told him that the girls would already be rich enough to be able to come to the US; they wouldn't need his help. Moreover, his intention of establishing a scholarship fund anonymously

would not succeed, as legally his name would be there, albeit under the surface: anyone who dug deep enough could discover it. UG immediately tore up the papers of his correspondence with lawyers in Stanford and called Chandrasekhar right away and asked him to scrap all those plans. Later, Aruna in Bangalore chided UG about the same matter: "UG, we're just starting our lives. Why do you want to us to do things to end them?"

In regard to this matter, UG called me and Aruna "my gurus!" Of course, he ultimately did give the money away to girls of Indian origin for their education and arranged to give much of what remained at the end of his life to deserving girls who were yet to be discovered.

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**Response to Reports of Experiences:** Different people at different times related their personal experiences to UG. There were times he not only agreed with the person, but he even elaborated or commented on them. I can mention a couple of my own experiences here:

1) I caught myself falling asleep once. Later, in the car, I said to UG, "Nothing seems so important, even what UG says doesn't seem to have any value." He replied, "No, what UG says has no value."

2) During a conversation I said, "...all this is shit. And I don't know when all this will end," or something to that effect. I remember UG shooting back with a resounding reply, "If that is not there [meaning if you don't compare this with something else], this is not shit!"

3) Another time, I remember my bragging to UG about something "I have seen..." UG said while everyone listened, "You haven't seen it...." I grumbled something in reply, but I

dared not challenge the authority with which he had responded.

4) One of the first things I learned from UG is not to attach any importance to experiences (no matter of what kind). Since then my oft-used motto has been, “experiences are a dime a dozen.”

5) One morning in Hemet, I was sitting alone in silence after getting up early in the morning. Noticing that I was sitting idle doing nothing, he commented teasingly, “Are you meditating?” I asked later whether he was objecting to my meditating because it was “pleasure-seeking.” He answered, yes.

6) On a rare occasion, I was asking UG a question about what he meant by “knowledge”. He turned to me and looked at me in a certain way. I would never forget it. I could hear his voice changing and his compassion flowed from him to me, as if it were some sort of fluid. His answer was, it was “whatever you have learned as to what gives you pleasure or pain.” But his compassion was worth a million answers. I know many people were bound to UG through such a flow of compassion.

It is brief conversations like these that really drove some points home to me.

**Mountains of Energy:** Some of the conversations which friends had with UG were so memorable that they made permanent imprints in their minds: these occasions were not only noteworthy for their absolutely profound discussions on various topics, but also for the mountains of energy that would be generated during these discussions. The atmosphere would simply be electrified, as if there was a great celebration unfolding! Unfortunately, none of these discussions were recorded, as placing a recording device in their midst would have simply ruined the process. In fact, although the moments are unforgettable in their intensity, most of us have hard time even recalling the details of those conversations.

**Meaning of Life:** UG often asserted that there is no meaning to life. Yet, when people were around him, he would assign various tasks to them just to prevent them from mentally chewing on themselves. Many ladies became familiar with his “sweatshops”. Each time one of these ladies came to see him, he would give her some kind of sewing job, to fix a button on a shirt, to cut off a collar on a sweater and sew the edges and such. If there wasn’t a job ready, he would create one. He would act as if he was ripping a tag off a sweater, shirt or pants and there would be a tear in the clothing (I wonder if it wasn’t purposely done!) and complain that he had torn the garment. Then he would ask the lady to mend it. He would of course get his royal haircuts from some of these women (although at other times he would go to a barber). He would also assign various chores to men. With people who were knowledgeable in other areas like computers, he would ask them to do some chore or other on the computers.

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I remember how once in Palm Springs he led a whole expedition of two or three cars going in a caravan to hunt for sandals for me with rubber bumps on them. We had looked for them earlier but hadn’t found a single pair to my satisfaction. I had protested to UG that it was really not important to find those sandals. But he would have none of that. He said that it would give everyone something to do!

His shopping (and “mall”ing) trips were similar. He would go with a bunch of people into different stores, particularly clothing stores, and browse as if he was looking for a specific something. Meanwhile, he was watching everyone’s movements (and thoughts, too). The shopping trips were never for the entertainment of people. They were part of his teaching – except no one really knew what they learned out of them! Indeed, UG’s teaching was mysterious!

When he seemed to be interested in some piece of clothing, be it a silk shirt, a cashmere sweater, or an inexpensive pair of pants, there was always someone to buy it for him, although at times, he refused the offer. When he accepted, it was more for the sake of the gift-giver than for himself. In fact, much the same can be said about all the money gifts he accepted from people, particularly for his birthdays.

**Las Vegas:** UG made several “caravan” trips to Las Vegas from Palm Springs with a dozen or more people parceled out 4 or 5 to a car. They would all rent hotel rooms and stay overnight. UG would let everyone else (except the children) play at the machines, but would never gamble himself.

Once he was short of \$25 for his room rent, I heard. Mario and someone else were at his door knocking. He opened the door, gave Mario a quarter and pointed to a slot machine at the end of one of rows and told him to put it in the machine. Mario did and got exactly \$25 out of the machine and gave it UG! When Mario handed the money to UG, UG snatched the money fast and shut the door!

When someone lost in gambling, that was his own loss. But when he or she won, all that money would go to UG. And of course, UG would give it all away to the children in the gang.

**The Supernatural:** All sorts of supernatural powers have been attributed to UG. It’s part of the nature of the subject matter that it doesn’t lend itself to any objective treatment. UG has been credited with telepathy, clairvoyance, clairsaudience, precognition, psycho kineses, and miracle healing, and the seeing of ghosts and departed spirits. I personally had several experiences when I felt that he knew not only my thoughts, but the current state of my body. He seemed to be able to forestall coming dangers and prevent them from happening. And more often than not people claimed that their lives were saved either from a serious illness or from an accident either by UG being next to them on the scene or by their thinking of

(or praying to) him. Unfortunately there is no way to objectively verify any of this, for we simply lack the tools. I just mention this to complete the picture.

UG sometimes joked around, asking someone who was saying goodbye, “You want some energy transmission?” and then would shake his hand. There were times, when he would say, “I have powers, you know.” At other times, he would say, “How would I know?” or “There are no powers.” But I do know that he had his ways of taking care of people through his physical touch: He would, for instance, have Nataraj sit next to him and shake his hand frequently.<sup>43</sup> Nataraj credits him with not only knowing what was going on inside him, but with “saving my life.” I have heard others who said similar things about UG.

Sadly, however, I must report of at least one instance in which a friend of mine who was severely ill and hoped for a miracle from UG and it never came. Eventually he died. In fact, UG told him more than once to go to a hospital, see a doctor and get himself tested. It was just in such contexts UG would say, “There are no miracles, go to a doctor!”

Sometimes he would say that one should “give a helping hand” by taking medicine.

Of course, he never followed his own advice: he always believed that pain is a healer and given a chance the body has the power to heal itself. (He would, however, add the caveat: “If the body cannot heal itself, it will go gracefully.”) In his later years, he never visited a doctor or went to a hospital. But he wouldn’t advise others to do the same, he said.

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<sup>43</sup> At other times, UG would ask Nataraj to sing Beethoven, read astrological signs, cook or go on car rides.

**Conclusion:** UG always attacked conventional morality, religion and politics. He said that our legal, political and moral systems are all corrupt. He did not believe in any moral rules; but he said that one who is not moral can never be immoral, will never do anything to hurt others. He said, although he criticized laws, he would not himself break the law.

But he kept warning us not to be fooled by appearances; yet we don't and can't know what the reality of UG is. We can't but feel that we are somehow affected by having been around him. I have seen people who would even kill themselves for him. He has touched them, in their minds, as no one else in their lives has touched them.

UG sometimes made what seemed like scientific statements and say, "One day scientists will confirm it (viz., that consciousness is everywhere, for instance)." But immediately he would add disclaimers like, "I am not a scientist," and such.

For UG freedom of the will is a myth. You can never be free from the conditioning. Still UG encouraged people to make money or to be successful at this or that.

UG tells all these gloom and doom stories and yet he says that things cannot be any different from what they are because of the way we are and we live. So there is nothing you can do. So, you ask, "Then should we or shouldn't we do such and such? Should we or shouldn't we meditate?" None of that follows. You cannot derive any "directive" from what he says.

UG would use anything and everything in front of him as a tool for his teaching process and then simply discard it and walk away. He didn't have a specific means or method of teaching. He said once, long ago, "I could as well be reading out the numbers from a telephone book, it would have the same effect."

And you can't grasp his teaching in your hand and say "this is what I have gotten from UG." You don't know what you have gotten!

UG himself said repeatedly that people who listened to him over the years may not find any such thing as enlightenment, for, according to him, there is no such thing, but they will find their burdens (he meant the mental baggage we carry from our past) becoming lighter. And I know many a friend who has been listening to UG who would attest to that.

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## 8. Further Remarks About UG

**“UG is not Real”:** Once I said to UG, “UG, at a certain level, I feel as if none of this is real; even UG is not real.” UG replied, “No, UG is not real.”

**UG not a person:** The first time I had a clear inkling that there is no “person” inside UG was when I was visiting him in Corte Madera, California, in the early years of my acquaintance with him. It was a rare moment when I looked into his eyes, inside the pupils. What I saw was startling: it was a vast impersonal energy. No sign of a person and nothing which would recognize me as a person, either. I can never forget that deep inside: what was moving was not anything I expected such as a reflection of me or something which would look at me and recognize me. (It’s no surprise that people often characterized UG as, “No one home!”)

Now, when I look deep within myself, I see nothing but surging “energy” (I don’t know what other term to use.) Even the images and sounds I talked about in my recent paper<sup>44</sup> are just waves surging from this energy. I don’t exist there! That must be why I felt at times when I was close to UG physically that there was no separation between us. It’s not that I am in that awareness or energy most of the time. But I know what the “bottom-line” reality is.

UG asserted more than once that the “division”<sup>45</sup> which is millions of years-old, keeps occurring, bringing “UG” into the

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<sup>44</sup> “Thought, the Natural State and the Body”- see above, Ch. 6.

<sup>45</sup> Division in consciousness, which constitutes UG and what he experiences.

picture, and that it will never go away. It’s that UG we saw from time to time, the “UG” who reacted to people and situations, sometimes through his own conditioning.

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**The Lion’s Den:** I was always bit suspicious of and annoyed with UG’s statements like “There is no such thing as matter,” “There is no space,” and “Thought interprets reality.” I felt that UG’s talk of everything being an interpretation is like the Advaita Vedanta’s assertion that “The world is *Maya*”. “Interpretation” a like a huge lion’s den into which everything went and out of which nothing came.

I tested UG once on this: while I was visiting him in Palm Springs, I asked him: “UG, please raise your arm.” First, he was reluctant to comply, even after several requests. Finally, he did. I said, “See, I made some sounds, and you raised your arm,” meaning that the raising of the arm is not just an interpretation, although my instructions may be mere noises (because he would say that the meaning we give to the noises is an interpretation). He replied, “Your seeing of my arm being raised is also an interpretation.” Then I said, “I see what you did,” and didn’t say anything further. His reply confirmed my suspicion.

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**Further on the Body:** As Mahesh and others have understood (I may have missed this point when I was debating with UG about the body), UG, in his last days, neither tried to end his life, nor did he do much to prolong it. He merely let it take its own course. In fact, this should throw a good deal of light on how he viewed his relationship with his body, particularly when he said, “The body does not want to go.”

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**“Two dogs barking”:** UG would conclude many conversations by saying, “We’re just two dogs barking,” meaning we are merely making sounds and the meaning is all made up (by thought). His statements about his body and people’s responses to him are all just noise at a certain level (or from a certain point of view). Underneath, there are not even noises. No one is saying anything and nothing is being said. Not even consciousness or energy or waves, or noises and images, and of course, there are no bodies. There is no wakefulness, no dream and no sleep. There is no life or death either. It’s a vast ocean of peace.

On the surface, it seems like UG was talking about living and dying, the body not wanting to go, and so on and so on. But that’s all an appearance. There is a place where none of this is real, UG is not real, his living or dying is not real and neither is ours. There is just this vast ocean of peace. You and I are part of it.

This morning I was lying in bed feeling all this. I also felt that I wasn’t breathing. “It was being breathed.” The body is a surface phenomenon.

No wonder I felt at times that there was no separation between UG and me.

## Part 3

## Being



## 9. Thought, Thinking and the Self

**Preamble:** In the following, I am not so much interested in what scientists have to say about thought and thinking, their scientific studies, which generally involve establishing correlations between thought processes (or other mental phenomena like perception, feeling, emotions and dreaming) and various brain centers or electrical and chemical processes, as I am interested in understanding thought from my own point of view in a commonsense fashion. The problem with scientific studies is that they don't leave us with much we can do anything about. And they eventually can and probably will lead to commercial or political exploitation.

**Beginnings of Thought:** We all use the words "thinking" and "thought" without ever being conscious of what the words mean. I think the thinking process has its roots in consciousness which in turn has origins in the very simple activities like responding to stimuli, recognition and various stages of remembering. Response is evident even in the world of inanimate matter, as for instance, when iron filings respond to the presence of a magnet, or a gas heater or toaster responds to a set temperature in a thermostat. In the biological world, response takes place in the form of reacting to stimuli, whether internal or external, even at the level of ameba or other primitive organisms. Here we see the beginnings of what we can term as consciousness. Responses become more and more complex as life forms become more complex and heterogeneous – forming the senses and their sensations, which serve the organism's basic survival and reproductive needs. Some animals respond to stimuli even when they are not from anything in the present: an animal like an elephant is said to be able to dream. Dogs are known to be able not merely to recognize their masters but remember where their homes are and get back to them, sometimes hundreds of miles away. Whales and birds migrate thousands of miles away as their instincts and other internal stimuli prompt them. And

bees can communicate to other bees with precision the location of a source of nectar.

Internal stimuli too cause responses of various kinds. But most important for our discussion is the idea of image making. Images are said to exist in some primitive form in animals, particularly in elephants, chimpanzees and gorillas, and perhaps even in cats and birds. They miss their partners when they are not present for a length of time. The grieving process and dreaming through fear presuppose some sort of imagery, however primitive and isolated it might be.<sup>46</sup> Images are representations of objects which may or may not be directly present. Concepts too are representations, but they are more abstract and represent, at least initially, classes of things. In this sense images can be construed as concrete concepts, although they may often non-verbal, especially when they are at a physiological level (as in animals).

**Consciousness:** When animals respond to images in a primitive fashion, they are conscious, but only in an incipient sense. An explicit consciousness, as when we are self-conscious, requires the division between the self and the other mediated through thought, whether explicitly verbalized or not. Therefore, we cannot say animals are conscious of images or of their own responses to them. We too were probably like them before self-consciousness developed in us. Words, like images, are vehicles for concepts and physiologically they exist only in the form of sounds (which we notice in our sub-vocal speech movements).

**Self-Consciousness:** Then what is self-consciousness? I think the roots of typical thought processes must be sought here. Self-consciousness must involve some consciousness of *oneself* as part of the feeling of being conscious of whatever it is that

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<sup>46</sup> Of course, there may be other physiological cues, instead of images that may achieve the same end. What could be said about images, then, perhaps could be said about those cues as well.

one is conscious of (say, a sensation, an object or situation in the world, a feeling or an action). Self-consciousness does not take place in a vacuum. It is not a mere nothing, nor is it just a consciousness. It involves an object, something we are aware of, and the subject which is aware of that something. The subject is not a mere nothing, either. It is perception, thought, feelings, reactions, plans which are all based on the background knowledge one has acquired over a lifetime. It is the ground on the basis of which we are aware of the objects. All perceptions (and recognition which is implied in them) and our reactions to objects as subjects occur by means of the past knowledge concerning the object. The subject, as subject, can never be the object of attention. It is only evident indirectly through the inner dialog that goes on in the mental processes. The knowledge we have acquired represents to us the world we live in. And the knowledge reacts through its known methods. There is no perception without such a reaction.

Although self-consciousness is an aid in the process of learning a new skill, as it helps us in monitoring and putting together through memory various details one has to learn, it can also hinder us in the smooth performance of a skill once it is learned. Much intellectual thinking as well as problem-solving occurs in the field of self-consciousness in the form of a dialog one carries on within oneself.

**Knowledge and Valuation:** Our reactions are manifold and add to the edifice of knowledge and hence of the world we make up for ourselves. Perception first of all implies recognition of objects. Recognition is an implicit thought process. And the very recognition of the object is at the same time an evaluation. Also, the reaction to the recognized object or situation or person is simultaneously an evaluation on the basis of a scale of values one has built for oneself over time. The values reinforce experiences positively or negatively. The evaluation process is simultaneously also a process of becoming something other than oneself, something which will resolve a

perceived shortcoming, difficulty or problem and steer one toward goals which presumably imply an improved situation. The process of the self (which I will describe below) is a process in time. Evidently, without the movement of thought, there is no past, present or future to the conscious mind or self. Thought is very much involved in this process. Now, what is thought?

