

Albigen-Papers-4-Gurus-Unique-Systems

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FOURTH PAPER

On Gurus and Unique Systems

If there were a movement that would lead man, or his soul, to salvation, there would be no need for books or dissertations. I would simply recommend that infallible system, embrace it, and write no more. When I use the word "man" in the above sentence, I refer to man collectively, or every man. There may be a system that will lead certain men, but it does little good to write it down for the general public as a universal salvation, since it is evident that only confusion and reaction would result. The same type of reaction would occur if college texts were forced upon children in grade school. Books, religions and systems that pretend to take everyone all the way, in one universal class, are generally political.

And there is no doubt that politics has entered transcendentalism. There are two types of books to be found in the field of religion and transcendentalism which should bear watching -- they are ones which are critical and political. Those which are critical are worth the study, if they are unbiased.

The critical writer is a thinker, at least. And being in the field in which he is, he must be concerned with the Truth. He may be sharp and irritating to us if we are clinging to a vain hope instead of hoping to keep an eye open. He may show anger, and justly so. He may go overboard, and over-emphasize, or pick one religion or cult, when perhaps the majority are equally to blame. He may be motivated by personal encounters with fraudulent leaders, and he may employ a reference to incidents rather than use a strictly logical complaint. But he must not be taken idly. It is more important to read criticisms than it is to wallow in the endless volumes of literature that only encourage belief, that employ color to enhance ritual, and often extol as absolute Truth a devotion or technique that has only the external appearance of being mentally therapeutic ... to say the most.

A critic should have no cause, except to pick the straw from the grain, unless he is a political critic. That is, unless he is using criticism to campaign for recruits, by attacking the forces which have followers. The man who argues atheism is shunned as a leper, but the men who concoct new and more complicated dogmas to confuse and enslave men's minds receive praise in proportion to their success in gathering a following. The fact is that an atheist is actually a man who is protesting his own insignificance, while rejecting the meaningless and the unproven. The atheist alarms people, because he shocks them from the smugness of mass self-deception. People pursue their animal existence and pay some sort of tithe to be reassured that they have immortality. Now they are not guaranteed immortality for that tithe because they are usually told that they must, besides paying the preacher, -also believe ... no matter how hard the job of believing gets to be. So there generates in religion and cultism a feeling that is something like "keeping up with the Joneses." Everybody talks it up. Everybody presumes to presume. Going to church is the thing to do. The results are fat preachers.

Perhaps the public has not really decided to believe everything that is preached, but one thing that the public has accepted as a group is that Pollyanna is sacred. People do not wish to be doused with cold water, nor with words which have the same effect. If millions of people could be convinced that they had been effectively baited, their first reaction would be anger. This anger would be first directed at the critic who dared to shake them from their pleasant dream. If the critic is aided by the coincidence of an oppression of his listeners at hierarchical hands,

then the anger may be directed at the hierarchy, or the authorities of the era. The remarkable thing, however, is that the first and often fatal anger is directed at the light-bearer. Most of us have heard the sly hint about Lucifer, the early light-bearer. He was supposedly exiled for trying to illuminate lesser spirits.

The critic must be read, and an attempt must be made to understand the true reasons for his discontent. The politician must be exposed. The politician is a sapper of souls and a spender of time that is sacred because of its paucity. We must be alerted to the tricks of the politician, if we are to avoid being swept into servitude.

The politician remakes religion or philosophy to suit the desires of the most people. This is a sort of corrupt democracy which should not be applied to religion -- the truth is not attained by voting. Financial success and the perpetuation of the church may be attained in this manner, however. Thus the authorities, or augurs, who pretend to be able to read the will of God, if not His mind, have decided that God is fickle and is liable to change His mind.

A sin is no longer a sin. During the crusades, one of the Popes extended a carte blanche to the Templars, enabling them, for political expediency to fracture any commandment with impunity. They were given absolution in advance of the offense.

We find God and theology being warped to fit the occasion. We find that purgatory is not a timeless and dimensionless situation. It is subject to the length of a wick of candle at the altar of purgatorial souls. And the candle Itself is subject to cost.

Meat was once forbidden on fast-days. The gods have now been pacified. We can eat meat at any time. On occasion, religious leaders have inconvenienced the people to an amazing extent. We are bearers of canine teeth. Our faces are not designed for cropping grass. Our limbs have lost the skill of climbing trees for fruits and nuts (if they were originally designed for that). Yet there are some religions that endorse total vegetarianism, while protesting at the same time that we were created by a God (who gave us the canine teeth) who does not wish for us to kill other beings or eat them.

These people become fearful and over-zealous. An egg becomes a living thing. Some deny themselves fish, others rationalize for fish. Soul-degrees are haggled over, and conscience-wrestling becomes the excuse for complex, so-called "theological dissertations." And finally the hierarchical supreme court will decide that fish may not be flesh.

The rubrics of ritual are so numerous as to require volumes. Yet rubrics are as important to religion today as they were ages ago, when the mumbo-jumbo of the shaman was a closely guarded secret.

We get into the business of soul-identification. People would not pay much attention to a creed that allowed all life to be lifted up into a heaven. No one would pay ten percent of their wages to expedite a salvation that automatically happens to all animal life. So the authorities decided that a bit of cataloguing was in order. Some could see God, and some could not. Those in Limbo. Some could be prayed out of purgatory, or burned out with candles.

And the animals just did not have souls. We could not have dogs and monkeys getting the same privileges as the tithe-payers. Yet even a casual observer may encounter congenital imbeciles who have less sense than Jocko the monkey. Of course we find ourselves in much of a dither about this thing which we like to call the soul. It is like a car that is the most recent style. Everybody just has to have one. No one dares to be second-best, but we must all seek out some unfortunate being to denounce as being less equipped -- like Jocko. Now this will surely make us feel more secure, once we find out that there is someone else that is not so secure. It never dawns on us that Jocko may have it all over on us, in that his simple life may bring him closer to Truth, while our highly specialized computers of confusion-data may produce kindered hells, and errors that emanate from our fatigue and frustration.

We have observed here just a few indications of the confusion that permeates the major religions which have held sway over mankind for a long time. Wars have been fought over the identity of God's representatives, with the conviction that one was authentic and the rest were spurious. God allowed his signature to be given to the winner, even though it was written with the blood of devout unfortunates. Man was vociferous. The heavens uttered not a word.

People have become less devout -- perhaps as a result. Crusades of children are no longer available. Monks and nuns are becoming secularized. Heaven is smitten with liberalism, if we are to believe the mind-readers of God. The minds of men are no longer swayed by threat, nor are the minds of children inflamed with pious terrors. New techniques have been devised. Democracy has become the Way, and man is upon the altar as the deity. The congregation has been invited to partake of the sacred ceremonies. Deep theological arguments are avoided. The individual ego is assuaged by allowing it to get into the act.

We have fewer wars with religious motivation. The religious war at least served as an instrument of regulation which kept the theologian on his toes, and served to liquidate movements which had grown too monolithic or cruel. Today, however, we have a growing synthesis of all the grand old failures. They are flocking together and want to be recognized as a way of life. No longer touting their singularity, or their solitary efficacy, they now cling to the shred of hope that they might survive in a socialistic world as an order-promoting agency.

New "isms" and religions, coming up out of the ashes of the old -- meaning new concoctions and variations -- have taken the cue. They do not criticize. Nobody criticizes. People proudly assert that they are above the odious practice of talking about religion.