**Recognition and Judgment:** Thought is not only the process of recognition, but of judgment. More often than not, judgment implies an evaluation and a projection into the future. Images, concepts, as well as language, are implicated in the mental processes of judging, evaluating and projecting into the future. Some sorts of intuitive problem-solving, particularly those that involve creativity are beyond the reach of conscious thought, or, at any rate, best carried out when conscious thinking is not present. Once the problem is solved, then the solution is thrown into the realm of conscious thinking and then the thought process can work out the details of a solution.

**Intelligence:** Intelligence includes many skills such as problem-solving, scanning, assessing, evaluating, estimating, hypothesizing, drawing consequences from an idea, systematizing, comparing, organizing, analyzing, synthesizing, abstracting, projecting into the future, and so forth. Thinking is a function of intelligence that draws upon all the above. Animals, of course, have a lower level of intelligence as they lack the capacity to envisage in thought (or even imagery) a situation in its absence and manipulate it consciously.

**The Notion of the “I”:** Thought implying a division between the subject and object already implies the subject as the self. When one becomes conscious of one’s thought, one automatically has the notion of the “I” or the self. The notion of the self becomes enriched and filled with content through further thinking and experience, as one’s knowledge grows with experience and is added to the content of the subject. In

the division between the subject and the object, as one’s attitude is determined by one’s past pleasant or unpleasant experiences (i.e., knowledge), one either desires or tries to avoid the object. In the process of desiring what a person feels he or she lacks, she creates for herself the need for fulfillment which is really a filling the need or lack. However, once a need is fulfilled, others take its place, for, the very awareness of a fulfilled need generates a further need or want, either to secure the result or continue it or to achieve something else. The awareness creates the further need. Thus the person is set on an endless travel to realize the ultimate ~ ultimate happiness, pleasure, meaning or resting place for the self. The self is also a process to seek permanence and security, and this is where the self-protectiveness of thought comes in. While every thought we think is geared to reinforce the self in some fashion or other, it is doing so by means of the structure it has already built for itself.

While on the one hand thought seems to seek something other than itself, on the other, its search is always limited to the known. We have no clue as to what we seek if we don’t already have an idea of it. The seeking serves to further strengthen the self that is already there.

The self is not only the world we build for ourselves, but it is also a fictitious center which holds the world together and acts as its center. All the feelings, experiences and thoughts as well as achievements, worries and projects are referred to this center. We feel as if there is a unitary entity that acts through all these mental processes and governs the body as well as our dealings with the world.

**Mental States:** The awareness of an object, a sensation, an image, a feeling or a thought is simultaneously a reaction to it. We hardly are ever aware of something without reacting to it. But then the reaction itself becomes an object of awareness and of further reaction. This happens particularly when we rehash an issue approaching it from different points of view.

This constant action and reaction process linked through memory creates what we might call mental states. A state is something we ascribe to ourselves as, for instance, when we say to ourselves, “I am angry; I am depressed,” and so on. This ascription is itself a thought and is more often than not mediated by body awareness. Notice how we reinforce this feeling or awareness by beating our chest and by being aware of our speech muscles or of tension in other parts of the head or the rest of the body. This ascription to ourselves of a thought or a state or a feeling, associated with a certain body awareness, is what generates the illusion of the “I”. In each of the specifics (thoughts, body sensations, for instance) there is no “I”. But through the process I mentioned above, you get the feeling of ‘I’, the feeling that “I” am thinking, “I” have pain, “I” am the agent of my actions, or “I” am what is being referred to by other people as “great”, and so on. This illusion is perpetuated through repeated ascriptions linked through memory. In other words, I remember for example two such ascriptions from my past, and in that very recollection, a feeling is generated that I have such a quality, as anger, for instance.

**Mental States Have Continuity.** And we contribute to the continuity of mental states by reacting to them either positively or negatively. We are strengthening our state through our reaction. If we stop reacting, the state ceases to be when it loses its momentum. Thus states have inertia of their own, and they tend to persist because of our participation in them. When we participate in a state, we are within a tunnel, as it were. This inertia resists change and indeed any interference from outside. And within the “tunnel” the states have a tendency to perpetuate themselves either by building on themselves or keeping a fight for or against something going. These states or what I might also call mental tracks include fear, loneliness, depression, pride, inferiority, superiority, and such. For instance, when we are watching a movie, we are within the track of watching the movie, and as such, we are identified with the characters and situations and so experience the joys

and sorrows expected (or not expected) of us as spectators. You can only stop the process of involvement by stepping out of it, snapping out, as it were. Then you don’t have the illusion. Then reality sets in; the movie reality has become a mere show without any effect on you.

Our normal states of mind are similar. We are within one tunnel or another and we labor hard trying to get out of it, particularly when we feel it is undesirable. But that’s a futile struggle for we labor on the basis of a certain base identification (even if it is only a negative one) and cannot extricate ourselves from it. When we can get down to the base identification and question it from outside of it, as it were, then there is a chance of truly distancing ourselves from it and eventually becoming free from the entire state.

**We Must Think About Something:** Without something to think about, the mind (or consciousness) is in an unstable state. It keeps wanting to chew on something. It tries to achieve stability and grounding, if necessary by harping on the negative, as when negative memories impinge upon our consciousness and we react to them by building on them, just as we react to positive memories by building on them. We tend to think of the worst outcomes when we are in an uncertain situation, as that gives us more grounding and security (“It can’t be worse than that,” we say to ourselves) than turning to positive ones, which are always questionable in regard to their future occurrence (they might or might not happen). One way to solve the problem of sinking deeper and deeper in a negative state is to let the negative state be and if necessary focus on something innocuous, as they do in meditation, and “rise above” the state. Or, one could break up a mental state by interspersing it with self-consciousness, i.e. being aware of what we are doing as frequently as possible and breaking it into pieces. By “pulverizing” the state, the continuity of the state is broken up and the state loses its hold on us. This will at least temporarily remove us from that state of mind. Habits are like states of mind and they too will tend to become weaker by the

same processes. More lasting freedom, however, can only be found in becoming free from the source identification(s).

We can superimpose states upon states, say, guilt upon anger and so forth and make them multi-layered. Also, we can suppress them to a subterranean level beyond the reach of the conscious mind. We can become conscious of the states, but as I said, such consciousness only reacts to the state from a point of view, generally the point of view of identification with something and tends to reinforce the state. We cannot just let the state run its course, say just be afraid and let the fear run its course and die its natural death.

States add to the notion of the continuing self: Go through a few of these states, you get the feeling that there is one constant “I” running through them all. The more organized my memory is, the stronger is my sense of “I”, or you can say, the bigger is my ego!

To repeat: states of mind continue through memory. Each thought or feeling we have is “linked” to other thoughts or feelings relevant to it – it may be the same or similar thought or feeling we have had in the past or something connected to it. This connectivity, association or linking is what gives rise to the notion of the continuing “I”.

Once the notion of the continuing “I” is established, every thought we think is used to reconnect us to the relevant past and further support the continuity. Although we can never find a specific beginning for the “I”, we believe in the history of the “I” with some beginning, its current life and an end.

In the process of organizing our world we arrange our goals in order of priority and look for ultimate goals. And when these are waylaid and unfulfilled repeatedly, and we confront frustration, we struggle hard to find meaning in life. Until we become involved in some other search we become bored with life, it having lost its significance.

Whenever we perceive and relate to anything in the world, we do so by placing it in this mental world of ours, this world of the “I”, the “I” being at the center of the world. The world of the “I” is intimately bound with ourselves, because it is nothing but a multitude of identifications interconnected. We feel that whatever happens to each of these things in the world happens to us. Our interests, values and goals are bound with these identifications, determined, of course, by our earlier exposure to them.

**Psychological Survival:** Our instinctive biological struggle for survival is now translated into the mental world. But these two types of survival are not identical because our psychological survival is embellished by our imagination, which is one of the functions of thought. It can imagine a fictitious future and fear for my non-continuance. Each thought thinking thus about the future is my future that I think about and fear. Our mind can thus generate insecurity and fear of death even when our physical survival is presently not threatened.

**Dialogue within Ourselves:** The constant dialogue within ourselves is what provides us with the illusion that the “I” exists at the center of all my thoughts. I wonder if we would have this idea of the “I” without the inner dialogue. What does the dialogue imply? When the sounds (thoughts) go on in my head, there are subtle speech movements. I am always aware of myself as thinking these thoughts, and also of the person who has experiences and feelings, and is the author of his actions. With each such awareness, there is a feeling that “I” am thinking those thoughts. With this feeling I link those thoughts and memories. Hence the feeling that there is the ever-present “I” behind all my present thoughts and experiences that I remember.

The same is true of our memories: as memories impinge on our consciousness we become aware of them and in that very process a reaction to them is generated and then a response to

the reaction and so on and so forth. That's partly how the inner dialogue is generated.

## The Features Of The Self:

**1) The Self Is The Center Of Our World:** The self is our self-image or self-esteem which is a result of the process of constant evaluation. We are quite sensitive when a remark is made about us as we are constantly on guard as to how others look at us. We worry about ourselves, worrying about every little thing that happens to us; we evaluate it; relate it to the rest of our lives and react to it until we are satisfied that the problem is solved. Notice how the same problem-solving skills of intelligence are exercised here to work out the problems of the self. Of course, the worry can easily turn into an obsession or a phobia and we can create a literal panic and hell for ourselves as we continually build on our worries. This is evident even when we notice a slight change or ache or pain in our body and react to it by panicking that we might have a mortal ailment.

We divide our world into the positive and the negative, into right and wrong and good and bad, pleasant and painful, happy and miserable. We pursue the positive and try to avoid the negative. We constantly reflect on and evaluate our lives, figuring out the direction in which it is going, and being satisfied with its progress or disappointed with the lack of it or its failures. We have now a life constantly focused on becoming, a life where there is no rest or peace

**2) The Self Is Meaning:** What we experience is interpreted through our past experience and thus the new acquires meaning through the past. When an experience acquires meaning, it becomes part of the world. The world we make up for ourselves is not just our world; in some sense I am the world, because the things, people and situations in my world are things I am identified with, either positively or negatively.

In fact, language itself, the words and sentences we hear, have meaning to us only because of the associations they have with our past experiences. They, as well as anything else that has meaning for us, must invoke our past in some sense in order for them to have meaning for us. Or else, they would remain as mere noises or marks on paper, or, if they are things, as mere nondescript objects which have no interest or meaning to us. In perception those things would recede into the background which may never come into the focus of our attention.

**3) The Self Defines Itself Through Comparisons:** The process of self-evaluation is mediated often through comparison – comparison of ourselves with others, our present state with a future possible state, our actions with our own scales of values or others' values, and so on. The process of evaluation creates feelings of elation, depression, self-congratulation, importance, pride, inferiority, superiority, sense of power, dominion over others as well as anxiety and fear about the outcome of a given situation. Insecurity is built into this process. The uncertainty generates the anxiety and creates the unending search for security.

**4) The Self is also Self-image:** Our self-image is something we build on the foundation of our notion of the self. We fill it with various projects we have, our desire structure, our estimates about ourselves, our achievements and failures, our sentiments and beliefs, and so on. This structure is held together by the center of the self. Not only each thing that occurs in our world is related to the self via the self-image, but is interpreted and reacted to by means the image. The reaction in turn reinforces the self and its image of itself.

We constantly build and rebuild our self-image by feeding it with various reinforcements, particularly those stemming from not just our opinions about ourselves, our qualities and actions, but from what we hear from other people, and also from what we think other people think about us. This is a

constant process which keeps building and revising our idea of ourselves.

**4) The Self Uses Thought for Self-Protection:** This indeed is where we can notice the self-protectiveness of thought. Thinking does not take place in a vacuum. It takes place within the process of the self, within the context of the self, maintaining and continuing itself and its self-image. In fact, we are only interested in those things (even our physical perceptions not only select but seek those that are relevant to our interests) that are directly or indirectly connected to the self and its image of itself, and our perceptions are indeed determined by these interests. We seek those things and consciously or unconsciously ignore the rest of what is given in the field of our perception. As they say, “You only hear what you want to hear.” Our reactions to what we perceive reinforce our self-structure. We become sensitive to anything that is seen even as remotely threatening to this structure, and we not only take a mental note of it, but do everything to eliminate it, fight it off, erase it or diminish its strength.

Anything that is seen as possibly threatening, say, a disease symptom, a pain, an insult, or anything which could possibly hurt our self, raises a minor disturbance, if not a storm, in the mind. We don’t rest until the storm is quelled and equilibrium is restored. All our thinking and emotional process is utilized in this direction. When we say we want peace, normally, it’s this kind of peace we seek.

Many mental processes are carried out by means of thought and all have the self at the center. A) Desiring, striving, goal-seeking and pleasure-seeking: Anything which is perceived as attractive or desirable or pleasurable on the basis of one’s background experience is automatically turned into a goal that one seeks and becomes part of the desire process. B) Emotions and feelings: In the process of responding to the various situations, including successes and failures in our attempts to deal with the world, as well as to the self-evaluation that one

constantly makes, we undergo many emotions and feelings. More often than not, these emotions and feelings are verbalized and as such exist in the form of thought – for instance, thoughts of envy, jealousy, anger, fear, elation, depression, and so on. Without the verbalization or thinking these emotions and feelings lose their identity and reduce themselves to diffuse energy.

**5) The Self Creates a Sense of Time:** In the process of seeking our sense of time is created. There is no time without thinking. Although our striving implies time, with its future, past and present, there is something interesting about our dealings with our self: when we seek or avoid, of course, there is time, because the distance between what we seek or avoid and ourselves implies time. However, within the structure of the self there is no time. It’s as if everything is frozen there in time. Take, for instance, our memories. I was in love with a girl say forty years ago. But my fantasies or reliving my past experiences with the girl hardly ever take into consideration the changes in time that have probably taken place in the girl over the last forty years – perhaps she is an old hag by now, or even dead, for all I know. I myself have become old and perhaps have no ability even to perform sex! But my mind knows no such age. In some sense, it acts as if it is ageless. It’s immortal!

What’s interesting is that our dealings with life are based on this notion of our “frozen” self. We act, strive, accumulate wealth, and protect ourselves, our health and our good name as though there will be never an end to us. At the same time, time is very real to us, as that’s what is implied in our striving for our goals and whenever we are involved in the thinking consciously about anything. Although in some sense time is frozen in individual experiences, as a continuing self I am very much aware of time; and in spite of the fact that I know of no beginning to myself in time (I cannot even imagine it except through concepts and someone telling me about it), I am mortally afraid my life not continuing. Also, it is impossible for

me to imagine myself ending. No wonder as human beings we create all these fancy notions such as Kingdom of Happiness, heaven, immortality and living after death as pure Consciousness and so forth. These are all our lame and ineffective attempts to combat our fear of death. None of that, of course, will succeed in the face of a seed of doubt!

Combine this sense of time with our constant attempt to seek our goals and our striving to restore our mental equilibrium; we can then understand what UG says about man seeking only one thing, namely, permanent happiness. This indeed is what counts for man as permanent happiness.

**6) The Self Is Not Aware Of Its Workings:** Thought processes don't always take place at a very conscious level. We are not always aware of what goes on. When we seek a goal or fend off an offense we are not always aware. When we are aware, the awareness only takes place by means of another thought. We don't know much about the thought until it surfaces in consciousness. We don't even know that it exists. Say, we bear a grudge or resentment against someone. Our behavior, including what we say to the person, might show it. It may be evident to some other person. But until it is formulated as such in thought, we don't even know that it exists. We sometimes have subtle feels and inklings about such and many other things. And in fact, even much of problem-solving can take place subconsciously. If we include these inklings, the field of thought gets expanded considerably more.

And there may be layers and layers of these mental processes. Part of the challenge of either psychoanalysis or self-analysis would be to peel off layer after layer of these processes to disclose the root, the thing, say, that we are primarily afraid of or the person we resent.

**7) The Self Moves In Mental Space:** When we think, whether in a goal-directed fashion or to solve a problem, or otherwise, we move in a "mental space." Some times we find gaps in the

mental map we lay down in thinking which we bridge in order to solve a problem. And at other times the space is traversed in an uncharted fashion as when we create, as in science, music or art. When we understand or we think we know, there are flashes and clicks in this mental space. In relationships also we feel mental distance ~ we may want to close it (as in a relationship we like to have) or keep it (as with a student in a classroom or with a stranger).

**8) The Self Is Prone To "Tunnel Vision":** There is such a thing as a "tunnel vision" in thought: The point of view or of prejudice or belief in our thinking governs our thinking process. Of course, we could become conscious of these points of view, but generally we are aware of them only from another point of view. When it is possible to become merely aware of them without reacting to them, the process has no longer any hold on us. For instance, take fear. When we get to our fear at its basis and can face it without reacting to it, that is, without trying to escape from it or justify it or build up on it, if we can face it without resistance, then the fear has no longer any strength. It simply dissipates. In doing so, we are dissolving the duality or division that has hitherto existed between ourselves and the object of fear. We become one with the fear, as it were. The same goes with other mental states such as anger, depression and loneliness.