Thus we have reasons for rejecting nearly everything until we can substantiate things for ourselves. It is not enough to have a child's devotion when it comes to religion. Children of all religions are devoted. Only the philosopher who has endured the disillusionment of several "isms" will fully understand this need for a priori rejection. Each time the philosopher has changed temples he may have done so with a new refreshing vigor emanating from the conviction that he has found the end of the rainbow. Each time he has lived long enough to be disillusioned.

It is then that we come to realize that we did something too hurriedly. We may have purchased that which looked like a beautiful new coat, when in reality it was just an old coat made over. The fact that it is usually tailored to fit the new wearer does not arouse the buyer's suspicion.

We find Christianity with its Hell and half-hells to be Godless or not commensurate with our ideas or propositions concerning God. We find God no longer just by human standards, and while admitting that God may have His own standards (perhaps totally incomprehensible), we nevertheless also realize that any other than human standards are not comprehensible. We realize that the burden of proof lies in almighty hands, not human hands, so that if there are other standards, man cannot be held to account for not understanding them. For man has learned something about himself. He is finite. He has no hopes of miracles that might enable a finite man to converse with transcendental gods or beings, with the assurance that his senses are not playing tricks on him.

So man looked around. The Christian religion became diversified, and various new ideas were added, such as fatalism. Fatalism, or predestination seemed to answer some of the unanswered questions. But we know that answering questions is not enough. For instance, we might proclaim a kingdom of gnomes or angels, and scrupulously answer every question about details adroitly spun from our imagination. Proving the existence of the gnomes and angels would be overlooked in the process of examining a portrait of possibility. And possibility is later confused with probability. And then when certainty replaces probability, we have the necessary fanatics for a new religion.

Man's desire to improve on Divine Justice resulted in the theory of reincarnation. The ancient theory of an angry God disappeared in the Orient long before the scientifically advanced Westerners gave the second appraisal to Christianity. Even now, the theory of reincarnation has gained only a slight foothold in the West.

For the Western man, flaccid tolerance seems to have overshadowed any dynamic curiosity that might exist. This tolerance can only be a sign of weakness, as it is a tolerance of ignorance and deception. The Christian hierarchy in their previous refusal to compromise, was at least respected for its vitality, even if that vitality was trapped in dogmatic assumptions. The modern Christian hierarchy has relented because the peasants are no longer ignorant, uneducated, or stirred by colorful stories. The peasant's descendants no longer care if the hierarchy decrees or utters curses ex-cathedra. The new breed of peasant reasons that you cannot reason with an unreasonable God. Regardless of the possibly sublime language or motivation of God, the peasant only knows the language of the peasant.

It is likely that the hierarchies of the sundry Christian sects have decided that they have merchandise no longer sellable. The Catholics tried for several hundred years to deny the heliocentric system in order to maintain a particular interpretation of the bible, and to maintain the infallibility of the pope. The telescope -- a very simple device -- threw the chains of ignorance aside, and threw a doubt upon the whole pretensive system of authority.

Since each church has a window, and the window is glass, a truce has been called. There is a new approach to the business of religious competition. Each may decorate its window with any variations that might attract the eye of the passersby, but it must not damn the efforts of the others.

The word has gone out to protect all the hucksters. They are doing a good service. They march for noble causes, and keep the neighborhood children from growing up to be convicts. They promote civil obedience and passiveness. But they do not mount any crusades to liberate man from his ignorance. Ignorance of man is their asset, and the experience of several hundred years has taught the priests that any whittling away of the ignorance of the peasants may cause reverberations in the membership -- if not in the payroll.

We must beware of the movements that proclaim their alliance to the syndicate with such admonitions as "There is truth in all movements," and "Different religions suit the difference in need of peoples."

The brave theologians are all gone. Perhaps Martin Luther was the last brave man, and for all that we know, his bravery may long since have been forgotten. Brave men are born from the necessity for an answer to tyranny or some similarly impossible situation. In those days the cross was the general, and the sword was its lieutenant. Now the cross has no rank at all. The sword has it for a hireling. The church has offered to be a civil servant. The church cannot live as an entity without a state charter and the man who issues state-charters is a politician. The state secretary will decide that which is a religion, and that which is not. And he usually decides that the accepted, or well-rooted religions, shall be the ones that shall have a charter. Let God bow down or lose his share of the tax-money.

If we were to believe in a devil, or enemy to the soul of man -- we might view the situation with alarm.

An interesting note is the matter of faith as a factor in religion. The exhortation to have faith to many seekers, seems like the lament of a hopeless lover about to lose his mate.

It is true that the devotees of almost every religion encounter the word "faith" somewhere in their career. I wonder at the need to exhort men to have faith. Is the religion in question so lacking in appeal, intrinsic value or in evident virtues that one must be exhorted and reminded to believe, or that we must constantly remind ourselves that we must be in an accepting frame of mind?

Most Christian schools teach that believing must come before knowing. But if this believing is nothing more than prolonged self-hypnosis -- how can we be certain that the knowing is not also a result of auto-suggestion?

Man cannot be damned for doubting, if man lays his existence into the hands of a creator. If man believes that he was created by God, there then must be a good reason for the intellect that hesitates, doubts, dares or chooses to reject.

This is one of the absurd positions of the Christian hierarchy. What sort of theology is it that makes us creatures fashioned by a personal supreme being, Who, after fashioning us as He is supposed to have done, with free will, and an obligation to choose Him and endorse Him or be forever lost -- at the same time denies us the right to doubt and consequently choose?

In other words, we have freedom of choice as long as we do not choose anything but Christian recommendations. We have free will, but if we do not heed mysterious and unproven demands, we shall become eternal, cosmic, criminals.

The emphasis of believing lies most heavily upon the Christian and Mohammedan religions. Another thing that marks the teaching of both is the exaltation of a man as a Saviour or Prophet, and the further demand that belief in this man is necessary to spiritual survival.

We know of course that both of these religions presumes the other to be false. Both used the sword. And strangely enough, both survived the long confrontation with each other. If God is interested in either geography or membership, He did not give the human race much of a clue as to which of the two was His chosen one, and which was consequently the liar and betrayer of man's trust.

The Eastern religions demonstrate themselves to be generally, systems of self-betterment, enlightenment, or liberation. However many of them, if not the most of them, employ the "Master" idea, and the belief in total submission to a human master. This has the same conflict with common sense that the requirements for "belief" in dogma has.

This is no attack upon faith. Many things may well have been created or recreated by faith. And it is possible that most of the dynamic nature of faith has not yet been fathomed. But it must be emphasized that the mechanism of faith is not a guarantee of wisdom, and that we must be on the alert for any and all movements that demand it in preference to sincere searching.

Likewise, when we fasten ourselves to a "Master," we preclude that all that is to be learned shall emanate from the bounty of this man. This does not mean that there are or have not been eminent men who have walked upon the earth. It means that when a man demands total servitude and obedience, he may either be something very special, or he may simply be a hypnotist.

And we have no evidence that entering the valley of death under a spell of hypnosis is any more efficacious than entering it as just an honest and ignorant human being.

CULTS AND OTHER SYSTEMS

All of the movements that concern us in this work were the result of questions about the following items, and they should be judged by their answers that ably or poorly enlighten us about the same question-items.

1. The nature of man, especially the inner man.
2. Life before birth.
3. Life after death.

4. Relation of man to nature, the world and the visible cosmos.

5. Relation of man to the Absolute.

Most people, and this includes philosophers as well as humble layseekers, put the cart before the horse and proceed to try to understand the universe, or life after death, before understanding first, their own nature, and how they came to be here. The following are keys in analyzing "isms":

a. Of the many "isms" that take on the tasks of explaining any of the above five items, we determine to gauge for the least unlikely, or those nearer to the truth.

b. We take note of the avatar or other original exponent of the "ism", and we look for personal inspiration, and perhaps miraculous evidence of his being a superior and hence wiser being.

c. We study writings of the "isms" for contradictions.

d. We look for "isms" that explain more phenomena than other "isms".

e. We pay heed to "isms" that appeal to our Intuition.

f. We watch all "isms" for most common factors, in the business of equating that some truth must accompany concurrence by a number of faiths or movements.

So we look for a workable system or discipline, superior to other disciplines. I would like to take some of the movements that are in a sense esoteric and in a sense unconventional or of lesser popularity than the organized religions. In regard to Item One, which deals with man's knowledge of himself, we have already heard from Psychology and Psychiatry. The Third Paper also dealt with principle religious ideas, and I will try to discuss the offerings of movements not discussed in the Third Paper.

When we approach these more or less esoteric groups such as Zen, yoga, Rosicrucianism, Theosophy, Kabbalism, various forms of thaumaturgy, and predictive systems such as Astrology and numerology, we find that they fall into categories as far as their primary function is concerned. These are:

THE SYSTEMS

Mechanical means to a Spiritual or Truth-bringing end. (Joining the right church, whirling the right prayer wheel, prayers or magic.) Physical means to a Spiritual or Truth-bringing end. (Pilgrimages, praying, yoga exercises, fasting, physical mortification or punishment in the hope of spiritual gain.) Mental means to a Spiritual or Truth-bringing end. (Meditational exercises as produced by many cults, raja yoga routines, concentration upon supposed spiritual centers in the body, analytical approach to religion or the analytical conceit that man can by solving the definition of matter automatically find the secret nature of that which caused matter. Or any system that postulates that our finite mind, possesses or will possess the breadth of scope to evaluate all problems, and the concomitant infallible faculties that would make that mind's conclusions dependable.) Direct union with the Spiritual end or Truth, (Dying-while-living techniques, techniques for Satori or Enlightenment. Or accounts of experiences of those who have died medically, and regained consciousness.) We know that most movements encompass several of these four systems. So it is good to know the degree of thoroughness with which these movements satisfy our enquiry.

Naturally I am not implying that the purpose of any movement should be the satisfaction of enquiry, because our enquiry is again being carried out with that same finite mind with its weaknesses, but we still can employ some yardsticks to save us decades of time. Our enquiry must be first tempered with another faculty besides our analytical sense, or else we will be perennially chasing our tail.

YOGA

Yoga is a wide word. Under the various yogic systems we find all four paths or means. It would be good at this point to note that these four systems are all presumptive of a Spiritual nature for man, or presumptive of man's ability to learn or reach the Truth. We might say that all philosophic systems herein discussed imply that there is at least an inadequacy of state of being as far as this present life is concerned, or an inadequacy of our ability to properly appreciate the state of being now experienced.

This book presumes, in other words, that there is hope for man, and that it is possible to better understand both the state we now experience, and that it is not unreasonable to contemplate future states. In making this notation, I am sidestepping a lot of materialistic thinking and writings, but as possibly explained previously, if man is limited to a materialistic existence, without any aspirations for immortality tolerated, then writing any manner of books, (except possibly hedonistic books) would surely be taking up time when we might be vegetating.

Our chief aim in this paper is to somehow indicate the diverse paths or metaphysical directions that result from the many unanswered questions. The many questions that possibly result from diverse unexplained phenomena, as well as diverse desires and elaborate hopes, somehow become all tangled up, and the different paths or systems somehow become all tangled up by trying, it would seem, to cure all with one system. So that we find a religion or a cult springing up, pronouncing its findings as being all that is necessary to bring man to a condition where he will not need to question any more.

We hear of hatha yoga, which is somehow a yoga of health. The main argument of hatha yoga is not a pretence that by various postures a body can be made immortal, but that if we wish to progress in any higher enterprise, we must first have a healthy body. Some teachers of hatha yoga slyly hint but never prove that some yogis live for several hundred years. This was one of the themes in the book *Lost Horizon*. Various books on yoga have hinted at marvelous phenomena performed by yogis, such as bi-location, astral-projection, dematerialization and rematerialization, projection of the body, and quite a repertoire of magic.

It is worth noting that most of these books came out in the eighteen hundreds or very early in this century. Colonel Olcott and Blavatsky may have stimulated the public's interest in this type of phenomena by their works, and caused lesser authors to try their hand at even more sensationalistic fiction and half-fiction.

Blavatsky wrote the *Secret Doctrine* and *Isis Unveiled*, and other books. These two are encyclopedias of occultism. If Blavatsky ever recommended a system, I failed to find it in either book, or in the *Voice of Silence*. I get the impression that Blavatsky believed that gurus or avatars were the only ladder to wisdom or Spiritual ends. And since Madame Blavatsky never gave us the address or phone number of any of these gurus, we were left with her guidance alone, and her scriptural interpretation of the words. She was an admitted amanuensis.

The movement that resulted from Blavatsky's efforts is known as Theosophy. Its derivation implies that it is a god-science. Blavatsky's gods are of human origin. She distinguishes them from the Absolute or universal mind. Theosophy maintains that there is a spiritual evolution of men toward godhood, which involves such levels as adept, master and bodisattva. There is supposedly no limit to the height to which these levels extend.

Theosophy is a very worthy work in that it inspires people to look deeper into the nature of things. Theosophy is commendable in that it attempts to help man to understand himself, before making him submit to wild dogmas. Many of Blavatsky's writings betray an attempt to save the student some time by debunking some of the less meritable systems to which we are exposed. She spends many chapters explaining the origin of matter from non-matter, and in explaining the evolution of primordial atoms into humans, and the evolution of the planetary systems.

She does however, leave little hope for the neophyte-seeker. She gives no system, except to advise the general pursuit of theosophical wisdom, and the search for masters or avatars. Perhaps this omission (of a system) is a passive gesture of honesty, because we receive the hint that man progresses only in the appointed hour, and for man to try to accelerate his development too prematurely would be foolish -- according to Blavatsky.

Let us look at the manner in which Theosophy answers the questions listed at the beginning of this chapter.

Item 1. The nature of man. Theosophy explains man as a reincarnating, evolving, immortal being. But it does not explain how we may prove this to ourselves. It consequently utters a most detailed concept to answer Items 2, 3, and 4 -- but it leaves the gap of mystery about the highest form of god-man, and about the Absolute or the universal mind (Item 5).

And as I mentioned before, in regard to the systems, It does not really qualify as a system. Theosophy seems to be about the business of synthesizing religions, and looking into them for their common factors. It is weak in giving us an invisible avatar, saviour or guru.

Theosophy has received considerable criticism by many pseudo-logical minds who claimed Blavatsky's writings were filled with inconsistencies. I must also confess that I did not check every foreign reference or bibliography and translate it again to double-check her, but I did agree with most of her general criticisms of other movements, even though I felt that she may have allowed her own intense personality to color some of her rhetoric.