**9) The Self Covers Up Our Emptiness:** All feelings of insecurity, loneliness, as well as our fears cover up our emptiness, the vacuum which is pure consciousness or awareness or energy or whatever you wish to call. In point of fact, it can also be said that all thinking is our way of covering up our emptiness. We sense that as nothingness and are terrified by it, and start covering it up with all kinds of activity, information, knowledge and achievement, knowing full well that we can never completely succeed in doing so. But that doesn't prevent us from trying. In other words, the whole mental edifice, the edifice of the self and of thought in general



is based on this emptiness. Yet, we struggle so hard to maintain the structure.

**10) The Self Is A Mechanism of Desire:** Thought and desire are intimately connected with each other. As UG would say, to think is to want something – if you don't want anything, you don't need to think. I once expressed this idea once to UG (and later to others) in these terms: every thought we think is an attempt to change the given. It's an attempt to become something other than ourselves. This is part of the movement of the self in which our very awareness of something as other than ourselves automatically reveals our own lack of it (a threat to us), and that in turn sets a reaction mechanism going to change the given situation into a more settled one. All such processes are means of self-fulfillment as we feel inadequate without the object. Our inadequacy is enhanced through the process of comparisons which we do all the time. And our reaction mechanism always takes place against the backdrop of our background, past experience and knowledge.

**11) The Self Takes Itself Seriously:** We sometimes are interested in helping others, and undertake various social work activities, charities and so forth, or we carry on intellectual activities (we claim out of curiosity), pursue knowledge and practice art. In all of them, the self is at the center and those activities are basically part of the projects of the self. To test this theory there is just one simple method: when something we have concluded or thought of, or when a long-cherished fundamental belief of ours is attacked, of course we buttress it with various justifications; but more often than not, we feel that the very ground we stand on is taken away from us; we do not rest until we quell the opposition, even at the expense of abandoning the project and taking up another ("I shall return!"). We resent and bear a grudge against the person attacking our belief, in spite of our ostensible attempts to appear impersonal and objective. We do all this because we identify ourselves with the project (or belief) – the success of the project is our success; its failure is our failure. In fact, if

there is a series of these "failures", then we feel we are ourselves a failure! That's a disaster that can set us on the course of a prolonged depression.

**12) Relationships Are Movements Within the Self:** Although seemingly occurring between real people, relationships in fact take place in our mental world between the self and others who are part of our perceived world. And these relationships, no matter how much we whitewash them in the name of love, affection, unconditioned love and so forth, are part of the projects of the self. We desire a person and try to have a relationship with him or her for various reasons: it may be sex or companionship we want; or we are simply identified with the person to the degree that the person's welfare and accomplishments become our accomplishments. I am not saying we don't do anything for other people just to benefit them. Of course, we do. But when we do, our self is in some way or other involved in it. We do not simply know how to act otherwise. When things fail in relationships, of course, as UG says, "Love' is our trump card." We blame the other person claiming that he or she does not love us.

**13) Thought Is Capable Of Creating Illusions:** It always seeks a state where there is no striving anymore and where all its desires are fulfilled – the utopia; the kingdom of permanent happiness, *moksha*. But such things are all based on illusions. As long as thought is there, there is no end to striving, for the two are synonymous. And it cannot find a state of total fulfillment as long as it keeps seeking it; for seeking presupposes a sense of a lack of fulfillment. Also, seeking presupposes that we are an independent entity capable of a destiny. And apart from the set of thoughts and experiences we have created for ourselves, there is no independent "I". The "I" as the contemporary philosopher Daniel Dennett puts it, is a "gravitational pull." We can never directly see it. As Sartre puts it, "We can only see it with the corner of our eye." In other words, it only appears to be there when we are not directly looking at it. When we look it directly, it's not there.

Yet, it is for this fictitious “I” that we strive and struggle so much. Knowing all this, thought “thinks” that it might even want to end itself. And that’s the grandest of all illusions! An ending of thought cannot be achieved by thought. It cannot be achieved by will, which in turn is thought. Of course, when we physically die, our thoughts will die with us.

**14) No Self?** If the thought process is suspended for any reason, which can occur for some unknown reason, or because it is utterly frustrated, having exhausted all its resources, or because it is disillusioned by all its goals, it collapses. Then there are no problems. At that moment, the body knows how to handle itself. You are in the field of pure awareness. But this cannot be contrived. Nothing we do or can do can make it happen. None of our methods of spiritual realization actually work, because they all take place through thought and the self’s contrivances as their means. We constantly look for and calculate the results. (Just don’t point to me all those examples of people who are “liberated” through some method of realization: they don’t impress me. In my opinion, those examples don’t prove what they are supposed to show.)

But unfortunately, we, as conscious human beings, don’t know how to live without thought or what to do with the pure awareness. We just don’t know.

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## 10. Reflecting on Reflection

In the article above, I made “reflection” sound like a thought process which is bound to perpetuate the self, which it surely is. But there is another sense of “reflection”: a reflection which is aware of all this, aware of this process of generating goals and being bound by them or continuing through them, and which in the very process of being aware of them, dissolves them by letting them go.

Such reflection is a continual process. Not that it is done in volitional way; it’s something that happens rather automatically. In the flame of awareness, goals burn away and therefore with them all the rubbish that is generated from pursuing the goals. And thoughts dissolve themselves.

Reflection may be generated by the awareness of the pursuit of a goal and therefore could itself be called a thought, but once it is generated it dissolves the process instead of strengthening it.

Of course, there may be a motivation behind reflection, the motivation to be rid of the pursuit of the goal, with the further motivation of being enlightened, and so on. But as long as such motivation doesn’t generate further goals and process of seeking, it doesn’t matter if there is one. It is a movement of letting go, letting everything go, including life itself, and letting reflection go. It’s done in full awareness. It’s not a movement of one thought chasing another thought, like a dog pursuing its own tail.

If, on the other hand, this reflection perpetuates the self by generating a sense of pride and achievement (of enlightenment!), that may well be so; hopefully, that too will happen in the field of my awareness. If I am deceiving myself in all this, that’s life. I let it be.

Then I land in the body awareness or awareness in which thoughts, images or sounds may come and go.

I may later be dragged into action or pursuit of a goal. But then I can drop the pursuit of the goal whenever I find that it is complicating my life and binding me further. Again, I may be playing games with myself. But that's the best I can do.

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## 11. On the Division between Spiritual and Worldly Goals

I specified in the paper in Chapter 6 that “by ‘goals’ I do not mean the goals necessary for day-to-day living, but *fvgoals* for self-improvement and self-fulfillment – goals which involve the ‘self’ in some fashion or other. While the former set of goals will have no relevance and cease to be once they are achieved, the latter persist in our consciousness and create endless striving. Indeed, the continuity of the ‘self’ is perpetuated by the contemplation and striving for these goals.”

My friend Vito Victor raised a question about this distinction:

*But in your essay you also talk as though the rational mind has its legitimate place in solving “practical” problems. As you put it, “I have to use thought to solve problems, for sure, to plan ahead and to organize my life – in short, to lead a successful life in this complex civilization.” But what is it that requires us to “plan ahead,” and what is to count as a “successful” life? When I retired, with a pension of \$1500, our financial adviser thought we were nuts. The definition of ‘financial security’ is itself another thought product.*

*Do you see what I am getting at? I think that the dichotomy spiritual-practical may be shaky. It may be that everything is thought, that the mind entirely pervades human functioning and we can’t get rid of it.*

And so did my friend Elliot Roberts-Ruchowitz (see below). Now is the time to discuss this issue:

1) Is this distinction that clear-cut? When my goal is to make money, does that not also involve my self? When I make money, I feel elated, when I lose it I feel lost. Will I ever stop making money? Then isn’t that a spiritual goal?

A typical goal of going to someplace just disappears once when we arrive there. But it's not so simple with other goals. Many of these wants are generally part of other wants, means to other goals. When the bigger ones are satisfied we find ourselves going after other wants or more of the same (better food or more of the same food, for example.) In this same example, of course, when you finish cooking a meal, the desire to cook that meal comes to a stop. But another desire is instantly formed from the success of it; viz., I must cook something like this again, or cook a different thing. Or if the cooking is not successful, I say I must do it better again. Desiring, based on goal-formation, is something, as Hobbes says, which only ceases in death.

2) There is a constant restlessness in us which keeps seeking goals, wanting us to become something other than ourselves. On the one hand, this seeking is based on our awareness of what we are at the moment, which evaluates the present condition and posits a goal to make the condition continue, or make it better and so on.

On the other hand, we also have a restlessness which looks for anchoring, seeking some foundation. Notice this condition when we have nothing to do, when for just a moment, the mind is blank. Why does it have to go anywhere, become anything else or do anything?

It seems that, therefore, in the ultimate analysis, all goals are spiritual goals. They all want to make you better, change you into something other than what you are.

So where does that leave us?

3) Pleasure-seeking, goal-seeking, becoming something other than oneself etc., must all amount to the same thing. They are all goal-seeking behaviors. In other words, whatever we do directly or indirectly involves goal-seeking or pleasure-seeking.

Still, when Elliot asked me the question whether money-making is worldly or spiritual, I said that it is worldly, as long as you can quit it when you have as much as you want or as much as you are satisfied with. In other words, money can be worldly or spiritual depending on whether you can let go of the goal when you have enough of it. That doesn't mean you are free from all pleasure-seeking goals. If not money, you will be seeking something else.

To stop the movement towards goals means you have to "die"! When for just a moment the movement stops, there is a strong impetus to go after something, to think about something, to become something. It's a very unstable situation! You have to accept death and be disillusioned about all goals. Then you will probably recede into the body and be a mere awareness, at least temporarily.

And when you are drawn by some situation into action, then you can just do what's needed for the moment and get back to "dying" again, even if that involves what may seem to be goal-seeking or pleasure-seeking.

4) Then there is the factor of thought complicating the issue: More often than not, thinking is not such an innocent function. Most of the time, it is used to perpetuate or continue the self in some fashion or other. That means, there is a goal-seeking, pleasure-seeking activity going on whenever you think. At times, the mere recognition of an object is enough to judge and evaluate and therefore to seek a goal. Perhaps there are moments when you get tired of the whole thing, go into a mode of mere reflection.

5) But what is reflection? Isn't it another form of perpetuating the self? Yes, in the absolute sense. Even when you are aware that you are aware of images and sounds! And as long as there is brain activity, it may just have to go on. Then what the hell is all this writing about? Why am I doing it?

6) That's why UG kept saying that you have to clinically die! There is no final solution to problems except the "final solution!"

But then in UG's case at least, there may be thought functioning without there being a thinker and without its perpetuating the self.

But until then, at least relatively speaking, we could be disillusioned with our goals and attain some amount of peace. Or is that another one of our grand illusions!

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## 12. Desire, Pleasure and Tension

I learned from a "Network Chiropractic" brochure that desire is represented by tension in the nervous system. I once mentioned this to UG without disclosing my source. He agreed and said, "Yes, it is."

This was borne out further in my own experience. When I let go of everything and am able to accept things as they happen, then my system relaxes totally. Then either I relax into the body and eventually fall asleep, or get into a state of awareness where there is no self, but just being, or I sometimes get into a state of ecstasy.

But you can't remain there forever. Something draws your attention and you are caught in this or that activity or thought process. Then again, you are aware of things as when they are finished or you are finished with them, and you revert to the state of passivity, of letting go.

There is certain instability in the state of desirelessness or absence of thought. There is always a pull in the direction of seeking pleasure, of looking for things in the past which might give us pleasure now. And then you get lost in that memory, experience and pleasure-seeking, or whatever. Of course, if you are aware of it, you can return to Ground Zero.

The real test of freedom is the ability to stop anything you are doing at the moment, however important it is, to be totally detached from it and divert attention to whatever else is needed. That ability and flexibility is what enable one to step out of any emotion, disappointment, depression etc., as well as any current activity.

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### 13. The Self is a Set of Habits

A habit is no habit without continuity. You break up the continuity; then you break the habit. The self is a set of habits. Habits have a momentum. The momentum of a habit forces your consciousness to go back to a certain experience in the past and repeat it, or to seek a pleasurable experience, a novelty, an excitement, or something interesting relating to it. If you catch the urge as it arises, there is no need to “go” anywhere or “seek” anything. By interspersing the continuity with your consciousness, you “pulverize” the continuity of the habit into pieces. Then the habit loses its force.

You can say the force of habit is what they traditionally called in Indian philosophy *vasanas* and *samskaras*. I think it is these that account for why there is such instability in consciousness when it doesn't have to think about anything. There is a constant urge to go out and seek something, as if without that something you are groundless and unfulfilled. This can especially be noticed when we sit doing nothing for a while and feel jittery.

That which you seek of course is pleasure. You think, naturally, only of what gave you pleasure in the past. The thinking of it gives you pleasure once again right now and that pleasure creates the further urge to seek some more of the same or a similar pleasure. The self is nothing but this habitual seeking for pleasure which creates its own continuity.

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### 14. In and Out of Mental States

I wrote elsewhere about how the continuity of mental states not only creates mental problems, but also creates in us our sense of identity, a notion of self as a separate entity from others, the world and even from ourselves. It is indeed fascinating to see how this identity actually occurs.

Without our interference mental states have their own natural duration and then they fade out on their own. We pour life into them by either participating in them or resisting them and thus give continuity and permanence to them.

Take grief, for example. Like anger, fear, depression, loneliness or boredom, it is a state of mind. Left to its own devices, it has a limited life and duration. Then it fizzles away, sometimes through distraction and sometimes naturally, without any effort on our part. But our past experience keeps reviving it through our thought process by interpreting it as something undesirable. In that very interpretation is the process of resistance. Since I, what I think about and my thought about it are in reality not separate entities, although I might presume they are, my very thought of the grief and my resistance to it pour life into the mental state, giving it continuity and life. In fact, we have no way of looking at a state of mind except through our thought of it. If we could, then we wouldn't even know we are in that state.

Thus, in my mind a duality is set up between me and my mental state (of course, through my thought process). I keep battling the state and can't understand why it continues despite of my resistance or trying to suppress it or get rid of it.

A mental state does not have any strength if I don't participate in it or resist it. Just suppose I come to terms with it by understanding that perhaps grieving is a natural process or that death is inevitable and so on. The state will have its natural life

and die its natural death. The duration of the state depends mostly on the intensity of it.

Fear is another example of a mental state: Our initial attitude to fear is that it shouldn't be there, i.e., that we should not be afraid. And then whatever we do to address it will inevitably strengthen the fear, even if the attempt is merely to accept it. You cannot will to let it be. You just let it be. This is so because the will presupposes a duality set between yourself and your fear, and as long as you operate within that duality, the fear not only persists, but is multiplied and strengthened. But suppose you surrender to it. Cease and desist from any effort to change it. On many such occasions, which generally happened in my bed, in just a few moments, the fear not only fizzled away, but my organism relaxed and I fell asleep, waking up to notice I had no problem anymore.

The discussion about mental states gives us the hope that we can do something to change a given mental state. But unfortunately this essay can give no such direction or instruction. Even the instruction "Do nothing about mental states" can easily be taken as a direction. Then we tend to look upon a given state with a view not to change it. That too has the motivation of wanting to change it.

The reader can always ask: "Then what to do?" "Nothing," would be my answer.

2) But this talk may make it look all too easy. Actually, it's more difficult than it seems, because we are so used to living by the pleasure principle of enhancing what has been pleasant and avoiding what has been painful. As long as we fall headlong into pleasurable experiences and want to repeat them, improve upon them and seek more of them, we guarantee the continuity of ourselves. It is the same attempt to preserve the self that also automatically produces the negative reaction to some other experiences calling them painful. So, the learning about inaction regarding mental states has

eventually to be applied to the so-called pleasant or positive or pleasurable states of mind as well as to the negative painful states.

It's of course not to say that we shouldn't enjoy what happens in our life. This is a far cry from preserving mental states as a way of perpetuating ourselves. But such inaction does involve a fundamental overhaul of our systems.

What is the difference between letting a state be and being in a state? We are sometimes in a state struggling in it (like in a depression) and there may seem to be no end to it. This is an inevitable question to arise. The answer is that when you are struggling within a state, either you are aware of your struggling in it or you are not. If you are aware, the fact that you are aware is itself in indication that you are other than that (although still involved with it). And that awareness also implies that there is an attempt to become free from the struggle. Thus you are back to square one. If, on the other hand, you are not aware that you are struggling, then as such there is no problem. The state will wither away, unless, of course, it is generated by body chemistry or drug-induced. If it is, the solutions for such problems (which are observed by others) are not from within. You have to get help!

If by some means you can get out of mental states, say by just letting them be and surrendering to them, there is a "neutral" zone, a zone of mere consciousness. Here you are merely aware of the innards of the body such as the throat, the stomach or the mouth, and you are not within the mental world. Thoughts may arise and pass, but you are not them or in them and there is no reaction to them. It is indeed a skill ~ not a skill which you can consciously and deliberately cultivate, as that requires a goal of changing the given and a will to change it ~ to just let the state be. Once you have a clear taste of the zone, then you can move back into the "neutral" zone whenever you find yourself caught in a mental state ~ you just have to let be whatever the state you find yourself ~ if it is fear,

let it be; and if it is a hurt, let it also be. It is a skill of instantly freeing yourself from any mental state by letting it be and letting it last as long as it wants to.

You can say this zone of consciousness is self-luminescent, to use a Vedanta phrase. You know it exists because there is a built-in self-awareness. UG himself talks about consciousness knowing itself (he says, for instance, in the *Mystique* that life knows itself). You could call this a temporary state of enlightenment. On the other hand, you can say it is a shift in the brain. I am not so much interested in what you call it as the fact itself. When the “front” of your brain is active, you are in mental states and you struggle within them. When you shift to the “back” of your brain (or “head” if you prefer), then you are in the zone of the body and awareness of the innards. There are no values here, nothing bothers you, and you don’t have to do or strive for anything. There are no relationships, including with yourself, no emotions, no love, and no fear of death. You can’t say it is anything. It’s not a nothing either. It’s just awareness.

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## 15. Ending the Downward Spiral

**The Build-Up Of Thought:** Whether it is a positive or a negative thought or a memory or impression or sensation, our mind builds on it, making the positive things seem more glorious and rosy, and negative things more gloomy and ominous. The build-up is forward-looking. In fact, many memories we have, just because they have an emotional charge, look toward future for fulfillment and repetition, or for annulment and annihilation, revenge and whatnot, if they are negative ones. In other words, as we get older, it may seem like we are only repeating and reliving our past, but we are really trying to resolve them for the future.

As we get older, we tend to emphasize worries and negative thoughts and dwell on them more, although we also reminisce the positive ones a lot. Indeed, we build up on them so much that we panic and terrorize ourselves with them, turn them into nightmares and start trembling at their occurrence. And we become paralyzed. The downward spiral never seems to end. Every symptom or sign we read we turn into something huge and start dreading it. An itch or a rash somewhere on our skin is turned quickly in our mind into a threat of a cancer, for instance. We become mentally and therefore physically sicker and sicker. If this is not hell, what else is?

We don’t question our positive thoughts, because they give us pleasure. We tend to avoid the negative ones, because they are painful. But there is no rut which we cannot extricate ourselves from. To do so it may not be enough to become aware of our conditioning or attachments and let them go, as they keep recurring. At times, we may have to consciously and deliberately say to ourselves, “I will accept the worst, and I am not going to obsess about this anymore.” We have to make a conscious decision. Like a young fellow saying to himself, “I am not going to be intimidated by this kid anymore; what’s the worst he can do to me?” or “I will work this out.” It’s not that



you are using your will, which is generally based on identification with something. But rather it is that after seeing yourself get into the same rut repeatedly, you decide consciously not to slide into it. Buddhist Vipassana meditation recognized the role of such a decision. (Also, in the eightfold path, part of Buddhist meditation consists in encouraging our minds to think wholesome thoughts and discouraging them from thinking unwholesome thoughts. The Buddhists realized that our minds do have a tendency to build up.)

When you once again confront a symptom and start reading its meaning, you catch yourself before or right at the time when you fall headlong into the thought habit pattern and stay out or step out of it. It doesn't matter if you have to do it repeatedly and it doesn't even matter if you have already been caught in the spiral. The moment you are aware of the rut, you step out! And you can.

The trouble with stepping out of things is that when you are involved in some thought process or state, you are within it and as such you don't even think that it's possible to get out of it, let alone make any effort toward that end. But when the pain is great, and you see no way out, it might just occur to you to "surrender" or to drop the whole process. Or you might just say to yourself that you have had enough of the rigmarole and it's time to get out of it. Anything is possible. Unfortunately, there are no rules.

The stepping out of things is a very unstable state. Consciousness, as Sartre would say, constantly seeks a grounding, a foundation. In other words, it seeks content. If there isn't any, it will try to find some. Being without foundation is indeed a heroic task. But if you could be there from moment to moment (unfortunately there is no continuity here, because it's not a mental state), then you stand alone. In some sense, you are always there catching the beginning of sliding into a mental state. I don't know if this is called

freedom, but it surely can end the downward spiral and the descent into hell.

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## 16. The Self, Meaning and the Significance of Life

**The Question of Meaning or Significance of Life:** My former philosophy professor who later became my friend once bemoaned the fact that in spite of carrying the *Bhagavad Gita* under his arm for many years he could never “believe” (in religious matters). He is a well-known scholar in Indian philosophy and tradition as well as in Western philosophy and logic. I told him that he could never believe nor make himself believe because “he knew too much,” meaning that his knowledge prevented him from naïvely believing in anything. The knowledge would prompt him to question and doubt any belief he might entertain. The same holds true with innocence in matters of living.

The question, “What is the meaning of life?”, as are questions like “Who made God?” “What was there before everything?”, is a metaphysical question. It does not lend itself to any satisfactory answer, because such questions are basically paradoxes created by our reason, which is a form of thought. For instance, suppose there is some meaning to life, say, for instance, serving God or His purposes, letting alone the question of whether there is a personal God or not, one could immediately ask the question of what God’s purpose is or why one should serve God. This questioning is endless. That’s why the question has no general answer.

In order to satisfactorily answer this question, we must ask in what contexts the question of meaning of life arises. I used to point out to my students when discussing the question of meaning of life that a five year-old, for instance, just doesn’t run to his or her daddy and ask him, “Daddy, daddy, what’s the meaning of life?” We don’t ask such questions when our lives are running smoothly. Our lives must have run into some crisis and come to a screeching halt before we are prompted to ask such a question. As UG often said, a living man never asks

the question of why he should live. You don’t ask such questions until you have lost your innocence in living. You must “know too much” to get to ask such questions.

Normally, when we do things, engaging in various activities of life, we don’t look for any external meaning to our actions except for keeping an eye on the goals we seek. It’s natural that when we confront various frustrations in life, particularly with regard to some significant goals, be it a girlfriend or boyfriend we wanted, or a job we seek or the ill-health that we try to recover from. In striving for our goals, we make constant and repeated assessment of our status, where we are and how far we still have to go, what we have achieved and what that “means” to us, and so forth, by reviewing not only our present situation, but also our life; and the reviewing becomes a habit. It is when we face some profound failures that we tend to review our life as a whole, assess its significance and ask if there is any meaning at all to our life. We have to arrive at a general idea of the whole of our life, which we didn’t have earlier (even when as young people we constantly looked forward to our future), before we can ask such fundamental questions about life. The questioning can land us in various forms of malaise: one might lose one’s taste for life, become bored with it, and worse, become an alcoholic or workaholic, or become addicted to achievement, or become chronically depressed or even go the limits of losing one’s will to live and commit suicide.

The solution to the problem of meaning of life lies in the sources where it was generated, viz., in the initial frustrations with achieving one’s basic desires or goals. In other words, the solution to the problem is in its dissolution. If we were totally engaged in living and are not separate from it, the question of what is the meaning of life would not even arise.

**Fulfillment and Frustration:** Built into any activity geared toward goal-seeking are ideas of time and future. We labor under an implicit assumption that the satisfaction of each goal

will somehow fulfill us. The feeling of fulfillment, the feeling that our life has been fruitful, could come not only from satisfaction of goals such as making money, having a good family, a house, a boat, power, achievement and whatnot, but also from religious sources: we ardently believed in God and His grace, we feel blessed, and through our devotion and piety we feel that some day your life will be blessed or that we will reach the presence of God.

When the goals are reached, when we get what we want, we do feel content and satisfied, and feel fulfilled for the moment. But the matter never ends there: the very awareness of what we have achieved spawns further goals, at least of preserving the status quo or continuing it in time, for we once again feel we may be lacking it or feel uncertain about it in some other fashion (we may not have it tomorrow or there is a risk that someone or something might take it away from us, and so on). When our striving process proceeds successfully without interruption, we normally do not tend to ask fundamental questions about living or its significance. If we happen to have religious beliefs, then as long as the beliefs are strong, they tend to give us support in tiding us over our frustrations: this life with its travails, for instance, might be viewed as a testing ground in which God or some other power morally and spiritually prepares us for a life of blessedness and guides us along the way.

But when we find that our goals are not achieved and frustration is the only outcome, and when we confront several such failures, we tend to believe that our lives have been a waste and we start wondering whether life itself has any meaning. We could even lose our faith in God, particularly if the shock of frustration is too great and no amount of prayer has been answered. It is not as much that we look toward a higher meaning as it is that we wonder whether there is any meaning at all that is the crux of the issue.

The flow of life has been interrupted when we ask such questions; our naiveté and involvement in the life process have left us. When the frustrations are rather fundamental, no substitutions of goals or simple patching will put us back on track. We have lost the taste for life. The lost belief or faith can never be regained. Is there any solution to such a problem short of getting into boredom, depression, suicide, alcohol or whatnot?

Once the question arises, one then asks the further question of how to become free from this separation, this alienation between ourselves and our life.

As long as we are attached to goals and something outside of us to fulfill us, frustrations are inevitable and the question of meaninglessness of life must arise, as we keep insisting that not only our desires must be satisfied, but that we must have no failures and we must be “permanently happy without a moment of unhappiness,” to use UG’s expression. The problem of meaninglessness of life is intimately bound with the problem of time and our own future non-existence: for we try to fulfill ourselves only because we feel we lack all the things we desire.

If we can confront our own future non-existence (i.e. death), and emptiness, then perhaps we could see the superfluous nature of our values and goals we have been seeking all our lives. That is, we can see that all the goals and values that have hitherto given meaning to our life are dispensable. This doesn’t mean that we do not pursue goals or have desires. Living simply requires us to. But we can see the tentativeness of goals and strive for them when one needs to and not be daunted by failures. Each thing we undertake would have value only on its own merits, but not as part of a life-project, self-fulfillment or ulterior meaning. When we don’t succeed in our endeavor, we are flexible enough to try again or abandon the goal and move on to other things.

Notice that I am not advocating that we should not have goals or not enjoy or suffer the results of our actions. Of course, we will, as we currently do. Suppose we come to the realization that there is no external meaning to life, and whatever we do has to have its meaning stemming from the goals of the action we aim at; and further suppose that we realize that success and failure are equally possible outcomes of every action and that when we confront failures, we let that happen and move on to a further project, even if it is retrying the earlier project and perhaps keep working at that. If we could come to such a realization, it means that we have learned to become free from the residue of disappointment generated from the previous failure or failures.

Each failure is an invitation to revisit our goals and assess their feasibility. Each failure is also an opportunity to become aware of our attachments to things, people or situations and question them. Each failure is also an opening to our own emptiness underneath all our goals and activities.

Then we tend to live life on its own terms, and not in terms of ulterior values we have acquired here and there.

I am not saying that there is no significance to life or meaning in life; I am saying that if you don't ask fundamental questions about living, then each little thing we do will have its own temporary and tentative meaning. The metaphysical question of whether or not there is an ultimate, exterior meaning to life doesn't bother us anymore, because we realize that that meaning is bound up with all the goals and values that we have so far found desirable and that our self is that meaning. The loss of that self is what we have been afraid of. Once we are free from that fear, we don't have to look for any ulterior meaning. Life is its own meaning.

**Meaning and the Self<sup>47</sup>:** The world we build for ourselves, the world of our meaning is our self. The self is meaning. The loss of meaning is the loss of self. Our thought process puts together repeatedly various situations and events that occur in our life from time to time and assign meaning and value to them. Then we feel elated or depressed, depending on the outcome of the evaluation. Meaning and value are assigned, however, in terms of one's past experience; that's the measuring rod and the backdrop against which things and events acquire meaning. The meaning we assign to our world is our meaning and it defines us.

Our feeling secure is bound up with our being able to find meaning in our lives. The mind constantly tries to impose structure on any given situation. One has to find a place for oneself in the scheme of things and see how one measures up in relation to it. Not being able to do so makes one insecure, because the situation then is seen as fraught with uncertainty and one wouldn't know where one is.

**Boredom:** One of the opposites of a meaningful life is boredom. If things are not interesting or meaningful, then we are bored. We constantly labor under the opposites of "boring" and "interesting" when we confront situations. What's interesting and what's not is determined, of course, on the basis of comparing the current situation, activity, idea, thought, conversation or whatever, with what we have experienced in our past as more or less interesting or meaningful than this. The ability of not looking for meaning in life is the ability to confront situations not on the basis of such comparisons, but just as themselves - i.e., neither interesting nor boring. You just do them because either you have to, or that's what's in your way. Everything you confront, then, has its own interest.

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<sup>47</sup> I wrote about this in a previous article, but it can bear some repetition in the present context.

**Loneliness:** One of the consequences of meaninglessness, particularly that stemming from frustrations in love, is the problem of loneliness. Unless you are, once again, comparing the present situation as lacking something you desired, there is no room for isolation or loneliness. The world is filled with things and people – they all keep us company. You don't get lost in them nor do you feel isolated.

**Depression:** Depression is another one of the consequences. Depression is considered a malaise. Unless it is generated from some physical condition (such as gloomy weather) or a chemical imbalance, it is always relative to something we have been missing or feel frustrated about. Depression is a withdrawal response. You don't reach out any more as you were frustrated earlier. Your energies, as it were, are turned inward. And depression is inevitable as long as you are still hooked to the person or thing you have been attached to and you can't, for some reason or other, continue to strive for it. If and when you could let the person or thing go, then depression drops itself out of you "like a handkerchief from your pocket."

**Fear and Worrying about Future:** We are not only proud of our past achievements, we also worry about our future – what will happen to our money, fortunes, job, health, family, house, and so on. We constantly live in hope and yet when there is some doubt about the future outcome we worry about it. The meaning structure, i.e., the self, is constantly at risk. We feel threatened. As long as you think about your future, you must worry. The mind is constantly calculating possibilities, measuring one's progress against them and responding to them through worry and hope. We will never be free from one (fear) without being free from the other (hope). To be able to become free from both requires an overhaul of our system, i.e., our values and our cherished desires. Worry is a form of fear. We cannot be free from fear until we take it all the way to its limits and accept the worst possible outcome. If we could ever

get to do that, that would generate the possible required disillusionment with our desires and goals. Thus we become free from our attachments.

In the final analysis, the question of meaning in life as a blanket question is tantamount to the preparedness to let go of one's set of values and meanings that one has acquired in the past, and that means the same as losing one's self. By facing one's annihilation, one is able to break up this total meaning structure into pieces. Then, perhaps, one is able to live without having to have an overall meaning, each life situation or event having a meaning in its own terms: I am currently writing, for instance, because there was some occasion in my previous writing where this sort of question arose, or someone raised a question regarding this. Once I finish writing this piece, its purpose is served and I move on to other things. I don't have to have this contribute to my overall meaning of life, nor do I have to feel disappointed if people criticize it or do not understand it or agree with it. That's their problem, not mine. As to the question of why I write at all, the answer is simply, for lack of anything better to do. It is, as a matter of fact, one among the many things I do in my day-to-day life, some necessary for living and survival, and some totally gratuitous. How else could it be? I can't, at my age, make myself believe in some artificial or religious goal and go about assigning meaning to my life on its basis. But I have no disappointment in my life either. Life is what it is. You just live it as best as you can, and then you go!

I know all this sounds totally counter-commonsensical and absurd as we are all so used to living on the basis of a set of values to which we feel so committed and attached. We feel that there is no point of living without such a basis (I can hear a resounding response, "Then why live?" in my ears!) This is just one possible analysis and solution and it may or may not appeal to you.

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## Part 4

### Other Philosophical Papers

## **17. Phenomenological Deconstruction (or Dissolution) of the Mind-Body Problem:**

Descartes postulated the mind (actually my mind) as a thinking substance from the fact that I think. I know for sure that I think, therefore, I must exist as a thinking substance, i.e., the mind, of which my thoughts are attributes.

Descartes jumped to the idea of the material object “out there” on the basis of his clear and distinct ideas (about material objects) and on the basis of his belief that God wouldn’t deceive him.

Once the existence of these two substances is established (I am not going into the detailed discussion of Descartes’ ideas of substance and attribute and or into his notions of clear and distinct ideas – those do not, for my purposes, matter) then it would become a problem for Descartes as to how these diametrically opposed substances could be related, as they seem to in our day-to-day experience, as for instance, when my foot strikes a chair’s leg (an occurrence in the physical world), I feel the hurt (a mental phenomenon), and when I want to raise my arm (a thought, as it were), lo and behold, it goes up (a physical phenomenon).

Again, I do not need to go into the detail about Descartes’ solution of the mind-body problem, namely, his mind-body interactionism. Briefly, Descartes apparently believed that both mind and body are incomplete substances (finite), neither of them being capable of causing “modes” in each other by themselves. But, according to the author I was reading, he believed that body and mind are related as potentiality and actuality and form and they together formed a more complete substance, called the human being which has the properties of voluntary bodily movement, or visual perception of material objects, and so on. This is an unsatisfactory solution based on

the unquestioned assumption of body and mind being two separate substances somehow united as a human being. My interest here is just to show how the mind-body problem is generated by Descartes in the first place.

It's interesting that the mind-body problem never figured either in Buddhist philosophies or Hindu philosophies. In them there is no clear opposition between the mind and the body.

My solution below may appear phenomenological; and it may appear to be subjective. But it is not purely subjective, as something of the sort can be repeated by other people:

1) In the field of pure awareness there is neither body nor mind: there are just images and sounds which can be interpreted as thoughts and things.

2) When I view the world, I have to abstract the things in the world from my impressions of them (sounds like Berkeley, doesn't it?).