Theosophy flourished for a while, and I believe now that it is waning, even though there is an increase in interest in occultism. This waning is, I think, attributable to its lack of any system or detailed blue-print for becoming a master or adept, and attributable to its lack of any sensationalistic advertising, such as is employed by other movements. In my estimation, the books of Blavatsky are some of the most valuable handbooks that a student of esotericism might own.

While Blavatsky's mentor or guru appeared to her in his astral form, most schools of yoga recognize only a living guru or master. While hatha yoga promises a healthy body, in which to meditate, Krya yoga promises a system of mental means to a spiritual ends. Krya yoga is a system of meditation upon nerve centers or chakras, as well as concentration in a prescribed manner to attain physical objectives. Raja yoga and Krya yoga are often confused. Some Indian systems employ Krya and raja techniques without ever mentioning the word yoga.

It might be better if we referred to both as Mental Yoga or Mental disciplines. Steiner's Rosicrucianism is a Christian form of Mental yoga. Steiner's system engenders the concentration upon the chakras.

SRF or Self Realization Fellowship, belongs to the Krya yoga or Mental yoga class. With the death of Yogananda, it appears to have changed from a guru-enlightened movement to just a plain movement.

The Vedanta movement is a similar movement. In it there are still to be found living gurus, who are the spiritual descendants of Ramakrishna.

These last three movements are some of the more "respectable" groups that practice Mental yoga. There are at least a hundred more of the same type, but their origin is recent, and the honesty of some is questionable.

The living-guru systems are a nebulous chain. Mental yoga systems do not always promise Satori or enlightenment, but refer at times to Samahdi and Moksa. As has been pointed out before, exotic words like Satori, Samahdi and Moksa may have a definite, limited intended meaning, or they may have all of the unlimited meanings that American and peasant-hindu minds can conjure up. Satori bears more the connotation of final liberation, while Samahdi is used to determine the point at which the yoga-attention joins the object of his meditation.

The mental yoga systems presuppose that man must first experience a change of being before being able to experience Moksa, or deliverance from the wheel of illusion. So, perhaps very shrewdly, most of the systems of mental yoga introduced into the Western world, emphasize yoga as being a discipline of change, without ever explaining the end-result of the business of being changed.

I am not opposed to the idea of change. I realize that our being must go through much catharsis in order to get rid of erroneous thinking. If nothing else, we are to advance upon a Truth-searching drive.

But many good people, also sensing this need for a change of being, lazily and blindly seize upon any cult or turbaned guru that promises a change of being. Most of these gurus, when questioned about end-results, refer you to their guru, or quotations from the predecessor. We obtain a mental cartoon of a staircase with a guru on each step, pointing to the one above him.

I observe sometimes with amazement, that that which the enquiring mind finds satisfying is too often a mere seat in the shadow of pretention. Nearly all the cults in this country are maintained by a solid upper layer of professional people, and a low proportion of working-class people. We find doctors, lawyers and scientists paying humble tribute to an illiterate swami who in turn has little philosophy outside of a sort of catechism of his own particular sect.

I visited the Vedanta temple in Hollywood, and met the Swami in charge. His name I believe was Probhavananda. Probhavananda, was a dignified, quiet, priest-like man. He was however, living in the shadow of his guru, and eating from the table prepared by a man dead quite a few years -- one Ramakrishna.

Ramakrishna was not a dignified or priest-like man, judging from his pictures. We all know that external appearances are not dependable. In picking a man who has attained spiritual enlightenment, but on the other hand, spiritual enlightenment leaves its mark upon the recipient, and there are consequently traits that would cause us to doubt spiritual enlightenment for a particular possessor of such traits.

Ramakrishna looks wild and almost idiotic in the picture of him in the Vedanta temple. Probhavananda looks serene and priest-like. Those in search of advice and paternalism, might well be inspired by Probhavananda. But the swami points upward to Ramakrishna, and the latter is deified as a sort of avatar. Ramakrishna, a figure to be deified and meditated upon, had a negative effect upon me. I am sure that he would never have been deified in the United States, nor have ever received a fraction of the welcome that Yogananda or Probhavananda have received.

Ramakrishna was chosen in India. And in India, some gurus are chosen out of emotion. It is good to note that at this point that Ouspensky indicates that Man number two, (second from the bottom) is the emotionally oriented man. If you read the accounts of some of the young yogis in their early encounters with their "Masters," and listen to accounts of Europeans and Americans who have witnessed much of India's spiritual procedure, we find that the reason a young neophyte in India chooses a particular Master is because of love. Now we can confuse this love with intuition, which is often the projection which we are intended to seize upon as the meaning of the word love in these instances. However we must also bear in mind the mores and general philosophy of India, in which, despite emancipating laws, the female is still thought of as inferior, and the male to be superior. A young mind, of homosexual inclination, in a country that looks kindly upon homosexuality, might well also be inclined to worship the male godlike human so deified by his imagination.

This deduction has been proven true in some cases recently investigated by two Americans to whom I talked concerning one of the gurus who now holds a fairly high place in the minds of the American minds. The guru in question managed to find himself and his movement listed in Life Magazine as the head of one of the more popular movements. But this guru had about him, in India, disciples that not only worshipped the feet of their guru, but the body wastes of the guru also. Of course when this guru comes to the United States, he does not get this sort of adoration he is satisfied with our money and publicity. We fail to go back a step and realize, that were it not for this abject attention by the native disciples in India with their blatant, nauseous masochism, or eroticism his popularity would never have grown beyond the borders of India.

Of course the perennial optimist (or rationalist for effortless and possibly tantric salvation) will indicate that perhaps underneath all of this "natural man" there is a duality wherein atavism and avatarism, live side by side. So I must leave the observation for what it is worth, having in mind only the purpose of looking for reasons for

the growth of cults, and hence qualifications; for making cults valid or invalid.

To get back to Ramakrishna, he was not in a sense the top-guru. The stories about his career tell us that he had gurus of his own. The man who initiated him into mental yoga is rarely mentioned. Ramakrishna had been worshipping another goddess, when this man happened to witness Ramakrishna's limitation and introduced him to the higher yoga -- kṛyā yoga or mind-chakra meditation. About this life-story are woven many other stories to give it wonderment and which form the body of the Ramakrishna movement.

The Ramakrishna movement, and the SRF movement are mostly pious systems of hero-worship.

We can take the kernel out, which is chakra-concentration, and forget all about Ramakrishna, Yogananda, Lahiri Mahasaya, or any of the rest. In SRF, I find the stories that embellished the movement to be more fantastic. In SRF there are hints of the ever-living avatars. Yogananda hints of having met Babuji once or twice. There are tales of golden cities created for the entertainment of adepts, and of the translation of the "Masters." Also stories of levitation and teleportation.

The main criticisms of these movements is not their outward structure, or possible internal inconsistencies. The main criticism for them is that their yoga-function, is like a rope that would hold the ship to the shore, or a rope keeping heaven in contact with earth, apparently has anchorage at neither end. But, rather seems to be a system unconcerned with a valid foundation, and negligent of ultimate aspiration. They are systems that go nowhere. If concentration upon a plexus makes a better artisan, or poet, or mathematician out of you, then your interest is in being such not being a changed being with a scheduled aim for changing. If any yoga system brings you peace of mind, and peace of mind is what you want, then you are getting what you pay for. And cult lessons may well be cheaper than tranquilizers. However, if your objective is the understanding of the relation of Man to the Absolute, or even the understanding of postmortem existence, then we will not linger too long under the influence of tranquilizers.

We now come to Rosicrucianism. There are several schools of Rosicrucians. In the investigation of Rosicrucianism we encounter from the first the obstinate insistence of a mythical heritage.

I use the word mythical because most Rosicrucian movements obstinately protest that they have a beginning which they are both unwilling and unable to trace. The heroes in the stories of Rosicrucianism are "Elders" or "Elder Brothers," whose secret hideouts are somewhere in Central Europe ... why Central Europe?

We are reminded of some of the stories about the avatars and adepts mentioned in yoga-literature, who live to be several hundred years of age. This appeals to people whose instinct for survival leads them to believe that immortality must of a necessity include the body.

Rationalization, like temptation, comes to the human mind in everchanging form. This writing largely appeals to people who are somehow dissatisfied with organized religion and the paths thereof. If you ask an occultist, or plain cultist for his reasons for being a member of the cult and for abandoning perhaps the church of his ancestors, he will give you fairly reasonable answers. He will generally point out what he considers to be childish or absurd tenets in the faith of his ancestors. But when he joins the cult in question, he begins to practice even more absurd rituals, and relays to the listener even more childish dogma than that which enthralled his forebearers in the organized religion.

I would like to take a moment here to indicate that in many movements we will find absurdities that should be explained by the promoters of the particular cult, or eliminated. The first yardstick that we apply to any movement is simple truth, and when our intuition tells us that this simple truth may be twisted or prostituted, then there is no further reason for following such a cult.

I can see no reason for the emphasis on fantastic claims that are always impossible to validate. Many discerning minds have abandoned Christianity because they could not believe that Jesus was divine. They may have come to this conclusion after studying Josephus, and personally translating the New Testament. Yet after doing all that work, they will trot out and join a cult and accept its tenets merely because this new movement promises a form of immortality that appeals to them, or for even lesser reasons.

This may seem inconsequential -- this business of lamenting the failure of the seeker in his second try for the Truth. However the purpose of this writing is to try to help the people on the ladder, whether it be the second or third rung, or attempt. It may well be a wonderful thing to rebel against the almost concrete restrictions of hereditary religious thinking, but it will do us absolutely no good to rebel if we do not have, or determine to have a discernment.

It seems that every movement wants to be rooted in antiquity. This engenders that the modern mind is somehow feeble, and that men were either very wise or very holy back in antiquity, and in those days were able to meet saviours, avatars, and master-gurus face to face. This must be recognized as an evident bit of rationalization. In such rationalization we are clinging to "authority" by virtue of our own mental fatigue.

Capitalizing on our mental fatigue, and love of authority, many new cults inculcate bizarre history into their philosophy -- almost to a point where the fantastic elements are more emphasized than factual ones.

We find that different Rosicrucian orders make different claims. One group spends fabulous sums on advertising, leading us to believe that they believe that advertising brings proportional business returns. The claims in some of these ads alone are enough to throw a shadow on their claims to honesty, much less any addiction for Truth. The Encyclopedia Britannica lists some of the claims of the Rosicrucian order. One is that their arcane wisdom is the result of a pilgrimage to the East by one Christian Rosenkreuz in the fifteenth century. The encyclopedia also points out that there is no supporting evidence for this claim.

There is evidence that in the eighteenth century there were many writers who manifested dissatisfaction with the doctrines preached in their time. Luther's intrepidity led other minds to speak out. Because of violent repressive measures practiced by ecclesiastical powers in those days, secrecy became a requirement for survival, especially if your philosophy ran counter to these authorities. However, in later years the bloody power of the church was wrested from the church of Rome. And yet the secrecy continued.

There is no need to have secret orders now, but secrecy gives us a sort of foetus-complex. It is possible that many political coteries possessed and needed to possess rules of secrecy. The fact that they were both religious and political complicated the material that was kept secret. We must surmise that this material, passed on to followers in secret was of a rebellious and theological nature. It is natural that in any rebellion against Rome, the promoters of rebellion would use more ancient authority, or more exotic authority to replace the Roman church in the minds of man.

Once the church of Rome began to crumble from different schisms, and was relieved of the scourge and sword, the secret lodges lost some of their reasons for existing. However no entity gives up its life, once it begins to function. I surmise that many of the secret societies discovered that they could maintain their life after the politicians deserted them, by encouraging the type of people who love secrecy for the sake of secrecy. How many adults among us are still children. I have been to encampments of cults, where the members seemed only to know that they had a secret and were part of a secret organization. The Rosicrucians in some instances are so secret that they do not give out the names of brother-Rosicrucians even to members.

My reaction to this is that it is a protective device not intended to protect the individual members from pests as much as to protect the mother lodge from the results of inter-communication of members.

Another claim that is occasionally employed by movements is -the hidden manuscript trick. How often have we heard this. God gave so-and-so tablets of gold, with the law written in His handwriting. Another found a manuscript giving all the secrets of life. However when we ask to see these heavenly apports, we are told that something happened to them. The gods were displeased and took them back, like petty, resentful playmates. Or the manuscript is kept in the temple and is only available to the higher adepts who have paid in for twenty years.

We proceed now perhaps from the trivial external appearances of Rosicrucianism to the inner core of their teachings. In doing so we abridge a few bales of lessons and mandami.

What do they really have to offer? As far as I can see, one group offers a symbolological philosophy and a promise of meeting a Master in his astral form.

As for the symbology, it might be valuable if you need something to occupy your mind. But again, why do adults need complexity when simplicity is possible in the exposition of ideas. I am reminded of Nostrodaus' prophesies, in which we find prophesies that concern an eagle, or a lion or a symbol such as the crescent. Of course we immediately conclude that he means Islam, when he speaks of the crescent, but in the event that the prediction does not fit Islam, then we can never accuse him of being in error. For all that we know, he may well have been referring to anything or anyone else. The book of Revelations is filled with symbols, and I have never heard Revelations explained, in such manner as to give a composite picture wherein all of the symbols have incontroversial interrelation and meaning. Revelations has been used, as a result, in a very uncharitable manner by many zealots who occupy "authoritative" places in theological circles. Revelations has become a cudgel.

Let us now get to the matter of the living master. Or master in astral form. I have over a period of thirty years, talked to every Rosicrucian who would talk to me about the matter. And most of them were frank. None but one had witnessed the "Astral Master." The one who had was an old lady who had spent her whole life in the movement.

She said that he allowed her only three questions, and she only saw him once. There was no elaboration on the answering. He gave her a simple answer of "No." And that was all she had.

There is at least one Rosicrucian group that protests that it does not charge. I visited the grounds which evidently is the main center for this group in the United States. This is in Oceanside, California. These are followers of Max Heindel. I visited the place more than twenty years ago, and it may have been changed since then. In the main reception room stood a table with some books on it. I asked about the price, and the lady in charge said they had no charges, but that I could donate something in return for any books I might like to have. I took their Cosmo-Conception with me.

I told the lady that I would like to communicate with them, since they told me that their instructions were free. When I returned to Ohio, and wrote the letter as directed by the same lady, I never received an answer.