3) When I confuse the things abstracted with my impressions of them, then I can generate the mind-body paradox: how can a purely extended thing (abstracted from impressions) be related to a non-extended idea, which is again abstracted from another impression?

4) I'll have to show how I get to the pure awareness: First, I have to abstract the body awareness out. I could do that by letting go of all goals and desires, all the things that hook me to my thoughts. Then the thoughts themselves go. I am reduced to my body awareness. Even the body can be abstracted. What specific methods, as for example, meditation, are used to achieve this state doesn't really make any difference for my discussion.

5) In that pure awareness the same images or sounds can be both images or sounds or they can be thoughts. This awareness can be brought about by an event that is occurring or resurgence of some memory or some other cause. The causes don't really matter. What matters is that the abstraction can be repeated by other people and the result is pure awareness.

6) There is engagement and disengagement occurring when we view the images and sounds as thoughts or impressions.

The thoughts and impressions, once they are experienced as such, also present the subject-object dichotomy; along with the opposition, we not only have the idea that we are experiencing the world, but also that "we" are experiencing the world.<sup>48</sup>

A parallel abstraction is made on the object side of the thoughts and impressions: then we have the material objects. From there it's only one more step to the further abstraction of "matter". Matter, of course, would have the extensible properties.

7) Here two impressions follow one another repeatedly (in the Humean fashion), and we set correlation or causation between them: for example, "wanting to raise my hand causes it rise" or "hitting a stone causes the pain sensation or feeling"). There is nothing more to causation than that. We don't need to establish any further relationship than this correlation: just as when you probe an area in my brain with an electrode in a laboratory, I get the sensation of being pricked, or I see an image or I have a dream. Unless we establish by abstraction other entities such as a specific area of the brain as a material thing and my pain sensation as a mental thing and ask how these are related, there is no problem of relationship between mind and body.

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<sup>48</sup> Berkeley's notion of the self (as based on a "notion") is probably based on such an experience.



**Remark:** Am I not reduced to a Berkeley sort of idealist position here? Notice, Berkeley had the problem of answering how there can be a tree when I am not looking at it. Actually, I don't know, but I abstract. And I could very well be deceived, although normally the deception may not occur. I don't have to maintain an independent object called the tree out there or a subject called myself in order to maintain objectivity of things or of other people.

Of course, we believe in these things. It doesn't mean that we know that they exist independently. We believe that there are other people when we are not seeing them around, and other people tell us and we believe what they tell us. But does that mean we actually know that they are there?

An objection here would then be: I may be abstracting objects out of my impressions (and matter out of material objects), but we know they are not mere abstractions, for we believe (and other people believe too) that they exist independent of our impressions.

Then, what is it to know their independent existence? If you accept my thesis, nothing would count as knowing. Ontologically, you are left with nothing but impressions and awareness of them; everything else is a construction or an abstraction out of them. Does it mean that all science is a concoction and has no validity? What about all the results of science and its technology? We do believe in them.

8. We assume other people to exist primarily on the basis of our taking language as meaningful. This is the same act through which we take images as thoughts or experiences pointing to objects (or to oneself). How does meaning arise? It arises by consciousness somehow being linked (attached or engaged) to an image or sound, and looking at an object as a thing, or sounds coming from another person as meaningful. I

participate in the dialogue and also see the other person as a person.

9. The notion of "abstraction" needs to be made clear. I hear what someone says as noise, on the one hand, and in an "intentional" mode, I am viewing the same thing as meaning, as an idea referring to experiences and other people as well as myself, on the other hand.

Here are some specific examples of this: What look like the sounds coming from another person, by being in the intentional mode, I view as speech coming from the person. That's because the same movement of becoming intentionally engaged also creates me as a person – I don't just make sounds: through my talk I make sense, communicate and convey information and experiences. Once I am in the dialogue, I have no less evidence to conclude that the other person is a person than to conclude that I, who am making these sounds, supposedly coming from my awareness and body, am a person. In other words, the abstractions are all intentional movements. They establish me and other people as well as the world as separate entities. Of course, then I have the philosophical problems about how I know them, or how one thing affects the others and so forth.

Without the abstraction, there are no metaphysical problems. We really don't know that there are other people; but we don't really know that we exist either, or that the world exists.

That's essentially what my solution to (or, rather, the dissolution of) the mind-body problem is.

**Remarks: 1)** One might argue (like Wittgenstein) that I cannot even assign any meaning to my impressions unless I take certain uses of language given to me by my culture and society.

The question is not how I get the meanings; that's immaterial. The causation of these impressions or the origin of the meanings of words is not important.

Then how do I know that these meanings are valid? I don't. I just manage. The question does not arise until I am deceived or fail in my action.

What then? Don't I have to take something "objective", something independent of myself, as the basis for the meaning and validity of my impressions?

The answer to this is that a thing is more objective (or objectively existent) only relative to something else. Where I get my knowledge, my sources, don't matter, so far as I am concerned. Other people are abstractions (of course, I take their independent existence also for granted, as I have abstracted them from my impressions).

There is nothing fixed about meanings. We check, for sure the meanings of our words with what we see as an objective "dictionary". When we use words we treat them as objective, until something else, or some one else gives us a different definition which might prompt us to revise this definition.

**Remark 2:** This seems like solipsism revisited. And we will definitely land in not just skepticism but also relativisms of all kinds.

Where is awareness, one might ask, except for my impressions of it, or rather my awareness of it? Surely, there is none. There need not be any.

**Remark 3:** Disillusionment with goals etc. is an unnecessary adumbration in this thesis. We just need to stick to the rock bottom of impressions. Isn't that what Hume did?

**Remark 4:** Then how is this thesis different from Hume's? Hume actually denied not only matter but also mind. He said, just like I am saying, that both are constructions out of impressions. We don't know either of them directly. Then how is it that Hume didn't end up being a solipsist. He was, and worse, he was a skeptic!

So, is this a futile exercise?

If we "bracket out" bodies and minds, we are left with just impressions. But then we have no "knowledge"? But who cares about knowledge?

**Remark 5:** This thesis doesn't seem all that much different from Vijñānavāda of Buddhism which maintains that the subject and object duality is created out of consciousness.

The answer is that my thesis is similar to Vijñānavāda, except that in my thesis the subject and object are not just that; many of the objects have material properties, while my thoughts have mental properties. The mind-body problem arises because of taking each side as objective and as material or psychological. Thus my thesis offers a solution to the mind-body problem.

#### Further Discussion:

10. I read the article by Thurman in the Online Journal of Indian Philosophy: It shows the parallels between Wittgenstein's attack and *Prasangikas'* attack on private language theory.

It's not so earth-shattering: I think the confusion arises because Wittgenstein and others were confusing between basing your knowledge on impressions with the privacy of the language on which you could refer to your sensations or impressions. Must the former imply the latter? Suppose I drive a wedge between the two: What I am saying is that our idea of material objects and matter in general as well as our idea of minds are

generated from impressions, or rather that they are “abstracted”. Does that necessarily have to mean that this is something private to me, something which others cannot share? Wittgenstein assumed so, (“My pains are private to me and cannot be shared by others...”) hence his attack on the privacy of language.

You cannot have my pains. But that doesn’t mean that I cannot know that you are in pain or the intensity of your pain. Privileged access to my pain is not different from privileged access to my body. As I cannot be your body or have your body, I cannot have your pains. But that’s a far cry from not knowing your pains. There is an epistemology of knowing other minds, even though it may not guarantee knowledge of private thoughts or feelings masked from the view of other people. Short of certainty, there can be other sorts of knowledge. (See next chapter for further discussion.)

My interest is to show how the mind–body problem is generated from our experience; it doesn’t necessarily imply that other people don’t do the same thing. I am not necessarily arguing for a solipsistic position, namely, that all I know is nothing but my own sensations and impressions. What I am saying is more like phenomenalism, or rather like a phenomenology which shows how epistemological problems are constructed. It’s more like Kant’s transcendental argument which asks what must be the case in order for us to experience such and such.

I am asking what must be the case in our experience for the mind-body problem to be generated. I am showing the presuppositions on which the problem is based. I am not saying that I have any privileged access to these sensations or impressions. Rather, I am saying that from my point of view the public is abstracted from the private; my mind is abstracted from the sensations or awareness or impressions or what-have-you.

Of course, this won’t satisfy the hardcore phenomenologists (or whatever you call them) or materialists.

11. But the question still remains, how is my solution different from that of Hume? Hume assumed that there was a problem in the first place and he offered his solution to that. But then he ended in skepticism with regard to knowledge. My solution, whatever it is, must allow for some sort of relativistic knowledge without landing in skepticism. How is it possible?

But do I have to have a theory of knowledge to solve the mind-body problem? See paragraph 10 about knowledge of others’ pains.

12. I think everything centers on the notion of abstraction. What exactly is abstraction? How does it affect the knowability of things? What is the resultant epistemological and ontological status of things after abstraction? These questions should probably be answered.

13. Abstraction is just a way of saying that if we go into our experience below the level of objects, to impressions, and the awareness which is even prior to them, there need not be a mind-body problem.

We are not saying, like Berkeley, that we have a notion of the self, or, like Hume, that the self is a bundle of impressions without a core. We are saying that the self is an abstraction, much like the material object.

The idea of abstraction is not akin to ‘superimposition’ in Advaita. If it is, then we have to have a prior knowledge of the object somewhere else to superimpose on the impressions.

14. Abstraction is nothing but the imposition of permanence to particular, fleeting sensations, impressions or images. By adding time, or rather freezing in time, it adds a third dimension and solidity to material objects as well as

substantiality to the self. We have to be putting together various sensations and attribute solidity to them and give them a third dimension. Just as we assign solidity to objects, we assign the status of a state to our experiences and place them in time. How this is done? It seems that as our memory and past come to bear upon the present, it's an automatic process.

First, an image or "sound" becomes a thought when it engages my awareness. The same thing is viewed then as an object, with a subject pole (me).

Second, when in perception an object is recognized as such, i.e., as an object, it too is like an object of thought with its subject pole. Then I get the further awareness that "I" am seeing the object.

Third, I get the further awareness that the object exists out there, independent of me. No further abstraction is needed here. The question of whether the objects exists truly out there as I perceive it is a separate question and is answered, in cases of doubt, by appeal to further impressions of the same object at a later time or impressions of other objects which I take to be more reliable and so on. A similar approach can be made to answer whether the object I perceive is truly an object out there or it is merely my hallucination or an illusion.

Fourth, when I perceive several of these objects, I can then abstract the idea of a material object or thing as such, as opposed to my thought of it, my perception of it. At the same time, I get the idea that I am thinking these thoughts. I get the idea that I am behind all my thoughts and perceptions, much like matter is behind all material objects.

Fifth, then I start thinking about the relationship between my perception of the object and the object as such, or between my thought and the object (correspondence), the relationship between my perceptions and thoughts and myself as well as my relationship between my body and my thoughts, the body itself

being also a material thing, although I seem to be within it, having it, and so on.

Sixth, I think about how I feel what happens to my body, and how am able to move my body according to my thoughts and feelings.

What is the relationship between my thought and my body, then, except that from my point of view they are both something which I perceive, and that there seems to be a correlation between them?

The problem of mind-body relationship is a problem which exists in my perceived world. I also question what the relationship between another person's body and what he says, which indicate his thoughts.

Notice that in none of this does the private language question arise.

**15. Mind-Body Relationship:** For myself there is no problem, because the thoughts or sensations or feelings as well as the body are mine. I am not two separate things to be somehow related. There are two sets of things happening in me or to me, if you wish. There is only a succession, as far as I am concerned. No other relationship needs to exist, because they are both mine. The question of my being two separate entities called body and mind doesn't arise except in abstraction. I move my arm and once I have an abstract notion of the body, then the same event is interpreted as the arm of my body moving, as if I were something apart from my body. Same goes with my thoughts. They are not separate from me.

The problem of the relationship comes into question when one of the pair (body and mind) doesn't go along with the other: as for instance, when I want to stop doing something, and my body, against my will, keeps doing it, when my mind is willing and my body is not, or when something happens to my

mind (I lose awareness like in anesthesia) and my body seems to function (for other people) without my awareness. Then a clear separation is made between my mind and my body and I ask the question of how these two are related. But the proper expression here, in order to avoid the mind-body problem, is that I am willing (or I like to do something), but I cannot do it, or my body doesn't obey or some such thing.

Notice, even here I talk as if I am two separate things, I and my body, as if my body is separate from me.

Death is a special case. I cannot envisage my own death except by extrapolation from other people: I notice other people's bodies becoming lifeless, and I attribute something parallel to myself, although I have no way of experiencing it directly.

Similarly, it may be said that when I go crazy, my mind is gone. If I am not there, my mind cannot be mine anymore, because nothing is mine without me being there. Others may say it is mine, but I can't.

**Conclusion:** The mind-body problem is generated not as much out of a misuse of language, but out of certain natural assumptions and abstractions I make from my immediate experience. Once, these assumptions are questioned, there should be no problem remaining.

We can also say it's the result of confusing the first and third person points of view. If we stick to the first-person point of view, we will end up with some such answer as mine. If we stick to the third person point of view, you tend to be materialist, behaviorist or logical behaviorist. It's the confusion between the two points of view that generates the seemingly insurmountable problem of mind-body relationship.

18. What about other minds? I know only other people's behavior, that is, what they say and do, and the expressions of

their thoughts in words or expressions of their feelings in behavior and what they say. But that's what constitutes other people to me, not other minds. We often wonder how the other person feels, because we feel that we can't really experience their feelings.

\* \* \*

## 18. Other Minds, Privacy And Private Language

I think I get to recognize another person as a person when several things happen either simultaneously or in succession: One, I recognize the other person through looking into his eyes (Sartre's "look"). Of course, something from my past experience must enable me to recognize the person as *that* person. Otherwise, it is just a person. Two, the fact that the other person speaks a language which I can understand and respond to gives me a basis to recognize the other person as a person. Notice how we are fascinated by speech coming from the radio or television or a cash register or telephone. There is a third important factor: that we have some sort of interaction with the other person through language or some other dealing. We are engaged in a dialogue, and we are involved with each other. There is the "you-I" dialogue. Then the recognition of the other person is automatic. It is not that we are always explicitly conscious of the fact, but our dealings and behavior presume our recognition.

These recognitions are at the bottom of our relating to others even when we hate or are angry at them. When someone mows down whole groups of people with a gun, it's not clear what sort of recognition that person affords. He could be treating others as mere things or animals or he could think that they are just a bunch of enemies to be gotten rid of.

What's interesting to note here is that there is no special problem of knowing other minds in these contexts. For practical, day-to-day purposes, the recognition is all that matters and that's what constitutes knowledge of other minds. The rest is based on some philosophical mind-body dualism which didn't need to exist in the first place.

\* \* \*

"I know how you feel," is something we say to other people either simply to express our sympathy or to indicate that we have been in a similar situation in our past or that we have had a similar experience.

I think George Herbert Mead is correct in saying that recognition of other people is a developmental phenomenon. We are taught to separate ourselves from other people, to be aware of other people as others and to be aware of ourselves as separate from them. We don't make such distinctions to begin with. Notice how a child (or as a matter of fact, even a grown up – I have seen this in UG when he cried watching Suguna crying) cries in pain when the mother is in pain by being ill-treated or for whatever other reason.

Such empathy is based on the fundamental non-division between the self and others. You can call that identification, which may in fact be the basis for UG's saying, "What happens there happens here."

There are many issues of privacy in the area of knowledge of other minds, but I think the problems get confused when you tie them to the private language controversy generated by Wittgenstein. (I mean here the idea that only I have access to my feelings and therefore, only I can know them, assuming that there is a private language through which I refer them to myself.)

### Privacy and Private Language:

Your mind is private in the sense that your thoughts are private (if you don't reveal them to me), your feelings are private and what you do or did, or intend to do can be private.

You say "you don't know how I feel." You could as well say "you can't know how I feel." There are some senses in which these statements are true and some in which they are false. I could have been in similar circumstances or had similar

experiences in the past as you are having now. Still, I can't have your feelings, because I can't be you no matter how much I try ~ much like I can't be that television set in front me. In order to have your feelings, in some sense I must be you. But if I can't be you, then I can't have your feelings; therefore, I can't know your feelings. To know your feelings here is tantamount to having them. So, to say "only I can know my feelings" just amounts to saying "only I can have my feelings." In this sense Wittgenstein is right.

I can't know what you are going to do, or what you intend to do, because you keep your thoughts and intentions (which are also thoughts) to yourself and do not reveal them to me. I can't know what you have been doing (except when I may be present), because you keep it a secret, and I have no access to that information through other sources.

But that situation is different from knowing your thoughts: there are times I may say I am thinking exactly the same thing as you are. Or, you say, "Are you thinking the same thing as I am?" There is no mystery in this. We can verify this by comparing our thoughts by expressing them to each other in spoken or written word.

In this sense, we can even compare each others' feelings by giving a description of how each of us feels about a situation. Another person could say to me, "I feel the same way" in a given situation, perhaps meaning that his description of how he feels is similar to my description of how I feel in that situation.

There is no other mystery about other minds as far as I can see.