The book Cosmo-Conception, pretty well explains that which they are about. As in some forms of spiritualism, they believe in subtle physical vehicles, such-as the astral body, and they believe in reincarnation.

Of all the American forms of Rosicrucianism, this is the only group that I think I would care to look into further. I know very little about them because they did not correspond with me -- but I have never seen them advertise, so I feel that they are not spending their supporters' money on pulp-advertising.

There is yet another group which is very select, and it is located in Pennsylvania. It seems to be run from behind a cash-register. In my communications with them, they had things to sell, but no explanations.

Rudolph Steiner founded a school of Rosicrucianism in Germany, and wrote a series of books. Steiner is widely read in this country, and I am somewhat surprised that someone has not by now commercialized his name. If a student wished to get a fair idea of Rosicrucianism without spending too much time and money on lessons, he might acquire some of Steiner's books. (I am not endorsing Steiner or Rosicrucianism by that remark, but merely making an observation for the benefit of any researcher).

One book in particular, brings you to the objectives of Steiner's Rosicrucianism, -- Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and its Attainment. This book was published in 1947, in London. His signature is appended to the preface of 1918. In this preface he refers to "anthroposophical spiritual science", in discussing his own work. This gives us an inkling about the trend in human thinking that draws mankind into the fold of cults that might be of pseudo-scientific origins.

It is evident that mankind, or at least the better educated segment thereof, is somewhat tired of the childish fantasyland of threatening devils, and angels with wands, all supervised by a very sick (by human standards, I'll agree) God that incendiarises any microscopic human that makes the wrong guess.

It is possible that this type of anthroposophy as seen in Rosicrucianism and other yogic cults, is not a long submerged Truth at last revealed, but a creation of new fantasy, palatable to a hungry mouth with a bad taste therein from former digestion.

In the beginning of this chapter, I have listed alphabetically, a series of keys to gauge any "ism" that we might be investigating. It might be good to list a few of the keys that we should avoid.

- A. Does it lessen your fear or raise your hopes by means of concept-building?
- B. Does it hint of sensual license?
- C. Is it cheaper to subscribe to, or to follow? Is it venal, or more expensive, and are you deluded to thinking that it, being select and consequently more expensive, is only for financially successful people (perfected men) meaning the select?
- D. Does it have a power structure that may bring you to power some day?
- E. Does it appeal to any other vanity?
- F. Did you join it because you were too tired to go on looking?

Philosophic movements have failed to replace Christianity, because for all of our education, we are still like cave-men grovelling in the sand at the sound of thunder. We are still waiting for a sign or a Messiah. We refuse to have the sense to simply start looking and working, while applying simple yardsticks to the business of investigating.

People like Blavatsky and Annie Besant saw that mankind might respond to a new Messiah, and were accused of attempting to endow Krishnamurti with divinity. Aleister Crowley and Gurdjieff tried to endow themselves.

Gradualizations of Eastern thought did manage to make a pretty sound and lasting foothold in Western thinking. As a result of these we have Mary Baker Eddy, who kept Christianity, but inculcated in it the idea of Universal Mind, and the potency of man's mind. Universal Mind is similar to that which is understood as Brahman. Steiner also kept Christ, and spent much of his time building an image of Christ. Swedenburg retained Christ while formulating a new Jerusalem along esoteric lines.

The gradualization was not quick enough for the peasants of Europe. Under communism they threw out many nauseous peccadilloes, and shook the very dogmas that supported the church.

We are entering into a new era, and I am not convinced that it is good. It is the era of the Man-God. From many Gods, to One-God, to Man-God. The Man-God era was not created by communism. However the followers and promoters of both communism and the Man-God theory have common-ground as a foundation for the structure of their thinking. The communist is weary of being exploited by the state powers that are reinforced and justified by a venal church. Mysticism and metaphysics find too many followers weary of the persecution of common-sense postulates by organized religion. Organized Christianity, while professing to believe in One-God, has fractured itself, until its polymorphousness is not much different from polytheism. Whenever tithes are the rule of the church, ten men in the congregation should support a minister. So every minister is inclined to create a schism and look for ten members.

These ministers place themselves above their objective, which is God, and they took hurry along the Man-God trend. Another trend is for the Christian world to produce healers, rather than for a preacher to lead a group of men in the studies that might lead to wisdom, or to lead a group in meditation that might bring them to a better mental condition, or change of being. In this respect, most healers become expeditors of the Man-God concept.

Nearly all of the yogic movements are conducive to Man-God production. The master-cela relationship in some Raj-yoga groups plainly states that the only chain the cela has to immortality is the link he has with his Master.

Somehow, I believe that most yogic systems are emanations from the Krishna movement which is older than Christianity, and may have suffered or enjoyed a sort of evolution of its own.

The Krishna movement is still alive, but it may have changed a bit or evolved into other schisms also, when some observers took the courage to point out the inexorable fate of a bald-headed man, or to note that the hair goes up in smoke with the body on the funeral pyre.

The tuft of hair has since been replaced by things more subtle, and more difficult to evaluate, such as the astral cord, the sound current, or the fixing of the master in the pineal chakra, so that we will have his picture with us after death, and thus be able to recognize him.

Rosicrucianism, while borrowing much from the East, failed to bring the concept of the Master-chain with it. It could only have been out of fear of massive reaction from a Christian-controlled society that claims Christ is its living master. And if this is true, or if it is reasonable to accept the Master-chain concept as being a valid means to immortality, then Rosicrucianism is entering into a compromise rather than bravely bringing out a new system of thinking.

With the advent of the Man-God cults, we fail to observe that they may well appeal to our vanity to the point where our heads are turned. That man is finally becoming more radical, and appealing to man, is very commendable. However, before we legislate, or indulge in too much concept-building we must be aware of our vanity.

The fact that mankind may well have created most of his gods, and other entities, does not exclude the existence of real gods or entities, nor does it make him a creator of any merit. When man looks upon himself, witnesses his own unsureness, his finite and relative nature, then it behooves him to double-check anything traceable to human creation. It has been hinted that the materializations that occur in a medium's cabinet are human creations, with or without the help of other entities. If this is possible, then the astral master, or the guardian of the threshold might bear a second glance, if for no other reason than to check ourselves for their origin. Eliphas Levi, the expert on magic, tells us that he suspects all of the phantoms that he produced may well have been mental creations.

Let us summarize or evaluate Rosicrucianism according to the five possible functions:

About the nature of man, Rosicrucianism offers a concept. About life before birth,-the theory of Reincarnation. About life after death,-the theory of reincarnation. Relation to nature,-vague, nothing definite. Relation of man to the Absolute. No tie. In response to the tests:

(a.) Subject to your judgement, and lengthy comparisons.

(b.) No avatar, or outstanding original prophet.

(c,d.) This would be a lengthy undertaking, as the writings are not scientific.

(e.) There are things about it that appeal to our intuition, but some of the very foundations of Rosicrucianism does not.

(f.) It has common denominators with eastern religions.

(g.) It does usually extend a discipline, and lays claim to efficacy for the system in relation to spiritual growth.

Let us take each cult, and each movement and ask ourselves these same questions about the functioning of the movement, apply the tests and test it with the keys A, B, C, D, E, and F.

I do not wish to imply that this is a complete system of evaluation. You may wish to add a few keys of your own, since the reasons for a person's joining of a movement are not six alone. This will give you some idea of the weak spots in any movement, and may help you decide the direction in which you wish to apply yourself.