\* \* \*

## 19. Whither Morality?

*What is morality? It is not the following of enjoined rules of conduct. It is not a question of standing above temptations, or of conquering hate, anger, greed, lust and violence. Questioning your actions before and after creates the moral problem. What is responsible for this situation is the faculty of distinguishing between right and wrong and influencing your actions accordingly.*

*Life is action. Unquestioned action is morality. Questioning your actions is destroying the expression of life. A person who lets life act in its own way without the protective movement of thought has no self to defend. What need will he have to lie or cheat or pretend or to commit any other act which his society considers immoral?*

~ UG in *Mystique of Enlightenment*.

We do question our actions before and after, whether we like it or not. For one thing, we worry about the consequences of our actions, whether they will be just as we expect them, or will cause harm to ourselves or others, or what will happen to us if certain consequences follow our actions, and so on. We also feel guilty if a current action goes against our own previously accepted norms of right and wrong or good and bad, and loss or gain.

I am not as much concerned here with which theory of morality (and moral judgments) is correct, whether utilitarianism is better than deontology or vice-versa, for instance, or whether we should opt for egoism or hedonism, and so on. My issue with morality is that even if we agree on which moral standards we use in our judgments, we are still left with a major problem.

The main problem with morality is not even that we worry about whether our actions may turn out to be wrong, but it is

that more often than not we don't act according what we ourselves admit is the right thing to do. It was Aristotle who first grappled with the problem of incontinence. The problem became translated in Christianity as the problem of the weakness of the will – “the spirit is willing but the flesh does not obey.” Socrates, followed by Plato, always taught that if only a person knew what is good, he would automatically be good and therefore act accordingly. So the ultimate evil really is ignorance. Plato's *Republic* is an attempt to connect knowledge of the good with a person's happiness (and by extension with the good of the state), thus ensuring the moral conduct of the individual (and by extension of the society).

Whether we approach the problem as one of ignorance or as one of the weakness of the will, the problem of the gap between one's beliefs and intentions and one's actions remains. As a consequence, no matter what our ideas of right and wrong are, most of us say or believe in one thing and act in another way. Our desires and passions, or our “self-protectiveness”, as UG said in the above passage, are the impediments to morality.

Once we act, publicly we tend to justify our actions or defend them, although, internally we may regret or feel guilty. We learn to lead double lives – in public we try to appear to be virtuous and while privately we plot against other people and try to get our way. No wonder morality becomes a farce.

As I used to say in the very first class of my Moral Issues class, “Morality is for other people only!” We are quick to judge other people's actions as good or bad, right or wrong, often using our judgments to bolster our egos, to help us feel superior to others or to feel that we operate on a higher moral ground than them.

People always look for policies of living, for a policy which will make them permanently happy and bring them in harmony with the rest of the society. Unfortunately, even if they come

up with one, I can hardly think of a single individual who doesn't violate his own policies (or moral standards) at the next turn.

Then why this sham? Why morality at all? Why standards of right and wrong (and of what's good and what's bad which are at their basis)?

I have thought for a long time that morality played out in these terms really has no place in our lives. Don't get me wrong: I am not advocating “immoral behavior” such as murder, rape, violence, lying or stealing, or acting on impulse or passion without regard to consequences. (The above passage of UG might tempt you to think that he may be advocating this; but that's far from the truth).

UG talks about acting with the self-protectiveness of thought. Unfortunately, we do think, and more often than not, we *are* self-protective. To me, it's interesting to see how in fact we act in concrete situations: we have desires, some of which conflict with one another. And we have fears. In the face of any given situation, we consider the conflicts and act in a way consistent with the equilibrium of our mental economy. I think that's the most assurance we could have for moral behavior. Consider the following possibility:

A young woman comes to me for advice regarding an unwanted pregnancy. I could take a moralist pro-life position and tell her that she should carry the pregnancy to full-term, give birth to the child, and if she has problems raising the child, give it up for adoption. Or, I could take the pro-choice position and tell her to go ahead and get an abortion. (I actually did advice someone to do this once, but I had a vested interest in giving that advice, leaving aside the main consideration of whether it is good for the mother or the unborn child.) But my advice ignores so many other factors the lady has to consider in making her decision, such as not just her economic plight after the baby is born, the social stigma or



disapproval of relatives, but more importantly, her having to deal with her loneliness, feelings of guilt, feeling of being betrayed and so forth. Were I to not take factors like these into consideration when I advise her, I might be missing the point and only imposing on her an advice from outside, thereby putting only more pressure on her instead of helping her solve her problem. Is my position here that of a moral judge or a friend and advisor? (In fact, even using of terms such as “right” and “wrong” and “good” and “bad” would only exacerbate the confusion.) Where should I stand in this matter?

If I were to advise her on this situation, my advice would be first, not to tell her what to do, and second, to tell her that the issue is not one of right or wrong, that she has to make up her own mind, listening to her feelings about the situation and considering how she would feel about the possible consequences. I tell her that after considering all these she should come up with a decision which she could live with, and if she can't come up with a decision right away, she should keep working at it until she can come up with a solution, i.e. 'sit' on the problem. I also tell her that when she finds the right solution to her satisfaction, her mental turmoil will diminish and she can live peacefully. She would then know that as far as she is concerned she has the right answer. If she finds later that she was mistaken in her previous decision, then again she gives herself a chance to rethink the matter until she comes up with a more satisfactory solution. And unfortunately, there are no rules for this. Of course, she knows that whichever way she decides, she has to face the moral judgments of other people, and that she has to live not only with herself, but with society, and more especially with the law.

I think this approach to the dilemmas we face bypasses the whole issue of rights and wrongs and goods and bads. (One might say, by taking consequences into consideration, she is adopting the utilitarian approach. But I think it's much more than that.) It's not that I provide any specific rules or guidelines for acting. But I think this approach more or less

approximates actually the way we in fact act and I also think that by broadening this approach (which aims at a state of equilibrium in our mental economy) has a significantly better chance of bridging the gap between our professions and our actions. I know this is no easy solution to our problems, but I don't know of any easy ones.

By “to live with oneself” I mean that you work at a problem in a situation you confront until it is resolved in your mind and that it's no longer a problem to you; I mean to resolve a conflict until you can live in peace with yourself. And, of course, only you can be the judge of that.

One might ask the question, what if I lie or cheat or dig the ground under someone's feet, and still am in peace with myself, because I feel that I am justified, or that I did these things because someone else did something else, and so on. The answer to the question, of course, varies with the situation:

For one thing, I have to live in fear of consequences: (of course, I could also just be paranoid and live in fear of unreal, non-existent possibilities). I remember that once, a long time ago, after smoking marijuana a couple of times, I refused to do it again, not just because I didn't like the taste of it, nor because of my respect or fear for the law (I might easily break the law in other cases, if I thought it was worth it), but I didn't think the possible consequences of getting arrested and going to jail were worth it.

For another, if my lying or cheating does cause a problem to another person, and there indeed will be consequences as a result of that, then I still have a problem on my hand. I have to work to resolve that.

If, on the other hand, what I do causes no problem to someone else or to myself, then why should I even bother to think about it?

One advantage of thinking in these terms is that such thinking provides a tool of self-knowledge and a way to free myself from all kinds of unnecessary goals, fears and worries, which will hopefully ultimately lead to a life without self-protectiveness. Another advantage is that I am not quick in judging other people's behavior.

This type of thinking is not really Fletcher's situationism. There is no talk here of God or love. And of course, it is subject, nevertheless, to charges of moral relativism which were leveled against situationism. But my thinking in a given situation is relative not just to the situation but also to myself, because my reaction or response to a situation is a complex result of what I see as the situation and of all the factors that go into making up myself including my background, conditioning, personality traits, psychological complexes and so forth. It is that entire complex which determines my response to the situation.

But my response is not a fixed response which can be judged as right or wrong instantaneously. Of course, other people may judge it as such. But as far as I am concerned, at any given moment, my response is either satisfactory or it is not. If it is satisfactory now, it may cease to be so when other factors come into the picture and I may find another response more satisfactory and modify my previous one accordingly. If I don't intend to change my response, of course, I am willing to suffer the consequences.

A nun, I have heard, for instance, made a decision to carry her unwanted pregnancy to full term and give birth to the child. She was willing to face the consequences of her action, including becoming a lay woman, finding a job to support herself and her child, facing social disapprobation and so forth. In other circumstances, the consequences I may be willing to face include physical punishment, prison or even death. But that would be my choice, that being the way I have

decided to live. If I "chicken out" and change my mind, I have to face my fickleness too and that in turn becomes part of my situation I have to resolve.

And it goes on and on.

Notice here, that there are no objective standards such as right and wrong or good bad that I use to judge my actions. (If others judge my actions with those standards, I, of course, have to face those judgments.) I can only talk about the responses I can live with and are satisfactory to me, and those I can't live with or have problems with.

Another objection that can be raised against this approach is that it is purely psychological and has nothing to do with moral issues of actions being right or wrong and that it would take away the most powerful element affecting our moral decision making and education.

I said above that we use morality as a tool not merely to judge other people's actions, but to build our own self-worth through those judgments, to feel righteous and morally or otherwise superior to other people. The one big problem I see in our society is that we are so quick to judge others (say politicians about their sexual morals, for instance), knowing full well that we are not really much different from them and that under similar circumstances, we would probably act the same way or worse. Then I ask why play this game of morality?

How could this help in educating our children if what we are preaching is different from the way we actually live?

What about situations like war? Haven't I removed the powerful tool of moral judgment, i.e., my ability to say that such and such a war, for instance, is morally wrong? My answer is the following: by criticizing either side in situations of war, we tend to polarize the situation further instead of resolving it. Instead of solving the problem of war, we perpetuate it by

taking one side or the other. I remember the times when I was demonstrating against the War in Vietnam in the downtown mall in Riverside, California (as I also did earlier in Berkeley). While I was standing there in the mall holding hands with others in protest, I could see the animosity I was causing by my mere standing there ~ people's hostile looks and angry debates and so forth. I asked myself, "What am I doing standing here? Instead of solving the conflict in Vietnam, I am adding further conflict to it."

My reflections drove me to consider the sources of war and violence in general, and discover to my utter chagrin that I myself was not free from intolerance, greed, aggression, violence, and quest for domination and glory, which I saw as the sources of war. I similarly saw that the problem of hunger and poverty the world over has also roots in the ways of my (and others') living: my self-protective self-interest, my urge to amass wealth beyond my need, and so on.

How can I save myself and others from such problems? Then I look for possibilities of change in my ways of living (before I can even possibly contemplate changing others' ways of living or making quick judgments about them.) I think this sort of approach is more helpful than moral judgments. It in fact helps people see things more clearly and perhaps help us solve problems better in the long run.

Of course, the same goes with educating children. If we could show a child that hitting another child hurts the child (once I demonstrated this to my daughter who just hit another child in a park by actually snapping my fingers sharply on her forearm just once and telling her, "this is how it feels to her, don't do it!" - and I never had to do it again), then that's the best education we could give her. Of course, nothing I do might change her dislike for the other child, but at the least I provided an awareness of a problem (at least she had to deal with me!). To be sure, she might do it later stealthily, or she might like being violent for just the kicks of it, and so on and

on ... but I don't need to dwell on the point. Of course, the need to educate my child may be my own need (I wouldn't say moral need, but her behavior toward other kids did present a problem for me that I had to deal with.)

The problem with the traditional moralistic approach is that it doesn't address the gap between our professions and our actions: it ignores our desires, feelings and passions and our make-up in general. As long as we have our desires, there is bound to be a gap between what we ought to do and what we end up doing. My question behind my approach is, how do we bridge that gap?

You might say that I am removing morality from the objective realm to the subjective realm, thereby making it inaccessible to any public discussion. This is much the same as saying that if you can't morally judge someone's actions as right or wrong, we can't point a finger at the action of a person, however horrible it is, and say it is wrong, we can't publicly discuss such actions, and therefore, we can't praise or blame them. That implies we can't change people's anti-social behavior. While this all may be true, much of what we do in the public realm can be transferred, practically intact, into the realm of problem-solving and in fact help us make better progress that way.

You might also ask the question: suppose someone does make a moral judgment, would I say that making such a judgment is morally wrong? I say it's neither right nor wrong, as far as I am concerned. I might find a problem with it, and in fact even feel guilty because of someone pointing out a problem with my behavior (as it might have gone contrary to my own standards about myself) and I would deal with the judgment in those terms.

What about feeling guilty then? Is that not a moral issue? (This is the crux of the objections to my approach.) Guilt and guilty conscience are expressions of conflict within a person of what

he feels he ought to have done and what he in fact has done. The question of “ought” is not necessarily a moral “ought”. It could just be a possible alternative action which the individual feels is more in accordance with his beliefs about how he should live or behave toward other people. That may or may not include moral standards.

One more remark about conscience: one might say my approach is akin to appealing to one’s conscience in order to decide whether or not to act in a given fashion. This remark is only partially true, as “conscience” normally presupposes an inner moral voice with its dictates, whereas the problem-solving approach, in addition to including the moral considerations, also includes other considerations such as one’s interests and passions and so forth.

The fact of the matter is that we do have moral standards about ourselves, as we do about other people and other groups or nations. We have mostly acquired those standards from our society and use them to beat ourselves or approve of ourselves. Of course, we believe in them. What my approach does is to bring them under the heading of “feelings” rather than “standards”. We feel that such and such should be done or ought not to be done. Right and wrong are just expressions of those feelings. There is nothing very objectively correct about them, although we might believe that they are.

You might ask then whether those feelings (“oughts” and “ought-nots”) are just what I think, or are they, according to me, what ought or ought not in fact to be the case? This is really the charge of subjectivism. My answer is that from my point of view there is no difference between “feelings” and “moral standards” and that I claim they are merely part of my mental economy.

It may be claimed that this approach is no different from that of any moral theory which attempts to reconcile one’s interests and one’s duties, taking into consideration how one’s interests

must pay attention to other people’s interests in order to secure a moral society. To that degree, it might also be asserted that this theory is similar to the utilitarian or deontological ethics whose primary interest is to safeguard the welfare of the society as a whole.

My answer is that the claim is essentially true except for this basic difference: it doesn’t lay an unnecessary burden of adherence to so-called “right” and “wrong” on the individual, and secondly, it allows the integration of a person’s interests and feelings better within the unique context of a situation, and finally, it tends to diminish the gap, for the above reasons, between one’s interests and one’s duties.

**One Final Remark:** again, one might claim that this is not very different from Hume’s theory of morality or a modern version of it such as “enlightened self-interest,” which is a form of egoism. Here one might say that I am advocating an individual’s happiness (in my terms an “equilibrium within one’s mental economy”) as the ultimate good, and all actions are then judged as good or bad or right or wrong according to this norm. My answer is, once again, that it may very well sound like that, except that my approach tends to include moral psychology in the picture, which moral theories generally do not.

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## 20. Is There Such a Thing as Selflessness?

UG used to proclaim that man is “selfish to the core.” In fact, one of the articles written on him many years ago in a Kannada newspaper in Bangalore which he showed to me had the caption of a quote from him, “Only selfishness is real, selflessness is an illusion.” My answer to the caption at that time was, “Yes, it’s a selfishness which does away with the very notion of self!”

The questions of egoism and altruism arise in the context of morality. Any moral theory must reconcile the conflict between self-interest and duty – at least that’s how it is traditionally conceived. Hobbes is a philosopher who claimed that man is like an animal, driven only by self-interest and desire which “only ends in death.” Some theories like that of Hume argue that there is basically no conflict between self-interest and duty and that if one would only look deeply enough into self-interest, one would discover that one’s duty is included in it. Similarly, Joseph Butler’s moral theory claims: “Every particular affection, even the love of our neighbour, is as really our own affection as self-love; and the pleasure arising from its gratification is as much my own pleasure as the pleasure self-love would have from knowing I myself should be happy some time hence would be my own pleasure.”(Quote from Internet sources.) The extension of this is the modern theory of enlightened self-interest.

Various forms of utilitarianism attempt to reconcile the conflict in different ways with varying degrees of success: a more recent one, proposed by Rawls, includes self-interest in its notion of “acting under the veil of ignorance,” according to which, people when they constitute themselves as a society should opt for such policies of the state that they would accept not knowing which position (high or low) they would be occupying within the society. (Rawls, *Theory of Justice*) This notion seems like a version of the golden rule: “Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.”

The political theory of Adam Smith, the theory of *laissez-faire*, believes in the Invisible Hand which guarantees that if everyone in a society acts for his own self-interest, the interests of the society as a whole are automatically taken care of.

My interest here is really not to address the issue of the conflict between interest and duty, but to inquire into the degree to which man is selfish: particularly to discuss the thesis that no matter what man does, it always is for his own pleasure (or self-interest). This is the thesis of psychological egoism. There are two problems with this thesis in the realm of morality. One problem is how it is possible for a man sometimes to act in the interests of other people if by nature he is not endowed with the ability to act in such a fashion, which is required by morality. The second problem, which is related to this, is that only one theory of morality becomes possible and that is ethical egoism, namely the theory that everyone ought to act according to his own self-interest. Ethical egoism leads to contradictions in contexts where two people’s interests conflict and according to the theory they both must be right.

Now, rights and wrongs aside, the question must occur to anyone inquiring into human relations, viz., the question of whether other people’s interests have any role to play in our lives except as means to promote our own self-interests. Of course, we sometimes act contrary to our own self-interest, particularly when we don’t know what it is – we think some thing is in our interest and it turns out that it is not truly in our self-interest. And we do act for other people’s interests – interests of our friends, relatives or strangers when we act charitably. When we do so we tend to enjoy our actions. We find them in some way gratifying or fulfilling.

But can we act selflessly and contrary to our self-interest when the situation (and you might say, morality) demands it? The answer pretty much depends on what we mean by selfless action. Is it acting contrary to one’s self-interest? If that’s the

meaning of selflessness, the psychological egoist might claim that such actions are actually born out of our self-interest, because we only act altruistically (or contrary to our self-interest) when it suits us, when it gives us pleasure. When we no longer get the pleasure we seek in giving to others or in sacrificing our interests, as for example, when we don't get the thanks we expected or our actions are not appreciated or when the recipient turns hostile instead of being grateful, we revert to self-centered actions. The psychological egoist here will constantly seek for the hidden motive of seeking pleasure even when it is not apparent on the surface. Then the thesis that whatever we do is for our own self-interest (or pleasure) becomes redundant.

I think this approach (of psychological egoism) probably misses some points. More specifically it ignores the mechanisms of our behavior, particularly our goal-seeking process. Our normal procedure is to direct our actions to achieving what we desire or avoiding what we don't want. Whatever we desire we desire because we hope it gives us satisfaction or pleasure. If our action gives us the desired result, we feel satisfied. If we perform the action repeatedly and it no longer gives us the same satisfaction, the action tends to drop off, unless it is a long-standing habit and quitting it seems more painful than keeping it. Masochism, although it seems painful on the surface, is pursued only because of the psychological pleasure one gets in physically inflicting pain on themselves. Here pain is pleasure.

Now, to repeat, my question here is, when we think something is right, yet it is not really to our self-interest or does not give us pleasure, would we still do it? If we could, then altruism and morality are possible. If not, then only psychological egoism is true and morality is not possible. The discussion below explores the psychological process of action, goal-seeking and the self, trying to arrive at an answer.

It's the mechanism of thought which has the built in process of seeking pleasure and avoiding pain. Everything it seeks, including doing good to others, has to fit into this scheme in order for it to be worthwhile to us. The values we hold and the things we desire are what give us satisfaction. They enhance our self. The thought process, in other words, is the process of the self. Through desire and fear, the thought process reinforces the self. All actions, even those we undertake intending to help others, must form a part of this "self (or mental) economy." Even when the actions we perform don't seem to give us satisfaction, or only give us pain, we would still do them if they conform to our values or concepts of what we want to achieve. The self, among other things, is a hierarchy of values we have built for ourselves, whether consciously or by simply absorbing from the influences around us through osmosis. We would do something painful because, as a value, it is bound up with the notion of ourselves. In other words, we sometimes do things for others even though they are painful, not as much because we may gain some hidden pleasure or self-interest, but because our very identity may be at stake, and not to pursue that value would amount to loss of one's self to that extent.

The present pain is tolerated for the sake of a future satisfaction of a value or a goal. When even that fails, and the goals or values are not achieved, we quit the whole enterprise, or console ourselves saying that we have tried, or tell ourselves that the goal is not worth it, or that's not what we really wanted, or that we will try for it another time when conditions are more in our favor, or who needs it anyway and so forth. More often than not, we replace one goal with another. But we never quit striving for goals, because we have an underlying belief that our happiness or fulfillment lies in achieving things which are out there, outside of ourselves, in becoming something other than ourselves.

When we become disillusioned with this too, then perhaps not only the striving drops off, and along with it our goals, but also

the thought process which is geared to achieving them. But that almost never happens.

Short of this total collapse of the self, which is perhaps possible in principle, at least temporarily, whatever we do is for the gratification, directly or indirectly, of the self. Only when such a collapse occurs, we are truly selfless. But then is there any action? (I am speaking here of action other than automatically satisfying one's biological needs.) Or would a person's movements be merely random? Then if there is action, (I can't deny there is), it wouldn't be premeditated, or based on some moral or other rules or laws, but would depend on the situation. It might even seem self-centered to others and no rules can be made out of such actions as they are so specific to any given situation.

You might ask, why would one even act in such a circumstance? There is no answer to that question, for any answer presupposes a motive on behalf of the person, and that by definition is precluded in a selfless state. The action is gratuitous. It's just as if the person had no choice but to act that way. It is as if the action is extracted out of him, forced out of him by the situation.

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## 21. Why I am a Vegetarian, On Taking Life, and On Abortion

### Why I am a Vegetarian

People always ask me why I am a vegetarian, why I don't eat meat, fish or eggs, don't I kill the vegetables I eat, and so on. My answer is the following:

First, yes, I don't eat meat, fish or eggs. For one thing, I don't like them – I don't even like the flavor, smell or taste of any of them. I have tried them both in India and in the US many times. Furthermore, I don't like to eat meat or fish because I don't like to kill animals.

I have no quarrel with those who eat meat. Still, I believe that most of those who do eat meat (or even fish) don't quite realize what they are doing. Of course, a butcher kills animals or at least cuts them up into different parts as a routine to make his living. I don't really know how many butchers like their jobs or do it as a habit or do it because they have no choice. Most of the rest of us (except those who like to hunt) eat meat by killing animals by proxy.

My argument, if you call it one, is not based on religion or morality. I think a person is justified in eating meat if he or she can kill an animal with his own bare hands, dress it, cook it, bring it to the table and eat it with relish repeatedly. As for myself, I can't do any of these.

I will recount a couple of experiences in this context: One, when I lived in Berkeley, I went on a camping trip with a Jewish girl from New York and her Norwegian boyfriend at that time. When the young man caught an oyster in the water and crushed it in his palm, the girl fainted at the sight of blood in his hand. I won't forget that scene.

The other is from my own past: once, in 1968, when I was in Waltair (Visakhapatnam), India, I lived in a cabin in the Shanti Ashram. The cabin had a patio, a bedroom and a kitchen, part of which was also used to take a bath. One night I woke up in the middle of the night to go to pee in the bathroom and I saw a rather long and very-slow-moving snake coming through the drainage hole in the wall. It was moving so slow either because it had eaten a heavy meal or it was hurt or it was too old. I couldn't tell which. I first used a broom and then an iron rod to move it forward with a view eventually to get it out of the cabin without harming it. But somehow it managed to get up on the door and hang right on top of the head of my bed. Tense and overcome by fear, I brought it down and, as it already seemed at least partly dead, beat it to death with the iron rod. Then ants collected around the snake and I called the caretaker of the *ashram* to come in to take the dead snake away. An elderly man, the caretaker asked me in a voiced mixed with respect, disapproval and pity for the snake, "You killed it, sir?"

The memory of that experience pricks my conscience (if I still have one!) to this day! Although I am not a believer in *karma* or rebirth, I still can't stop wondering at times whether my long-standing cancer and other ailments I suffer from are not a result of my own misdeeds.

I can't make any general rules out of my experience (or any one else's). I don't believe much in anything. Yet, I feel a person is justified in eating meat if he or she realizes what they are doing. And of course, in some areas on the globe you just have no choice.

Once a lady colleague in my college who wanted me to give a talk on the subject in her department heard my argument and countered it saying, "You can't always build a house from the scratch with your own hands in order to live in it." I said the cases are not analogous (you don't eat your house!). Of course, she promptly cancelled her invitation!

To be sure, I kill vegetables and fruit to eat them. Some ancient sages in India lived on fallen grain and fruit just for that reason. But I can't. J. Krishnamurti addressing this question once said, "You have to draw a line somewhere." Some people don't draw a line at all, and I draw it at meat, fish and eggs. Why not eat eggs, you might ask. Actually, my family does. I for myself don't like the flavor or smell or the after-taste of eggs. Also, I consider the fact that it is a potential animal. Rarely, I might eat something which has eggs in it when I don't smell or know that there is an egg in it. If I did eat it (or meat or fish) inadvertently, and learn about it later, I wouldn't beat myself for it.

### On Taking Life

Am I opposed to taking life? What would I do if I was attacked; my sister was attacked, etc. Am I a pacifist? How about abortion? How about preventing babies with birth defects from being born?

First, my attitude to killing: I am not a pacifist. Yet, when I became a citizen of this country, I told the Immigration Department that I couldn't take an oath vowing that I would defend this country and its constitution by arms if necessary. They asked me to write a statement of my religious faith. I wrote in it that I consider all men as my brothers and that I couldn't bear arms for any country including the United States. They ended up by giving me a special oath which provided an alternative to bearing arms. Thus I became a citizen of the US by being a conscientious objector.

They just can't make me take a gun and shoot another human being. I would rather go to prison or something. What would I do if someone attacked me and tried to kill me? I don't know. I will find out when I face such a situation. It's hard to answer hypothetical questions like that.



But there was a time when a student actually assaulted me in my office for calling him stupid (the word just slipped out of my mouth!) in an argument. I complained to the campus police and told them that I just wanted to get him off my back and that I didn't want to make any other trouble. His papers were later graded by my colleague. Each situation is resolved in its own fashion. I can't generalize and make up policies or rules of behavior for myself or for others on the basis of one or more experiences.

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For similar reasons, I also will not sit on a jury. Of course, I am called once every couple of years (because of my driver's license) for jury duty. So far, I have managed to avoid it. A couple of times I was selected to be on the jury. The first time, I was a bit disturbed and consulted a lawyer (a freebee from my credit union! I don't normally see lawyers.) He said, after consulting another lawyer, that I had to appear for jury duty and if I was called to be on the jury, I could explain to the judge why I wouldn't want to be on the jury. Something like that happened and after I was seated on the jury, the judge asked if anyone had objections to serving on the jury. I raised my hand. He asked, "What?" I answered, "My conscience does not permit me to sit in judgment on my fellow human beings." He said, "You are excused!" I left the courtroom in great relief.

The second time, when I was selected again, they asked me along with the others to answer a questionnaire. Then I had an opportunity to express my objection, and that evening I was again excused.

The lawyer I had consulted the first time asked me why I was opposed to being on the jury. I gave him my answer. He is a reputed lawyer who represented Cesar Chavez and others. I could see Mother Teresa's picture hanging in his office. He said, "There are a lot of evil guys out there." I answered him, "I

can't deny that. But, as a philosopher, I can't be part of a system which only punishes people for their acts without considering their side of the picture and seeing what could be done to help or prevent it."

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### On Abortion

This is one of the knotty issues that troubles people all over the world. Of course, an embryo is not a full-fledged life. But the issue of abortion is not so simple. Read on:

Many years ago, my then girlfriend became pregnant. I told her that she wasn't in a position to raise a child and maybe she should get an abortion. She was adamant and wanted the baby anyway. I said, "As a woman, you have every right to have the baby. If you insist on carrying the pregnancy to full term and have the baby, I will be with you (at that time, there was some question of my being with her) and help you raise the baby until you are ready to take care of it yourself."

And she did give birth to a child and she asked me as soon as she was born, "Now that she is born, what do I do with it?" I said, "Raise it!"

A few months after she became pregnant, I married her and stayed with her for another four years. She was now ready to leave me and leave the child with me. I had to get the help of a past student of mine to live with me and take care of the child. Later, my current wife came into the picture and took care of her.

But the real reason for my recounting above story is that when the child was about four-and-a-half or five (or may be a bit older than that, I can't remember the exact time) asked me, "Daddy, did you want to get rid of me when I was in my mom's belly?" By now I knew that she had heard (it doesn't

matter from whom) the news of what had happened. I had to collect my wits quickly and come up with a satisfactory answer or I would be my daughter's enemy for life. I said, "I'm sorry, but I didn't know it was you; if I did, why would I want to get rid of you?" Lucky for me, the answer pacified her and she never raised the question again. In fact, I recalled that story to her when she was grown up and she listened to it with amusement.

My ex-wife did go through an abortion (of a baby from someone else) and I know the depression, guilt, anxiety and nightmares she had had from that abortion. I know several other women who had the same response. In many cases, it doesn't hit until well after the abortion. For men, it's more a matter of convenience, economics, etc. I remember, in the case of both my children, it's the sight of them and my holding them physically that bonded me to them. But the issue is a lot deeper for women. They know the baby that was aborted, even though it was mere flesh, came from their womb and they are deeply affected by the experience.

Now would I say I am opposed to abortion? Of course not. Am I then in favor of it? That's where what I said above should come into play. How do you feel about it? Can you live with that decision? I can sermonize all I want, but if you feel so burdened by the baby and don't even want the stigma or the travail of carrying the pregnancy to completion, and you feel your life would be thwarted or ruined by it, who can blame you for aborting? But do consider how you would feel if you did abort and see if you can live with that decision. Talk to people who have had an abortion.

I see part of the problem that is generated in the controversy between the advocates of abortion (or right to decide about your own body) and pro-life people has to do with receiving government support. There indeed are poor people who probably can't afford the money to go through with an abortion let alone have money to raise the child. And the pro-

life proponents don't want the tax-payer's money spent on causes they don't approve. The question then becomes political and I have no answer to that.

I have so far avoided the question of whether abortion constitutes the murder of an unborn child. True we murder even full-fledged human beings unscrupulously in situations such as war, executions and so forth. When life begins, whether it begins at the time of conception or at the time of birth, whether life is potential or actual before the child is born are questions that cannot easily be decided by philosophical argument. Nor can the question of whether a woman has a right to decide what happens to her body, as the unborn child is part of her body, or at least an unwanted guest in her body. Whichever way these questions are decided, the problem of how the mother feels when the abortion is carried out remains, nevertheless. And to me, that's what should really decide whether she should go through with it. Surely, society has a stake in the life of the unborn child. But ultimately, it's the mother (and not even the father) that would bear the brunt of the emotional aftermath of abortion. Giving the child for adoption does not take away some of the feelings that are generated when the unwanted child is allowed to be born. That is, of course, an option for the mother once she carries the pregnancy to full term, if she can come to terms with such an option.

## 22. Reflections on Meditation

**Preface:** I used to define meditation to my students as having the main function of disrupting one's thought process. This definition is consistent with the Yoga definition of meditation as the cessation of the activities of the mind. But unfortunately, like many other activities carried out by means of our mind, meditation is a mental activity, although its aim is to disrupt the thought process. In other words, its aim is psychological suicide!

Unless we had an intention to change ourselves to become someone different or better, or be in a more peaceful or "enlightened" state, we wouldn't take up meditation. Such an undertaking is the product of the mind, as it is our thought process which always attempts to change the given situation and help us be somewhere else. Meditation presupposes an awareness of our condition and dissatisfaction with it, as well as an attempt to change our condition into something better. The following discussion demonstrates the paradoxical nature of meditation and how and why it is fundamentally frustrating. I will show some of its virtues as well as its limitations, and then I will mention some possibilities and discuss them.

**What is Meditation?** In the West, meditation is used, more often than not, to relax, to gain a sense of calm and freedom from anxiety. In the form of biofeedback it has been used to control blood pressure, promote alpha rhythm in the brain or whatever. For purposes of relaxation, it is also coupled with deep breathing, differential relaxation, visual imaging and so forth. Those who use meditation for such purposes don't have any pretense to enlightenment, liberation or whatever.

Traditionally, however, meditation has been viewed, at least in the East, not merely as a method of relaxation but as a means to attain Nirvana, or Release, or Enlightenment.

**Forms and Methods of Meditation:** There are many different forms of meditation: One of the most common form is to focus totally on whatever one is doing, not minding anything else. The traditional story of a woman going around three times with a pot of water on her head with nothing else in her mind, not even knowing that she was walking around, comes to mind. This is one of the means of transformation (*mukti*) traditionally recognized. That is what one might call the path of *karma*. You are focused so much on what you are doing that you are not even minding what it will get you or won't. Of course, normally, in any skilled action, you have to constantly adjust your means to the ends, or else your actions misfire. That doesn't mean you care about the outcome; you do care, but not about what you will or won't get for yourself. This is, of course, implied in the path of *karma*.

Repetition of a *mantra* or some sort of formula or a holy name is what comes to mind next as a most common method of meditation. Whether it is the syllable "Om" or the names of gods, or a prayer, it doesn't matter. The meditation could be helped with the counting of beads and other repetitive acts. (Then one has to split one's attention between the recitation and the counting – which I think becomes a chore.)

Meditation can be engaging in contemplating God or having a dialogue with Him. This could also take the form of singing the praise of God, as in *bhajans*.

One frequently adopted form of meditation is self-inquiry, looking into the true nature of the self. In a contemporary version, advocated by Sri Ramana Maharshi, it takes the form of the well-known "Who am I?" question one asks oneself constantly.

Just sitting and being aware (passively) of the mental contents is yet another form. Soto Zen and other forms of meditation advocate this practice. Non-interference with what is observed is essential. There is and should be no goal for meditation. If

there is a goal, the meditation becomes contrived: one begins to interfere with the contents and a conflict is generated within oneself, since one constantly calculates, measures and compares.