MAGIC

The world of magic comes under the first of the systems -- those which use mechanical means. This is not a field to be ridiculed because it seems to be rooted in things tangible or materialistic. Under the many categories of magic we find scientific results, once the unknown processes are understood.

Hypnosis and mesmerism were once in the province of magic. But there is no better lever than hypnosis to understand the human mind. The herb of the medicine man often becomes the life-saving drug for those who ridiculed the medicine men.

Much magic is rooted in intuitional procedures, so completely intuitional that there would be no logical way to explain the rituals that are used to bring about predicted results.

We might say that Magic is in many cases the sciences or ability that goes directly to nature for the understanding of nature, rather than an aloof, perhaps impossible, appraisal with rubber gloves and scalpel.

Magic, has one great stumbling block. It can become an endless trip to fantasyland. Any many of the so-called discoveries of deeper magic have never been properly explained.

Let us take some of the cases. Benvenuto Cellini relates one in his autobiography. The priest was able to bring up. literally, legions of demons. It is difficult to believe that the priest would be interested in gold alone, and Cellini would be interested in seduction alone. There seemed to be no great interest into the nature and origin of these beings. All we know about them is that they were very powerful, that they (or at least the speaker among them) liked virgin boys, and that all of them had an aversion for asafoetida.

Eliphas Levi, perhaps the foremost author on Magic, leads us to believe that magic may well be the utilization of mechanical levers to facilitate mental creativity. It is said that a lifetime of magical studies and exercises did not bring him happiness, and he supposedly rejoined the Catholic church later in life.

The life of Aleister Crowley, is another instance of a very unhappy man. A life that began perhaps as an earnest drive into high magic, soon became mixed with drugs and sex. His historians indicate that his work degenerated quickly into a combination of nature-worship and witchcraft. And to all appearances, most of the rituals were sex-sessions, stimulated by drugs.

The magus should never allow himself to be absorbed into the experiment. We find magic to have been perhaps a factor in older religions, that spelled for those religions, permanence or transience. We find the Jews gaining power with the rod of Aaron (which ate the snakes from the rods of the Egyptians.) We find the magic of the apostle Peter frustrating the levitations of the magician Simon.

Miracles come under the heading of magic, and we find that almost every major religion finds it necessary to list miracles performed by its members at one time or another.

Miracles have been somehow accepted as the external form of divine contact on the part of the practitioner. If we were to remove the changing of the wine at the wedding feast, the raising of Lazarus, the feeding of the multitude on insufficient bread and fish, and the casting out of devils -- the message of Love may never have gained the footing that it did,,nor would Jesus have gained the stature of Savior.

There are limitations to magic, however, and this fact or phase of magic has not properly been explained,-to the devout followers who imagine that the powers of the magician are without limits. A hint of the nature of Jesus' works of magic, is given in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, verses 53 to 58. The last verse reads: "And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." Jesus had gone back to his home town to do a little preaching, and met with some skepticism.

Miracles do not come entirely from a divine source, if at all. Even those miracles brought about with the aid of the faith of the believers or followers, are subject to natural laws. The phenomena that are listed as miracles, are mechanisms that do not upset any natural laws, but are rather natural phenomena, just not yet understood or explained by what we understand to be scientific explanations at the time.

The question has often been raised concerning the reluctance or inability of Jesus to embarrass his enemies with magic at the time of the final agonies. It is argued that since he predicted his death, it would have been unwise for Him to have escaped the enemy. But the fact that he predicted it, may well mean that He recognized inexorable karma or natural laws that could not be breached. The argument has often been brought forth that His success in centuries to come depended upon the spectacle of an ignominious self-sacrifice being imprinted upon the mind of mankind.

Such a display was not necessary for Gotama the Buddha, and in fact Gotama advised his followers against using magic. Let us suppose (with justifiable supposition) that the changing of the water into wine was done with hypnosis or sleight of hand, and that the casting out of devils was simply exorcism. Exorcism has been demonstrated by many primitive shamen since the time of Christ -- these shamen being not even Christian converts, let alone priests.

Every magician gathers belief about him like a snowball, and as the belief snowballs bigger and bigger, he is able to do more marvellous things. But, as I said before, all the while the magician is dealing with a science of which he knows very little. He plays by ear, as it were, until one day he almost surely tries some trick that does not work. The factors, that made his successes vanish like a puff of smoke. These factors are his everinflating ego, and the belief of the audience. The factors which we do not know, and the ignorance of them,--brings about his failure.

Some of the magi have come to the conclusion that the visible world is an illusion. This can only be understood properly when viewed from the position or attitude of the absolute. And this is saying little more to relative man than to assure him of a possible situation that cannot be proven. From the material standpoint, we cannot argue

that the material, visible world is illusory. However, the magus presumes that proper knowledge of the nature of this illusion will somehow give him power over it.

Those who have really experienced sentience of the Absolute and have viewed life from the direct appraisal of things -- lose all inclination to change any part of the theatrical mental reflections. An adult simply loses interest in the toys of childhood, and it matters not who has the marbles now.

THE QABALAH

I do not wish to deal extensively with the Qabalah because I have encountered too many diverse authorities or pseudo-authorities, on the basic value of the Qabalah. There are evidently two uses of the Qabalah. The lesser of these deals with magic, and the higher use is in the pursuit of wisdom. MacGregor Mathers lists four forms of the Qabalah: Practical Qabalah or that which is devoted to talismanic magic; the Literal Qabalah, or that which deals with a numerological analysis of the sacred word; also the Unwritten Qabalah and the Dogmatic Qabalah.

If you are not interested in talismanic magic, or in playing with word numerology, but in the part that deals with man's relation to God and the universe, you will want to go on to the Unwritten Qabalah. The wisdom of, the Unwritten Qabalah is transmitted orally only. It is hinted by Mathers that this transmission is a very secret and arcane matter.

The written Qabalah, or Dogmatic Qabalah is practically an endless study, especially if we are to launch into the literal Qabalah as well. If the great secrets are transmitted orally, I conclude that years might well be wasted in study when a few words whispered into the ear will do the trick.

We are here again faced with the negative aspect of a movement -- which is secrecy. Discovery of which, is always followed by the question, "What are they hiding, an explosive fact, or an embarrassing ignorance?"

ADDITIONAL YOGA COMMENT

I would like to omit any evaluation of the various types of hatha yoga. And if possible,--ignore the hundred or so cults that have sprung up in this country, whose only evident aim is to collect money and delude their supporters.

I would like to presume that if the reader has read this far, he will be aware that I have no interest in any movement that does not honestly work toward the Truth. I consider it foolish for those working for power, to subscribe to any "power-system" that lacked the functional wisdom for managing the power promised, or that failed to forewarn the student of all results of their actions.

I would also like to avoid, as much as possible, the endless and confusing use of Indian terms. It is my belief that wisdom is not the property of one race alone, and hence it can be expressed in any language. If at all. I borrow some words from the Indian language, such as yoga and karma, because they are almost lay terms.

While we are memorizing new symbols to understand a chapter, we might be reading an entire book. The same thought applies to Qabalistic studies. Many seekers are over-impressed by hindu terminology, and lose their way through the woods by studying the trees.