Many times this method of passive meditation is aided by focusing visually on a dot on the wall, or the space between one's eyebrows or just one's breathing (watching the way breath enters the nostrils and leaves them). In some forms of meditation, being aware of one's breath and counting the number of breaths constitute meditation. It has been long known in yoga practice that making exhalations slower than inhalations can indeed help one to relax.

Some other methods employ the instrument of thought to create a space between oneself and one's problem such as fear or depression by thinking about the whole picture, by contemplating the consequences of actions, or the opposite side of an issue, or taking a third (or the other) person's or point of view and so forth. This method too can result in freeing one, relatively speaking, from the problem one is currently facing and perhaps even aid developing detachment (Shankara's *Bhajagovindam* and Buddhist descriptions of the body and the prospect of ending up in the cremation ground come to mind). Some types of meditation like *Vipassana* take an objective approach to one's actions and look at them as an impersonal process than as something done through one's own agency. The aim here, once again, is to free one from an ego-centered point of view, thereby developing detachment. These types of meditation employ the instrument of thinking to solve, rather dissolve, the problems created by the thinking process.

Also in *Vipassana* meditation, like in some other forms, awareness (or self-awareness, if you will) is interposed between one's perceptions of any part of the body or emotions of the mind, without interfering with any activity. While sweeping the floor, one is aware how one's footstep falls on the ground,

or one is aware of how an emotion of anger rises, has its life and passes away ~ these are some examples. This sort of awareness has not only the virtue of objectifying what one perceives, but also of breaking up one's identification with it.

One frequently used form of meditation in contemporary practice is differential relaxation – focusing on each part of the body and relaxing it. In contemporary practice, one finds similar techniques to reduce pain. Focusing on one's pain with awareness and breathing and relaxing deeply helps one being relieved from the pain.

A meditative process of awareness in movement as in Feldenkrais can be and has been used successfully in solving skeletal-muscular physical (perhaps psychological as well) problems. In some ways this is similar to practicing yoga *asanas* with breathing and awareness.

**Outcomes of Meditaton:** The outcomes of meditation vary with the belief system one participates in or the method of meditation one uses: you may gain a vision of Christ or Krishna, you may experience God, you may feel oneness with the universe, you may have out-of-the-body experiences, you may lose all awareness of your body, you may feel that your head is missing, you may feel that your consciousness is expanding to encompass the whole universe, you may experience states of bliss or beatitude, or have a total sense of peace and harmony, or you may become part of the universal energy, and so on and so forth. The list is endless. Some may claim supersensory powers, peer into their past lives, claim to have precognition, psychic powers and powers to heal, as well as the possessing the ability to know the internal structure of matter. Or one may more simply claim an ability to relax and move through day-to-day chores with increased ease and lightness of being.

**Relaxation, Release and Self-Knowledge:** We need to examine the mechanisms or operation of meditation to see how it

works and how it can help, if it does. In meditation you are either focusing or you are simply relaxing. In either case, you don't interfere with the contents that show up either in the foreground or in the background of your consciousness. This is the primary reason why people who have been suppressing negative content in their minds, or have problems facing their own undesirable thoughts, emotions or past experiences have no business meditating unless they can face up to everything that shows up in their minds when they meditate. But if you can let things go and not react as and when things show up, then there is a genuine possibility of being released from the contents, particularly if you have gotten to the bottom rung of the ladder of the layers of a problem. One could term this process "self-knowing" or "self-knowledge".

Take, for example, fears. Normally we resist fear. But below the fear there is the threat we feel from the object of fear. And we dread the imagined consequences of the threat. If we let the process of the fear unfold and listen to all the possible consequences of the threat, figure out what could be the worst consequence that could happen and let them all be, then the object of fear will no longer pose a threat.

This same process could be applied to objects of frustration or conflict, or feelings of depression. Coming to terms with the happening which we dread or with not obtaining what we so cherish and desire, we can achieve a release from either the fear or the frustration that is generated by the attachments, negative or positive, to the objects. We could apply this to attitudes, beliefs and prejudices as well.

In adopting the process of meditation to enhance self-knowledge as described above, one could uncover some very basic attachments, particularly positive attachments to good health and life itself, as well as negative attachments to and recurrent fears of pain as well as to death. When one has learnt to let these too go, we might arrive at a stage where nothing is important anymore, not even living or dying, and

one is just plain consciousness. In that moment of consciousness or awareness, thought might appear just like sounds and experiences like images. One now has the ability to let them come and go. They have no longer the hold or charge on one they have had before. The emotional charge is dissipated, as it were. (Of course, this can also happen in confession or confiding with a friend.)

Self-knowledge in the sense described above implies the awareness of the contents of the self, and since this awareness is of a non-interfering nature, it could be described as an automatic process of detachment. In other words, in some way, we are shedding the contents of the self from ourselves.

**Limitations of Meditation and Its Effects:** This freedom may be just momentary. You may fall headlong into a thought or an experience or a habit pattern and react to objects of these as though they are currently happening. In other words, the attachments reassert themselves. You may have to go through the process again and again. So the relief and release you obtain in meditation may only be relative and temporary. Don't expect any permanent changes. The conditioning that generates the attachments may be too deep and perhaps even beyond the reach of your consciousness. And meditation may not be able to uproot these conditionings. You may have to accept meditation at that level; but that doesn't make it entirely useless.

Relaxation is similar. To the degree that you are able to let things happen or go, you are able to relax. Or you might say that your ability to relax physically in the face of the various attachments or hang-ups that show up in consciousness is indeed what enables you to become released (detached) from them. This only shows that the body and the mind are not really two separate entities, but two aspects of the same entity.

You can re-invoke this relaxation process by consciously letting go of everything, even if it be for just a moment. The process

can be progressively shorter, telescoping a whole lot of previous self-knowledge into just a moment, as it were. But then you are back again in the thought-game.

The primary reason why release of this sort is only relative and temporary is that underneath all conscious activity is a holding on to existence which is essential to the survival of the self, self in the psychological sense. The survival appears to be a physical survival – after all, the psychological is only a mental extension (or abstraction, if you will) of physical survival (at least, that’s how it appears to the self). This holding on to existence manifests itself as fear of death, of old age, of disease and most of all of pain, as well as the contrary side of striving for continuity through pleasure seeking (the opposite of avoiding pain). We can mislead ourselves thinking that we are totally free from all this holding on, but when a situation presents itself, we fall once again headlong into these.

This is the reason why I say there is a radical difference between this relative freedom and total liberation, where you are free from the will to live, free from the attachment to living, or the negative attachment (fear of) to death, pain, disease and old age. You could only witness this rarely among human beings. I could see that in UG at the time when he was face to face with death. From my own perception as well as a detailed account I have read by Mahesh Bhatt who was with UG until the last moment of death, I could say that after he had gone through his “calamity,” UG never cared whether he lived or died, and almost *never* sought medical help<sup>49</sup> to become free from pain or sickness. And to me that’s radical. I don’t know if this is indeed desirable for any of us, but I do

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<sup>49</sup> Except on rare occasions as when he consulted a doctor about his “plumbing problem” (hiatal hernia) or when he wanted his teeth extracted by a dentist.

know that this is what constitutes true liberation, if there is such a thing.

Unfortunately, liberation is not subject to conscious choice, since, as far as the psychological self is concerned, this is tantamount to not just psychological, but actual suicide. No wonder, UG kept saying that in order for such a thing to take place there must be “clinical death.”

**Bonuses of Meditation ~ Feelings of Ecstasy, Energy:** Once you are momentarily free from the contents of consciousness (i.e., the ego or self), at that moment, you may feel a surge of energy flowing through the body with or without the accompanying feeling of bliss. This can be (and is often) interpreted as experience of enlightenment; but tradition warns against such feelings: they are mere feelings and as such are fleeting. The consequence of such feeling may well be that the person feels unburdened, lighter and refreshed for the rest of the day, unless and until some concern, worry or obsession, stemming from the past takes over.

But this is not what traditionally liberation is supposed to be. If you are liberated, it’s final, once and for all. I can’t see that happening through conscious meditation and I give below my reasons for it. It doesn’t mean it can’t happen at all; it just means that it cannot happen through our conscious effort and will, or by any deliberate meditation.

**Critique of Meditation:** To repeat, meditation is an activity of the mind, although it is geared to let the mind cease its activity. It’s a suicidal process that happens instantly, but in degrees. There is always a hope behind this activity that it will eventually take us to our goal, namely, being free from all mental activity and the activity of seeking goals. But that’s a contradictory process. It will not succeed.

Practicing meditation is much like believing in God, and having faith and praying. You could say that you can

eventually become free from the self by keeping on practicing meditation, just like you could say if you have enough faith you can move mountains. If you haven't succeeded, it's your own fault. It means you haven't done enough. This is a tautological requirement: you have meditated enough only when you have succeeded in becoming free from the self and you will succeed only if you have meditated enough.

So, you can go around, walking around, without doing any ostensive meditation. But your awareness doesn't go away. You are stuck. You can't go forward and you can't go backward. Whatever is happening within you, you are still aware.

You keep going on in endless loops, getting more and more frustrated, trying in various ways not to meditate, to meditate, measure results, watch the activity of the self, get frustrated again, let go of that activity, let go of everything, and so on and so on.

There are times when you don't care what happens and are merely aware, but only to fall headlong into the habit of thinking and responding to the world through the self. This is an endless activity. And there is no end to it nor is there any hope.

You feel cornered.

But that may not be a problem, given the nature of the mind – this is bound to happen. You are now declutched and then again you are clutched.

**Possible Conclusions:** What possible conclusions can we arrive at so far? 1) It's a waste of time to meditate. 2) Meditation can at best help you arrive at "Ground Zero," a neutral state of awareness, but it cannot help you stay in it, for it is an unstable state, volatile; you are back in the automatic conditioning cycle each time you have to respond to something in the world. Not only is the conditioned response

mechanism brought into play, but simultaneously the dualism between the self and the world comes into the picture. You cannot but respond to the world ultimately in terms of the self and its interests. (For instance, however much you think you are enlightened, you find you are back to your prejudices, and also to feelings of inferiority and superiority, quest for power, pleasure, sex, and whatnot.) Of course, through meditation you can work your way back to the state of pure awareness; but you have to do it again and again. It's an endless cyclical process. Perhaps, you can telescope the process somewhat. That's about the best you could do.

**Beyond Mediation ~ A Possibility:** When by some chance the mind does cease its activity, there is no meditation, and none necessary. We just are in the mode of being, rather than in the mode of becoming, of getting somewhere, where the future invites us, haunts us, where there is tension in our minds pulling us forward toward the future. This restlessness will not cease until we give up the goal of achieving anything, including anything like self-liberation through meditation; it will not cease until the very goal to meditate ceases to be. Then there is neither meditation nor any need to meditate.

When all activity of the mind stops, there is a respite. You aren't meditating, nor are you not-meditating. I used to say in my Eastern Philosophy class that you are truly meditating only when you are free from the very need to meditate. (Just as UG would say, you are truly free when you are free from the very need to be free.)

I don't know if I would call this liberation. It's not liberation, if liberation implies some kind of permanent state. There are no permanent states. There is only a constant dynamic, a dynamic in which sometimes you respond to the world through the self and at other times there is no response ~ you just are. Nevertheless, as I discussed above, there can be a radical change in oneself which is called "total liberation."

**A Question:** Exactly what brings about the anchoring (I mean being “hooked” to a thought or situation repeatedly)? It’s clear that there are times when you are not anchored (UG’s “declutched” state); and at other times, you are automatically connected to the mental contents of the self and respond to the world as though you are a self. It couldn’t just be as UG says that the situation calls for a response and brings it about, because there are situations in the middle of which you can “drop out,” declutch yourself.

Here is an answer: My mind proceeds to repeat a habit pattern; in this instance, I have an urge to play a computer game. Then a counter-thought presents itself, of how this is part of the pattern of restlessness, the chatter of the mind, and whatnot. The idea continues saying that instead of going through the activity, just drop everything. Then, the thought simply drops out, at least for the moment. There is just nothing. You can say, its pure awareness; but it’s not aware of anything. Then there also is a jerking (like a shiver) in my body indicating an explosion of energy.

This is followed by the urge to record the event, as this gives a specific answer to the above question. Of course, this is also a mental activity. No wonder none of this lasts, because thoughts and what is generated by thinking can only last that long.

Then moments later, there is a strong urge to play a computer game once again. I, being one who doesn’t fight his temptations, yield to it. I let the urge play itself through. The strength of the urge must be the force of habit, or what we might call *vasana*. Restlessness follows. Then again a dropping of the thought processes and so on and so on. So goes the story.

And that’s about all you can do in meditation – masturbation!

Surely, there are a lot of mental contents: the head is abuzz with them. It’s not that there is any problem with them.

The self’s agendas are not so easily understood nor dealt with. Feeling important, having power, having control and feeling that in some way that I am better than anyone whom I compare myself with are all elements of this central agenda. So is the seeking of pleasure and avoiding pain. Greed, appropriation of things and people are a third. Of course, these motivations are all just different ways for the self to continue. Hence, of course, the fear of death.

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**A Possible Objection from UG:** UG would object to this account by saying that you don’t know that you are in a state of awareness except by means of thought. So, thought must very well be present when you are aware of your awareness in order to claim that you have that awareness.

**My Reply:** This is a debate I had with UG a long time ago. I asked him that same question, “How do you know that there is such a state as the Natural State or whatever?” (You can watch this discussion in the video “What am I Saying?”) I don’t believe he gave a satisfactory answer. The best he could come up with are these two answers: “I don’t know,” and “Life is aware of itself.”

UG is not consistent when he is asking a question about the account I have given. I am not claiming that there is knowledge when I am in the state of just being aware. I am just saying that there is awareness. The knowledge of it may come later when I start thinking about it. And you can’t say that there can be no awareness when you think of it later. The least you can say is that there is memory (or trace) of that awareness when you think about it and that you may no longer be in that state. That account does not bother me. I am not claiming that



awareness is aware of itself (although I could say that) and that is turned later into knowledge.

Nevertheless, I must grant UG this much: if this awareness is only a mental state and does not last for more than a moment, it is entirely possible that it is thought-generated and that we are back to square one. For one thing, you don't know that this awareness exists except by recognizing or remembering it by means of your thought process. For another, it too is a state and has its origins, duration of stay and disappearance.

**UG's Objection Extended:** UG's objections can also spread to detachment and as a matter of fact any other action consciously undertaken. Because they are done consciously, from his logic it should follow they are done by means of thought. Consciousness must then equal thought. For instance, you cannot consciously detach yourself from anything, especially without an ulterior motive. Just the same way, you cannot freely give anything selflessly, because that is done consciously and therefore with self-centered motivation.

**Another Reason Why Meditation is Frustrating:** There is another profound reason why meditation is fundamentally frustrating: Our mind, i.e., thought process, which I can also call the process of the self, is a seeking mechanism. It constantly seeks to be in some other place than where we are at the moment. This tendency manifests itself in a very basic way by our trying to assess whatever state we are currently in. In our constant search for fulfillment (and permanent happiness, as UG would put it), we seek and strive for a state of unbecoming from where we don't travel any further. This is an endless process.

Even if such a state of permanent happiness or fulfillment exists, we are not content with merely being in that state. We want to know that we are in that state and cherish it. And that's where the seeds of becoming are sown. That very urge to know our state not only puts us outside of that state in order

to cherish it, but also makes us seek further to continue or enhance or preserve that state by whatever means. This knowledge or consciousness is the curse of the human condition, because it puts us in the merry-go-round of alienating ourselves from ourselves and then again trying to unite with ourselves.

Since the urge to know or be aware of what we are or what we are experiencing is inherent in any meditation process, meditation is a fundamental failure and has to end ultimately in frustration. The ill-gotten gains are momentary!

From all this it should follow that one may have to be left in utter despair, with no hope whatsoever, and that there is nothing one can do about it either.

**Any Alternatives?** Then what are the alternatives left? Wait for a "Calamity" to happen, which might never occur? Be disillusioned with the whole "awareness" business and "jump in the lake," or accept your fundamental state of helplessness and keep going in circles (for we are called "wheels!")? The end result might be shortening or telescoping the mental process one goes through to drop the motivational structure gradually, piece by piece. Or one may just keep going through the process as usual until one dies and then the story really ends! The last seems to be more likely than anything else.

Gloom and Doom! You are doomed to fail and there is no way out! As usual, UG is right! *There is no way out!*

**A Post-Script: Objection from Advocates of Meditation:** I hear a strong objection from the advocates of meditation: Meditation yields more than mere awareness. It can lead to knowledge. It is a means of knowing which is beyond the ordinary, one that might result in extrasensory powers, healing, knowledge of God, of other lives, even atoms and their inner structure.

Here I am treading a totally unknown territory. I don't have to deny that there are meditative means to such types of knowledge. It's entirely possible that meditation (or prayer) clears the way for them. But since these realms of knowledge are not universal, we don't know and there are no known methods of accessing or controlling them. I am sure there are some who sincerely believe that they exist, but I have no answer to them. UG himself is believed to have had such knowledge and those powers, but, even if he did have them, I don't believe that he consciously cultivated any of them.

Please e-mail your comments, if any, to: [moorty@pacbell.net](mailto:moorty@pacbell.net)

*The End*





UG and Moorthy in Bangalore, 1990