For instance, the word transmigration is easier to understand than the word samsara because for one thing, the latter word is too often confused with samskara which means karmic memory. There is much to learn from the various hindu schools. India is split up into many religious factions which made for competition and stimulation. India is situated close to Tibet, and Tibet has long been the living stronghold of occultism and transcendentalism. The prevalence of the God-Man attitude, or the theory of the evolution of man's soul toward godhood, encouraged Indians and Tibetans for centuries to continue the exploration of man.

If we are to take the axiom-directive seriously ("First know thyself"), then we must realize that the orientals are far ahead of us. A theology that expects us to know the nature of God when we do not even know our own nature is manifestly absurd. If, on the other hand, the Orientals -- like today's Westerners -- have taken the Man-God attitude up because of laziness and moral decay or out of rebellion against a priest-craft and temple-taxes, then they are no further along than us.

The prevalent theme of nearly all yogic systems is the upward evolution or transmigration to a better state. Some go as far to set their sights upon a particular zenith at which they aim, such as Nirvana. In nearly all yogic systems there is a noticeable absence of the worship of a deity. Graduation from the worship of a non-human deity is looked upon as a favorable step by mystics on the path of yoga. Ramakrishna supposedly worshipped the goddess Kali for some time, until a monk came along and taught him to meditate upon his own spiritual centers. Thus Ramakrishna is supposed to have found all within himself.

In this case the guru-monk became more important than Kali. I have previously referred to the guru-chain -- a very significant mechanism for immortality.

THE CULTS

There are many cults flourishing today. Some promise an advantage for the applicant that is similar to mental yoga. I have a filing cabinet filled with papers from different "brotherhoods," "orders," and simply nameless gurus. I am indeed puzzled to understand or evaluate some of them for motives. Some do not have the circulation necessary to bring in any periodic flow of money. I, had to conclude that this type of venture had to depend upon a big financial killing by a complete takeover of the finances of the enquirers.

This practice is not unusual. The Radha Soami group, while not asking for money, instructed their followers to place all of their physical karma in the hands of the master. This placing of the "whole being" in the hands of the master would naturally endanger any bank account.

I received certain "documents" through the mail from a man who inferred that he had membership in a brotherhood of universal dimensions and ancient origins. Questions by me about seeming inconsistencies were answered with vague replies or confusing allusions to general ethical postulates. Some of the "documents" had interesting information in them, but nothing was in them that could not be found somewhere else. They were unique in their manner of presentation, only. One clever "document" tried to demonstrate that wisdom was somehow dependent upon the proportional ability to purchase it. With that one I called a halt.

Another cult, professing to be the reliquary of ancient wisdom, used the trick of mailing me a letter from Greece. It informed me that I would soon hear from one of their "elders" in California.

Most of these cults protect themselves by initially confiding to the applicant that the rest of mankind is vulgar and unable to contain the powerful medicine which the cult is about to bestow. The next step is the swearing the applicant to secrecy, under pain of causing kinks in the cosmos, or his own convolutions, if there is any divulgence to the profane. This manages to screen the operation.

For this reason, secrecy itself, has become something to look for, if you are looking for indications of trickery. Secrecy appeals to many business men, or prominent professional men, because, to begin with, they are a bit ashamed to have their colleagues or drinking companions hear about their joining a cult. A person may also be very hungry for the truth, but still wish to check it out before sacrificing too many of his business contacts or risking social criticism.

We should not be afraid of social criticism, if we have the conviction that a search is necessary for finding. And the search is more important than static membership in an organized religion.

When there is a liability of hurting the feelings of our friends, it is advisable not to preach an unsure doctrine or cult, but there is quite a gap between discretion and total secrecy. In the days of the inquisition or the Salem witch-hunt, secrecy was a necessity of course ... for students of witchcraft. But too many cults have sworn their members to secrecy, only to be proven fraudulent themselves.

A man, now deceased, who was known to have spent his entire life looking for the truth, spent many of his valuable younger years in a movement operated by a man and his wife. This couple seemed very sincere, and had written several books that showed no great inconsistencies. Their works did contain a considerable amount of unprovable concept-building. My friend, who had gathered quite a bit of money as the result of inventions, had evidently contributed to this pair for a period of over fifteen years. The couple were involved in a scandal, and some unsatisfied victim exposed them to the world. They were found to be drug-addicts, and prone to sexual excesses and abnormalities with quite a circle of co-conspirators. And in the event that these things seem inconsequential, the crime was really inconsistency ... they had been preaching quite the opposite of that which they were practicing.

Too many of us are led to acceptance of cults by our eagerness to accept strange terms. Many cults are nothing more than a slightly new twist to older speculative theosophies. We are enchanted, as neophytes, by the use of new exotic terms, such as the word "chakra."

While one group of philosophers is desperately trying to establish understanding of the body that is visible, and the mind that has evident relationship with that body, other people are inventing and designing systems both intangible and vague, and elaborating on details with imaginative, detailed charts. The latter do not bother to explain either their system or their charts thoroughly, so that the viewer may clarify the system with his own personal experience ... outside of twenty or thirty years servitude to a cult.

And the final frustration is that even those who profess to have seen chakras, still have no better knowledge than ourselves about the post-mortem destiny of man -- other than a vague belief in reincarnation.

An analogy might be given. It is like giving a condemned man a tedious course in anatomy, so that he will know the precise functioning of his nervous system when he experiences the gas-chamber. The thing with which that condemned man is concerned, is the condition in which he will be after he has breathed the gas and expired. This analogy-reference takes into account the possibility that there might be such a thing as a chakra.

There exists a very valid argument that applies to systems that purport to change our state of being or to sharpen our intuition or understanding. This same argument is used to justify a lesser or venal cult. The argument is of course, that proof of the claims of a discipline aimed at changing our state of being, lies in the end result and cannot be demonstrated beforehand.

I do not flatly accept this argument in either case. We still must make an effort to make prior evaluations. And it would appear that a developed intuition is our only alternative.

GURDJIEFF AND OUSPENSKY

In the Gurdjieff movement we find a refreshing lack of oriental terminology. On the other hand, Gurdjieff has his own unique brand of confusion. To learn of Gurdjieff, you might read Ouspensky's *In Search of the Miraculous*, and Rom Landau's *God is my Adventure*. Kenneth Walker also wrote a book about Gurdjieff, *Venture with Ideas*, which was reviewed in *Time* magazine.

The review in *Time* has little mention of Walker except to say that the latter believed Gurdjieff to be an outstanding philosopher-psychologist. Gurdjieff died in 1949 at the age of 77. Ouspensky, his chief disciple, died two years before. The article depicts Gurdjieff as a gourmet, and a "shearer of sheep," or confidence-man. The author does credit him as being the container of a vast amount of knowledge.

From reading All and Everything, and from reading what I could that had been written by those close to Gurdjieff, I have come to believe that he fathered an interesting metaphysics, and had an astute insight into psychology. Some of his followers lost faith in him, and left his Fontainebleau retreat after Gurdjieff became injured in an automobile-accident. He is supposed to have led them to believe that his system gave him control over accidents.

I am much more interested in the way Ouspensky deals with the Gurdjieffian philosophy. Ouspensky presents more of a serious, methodical approach. The Gurdjieffian fanfare is lacking in Ouspensky's explanation of the work. With Ouspensky we recognize that learning to think correctly is more important than concept-building, because the latter may lead to fantasy. Some psychoanalytic systems are good therefor. The self-observing system gives us something to do with our meditations besides just allowing the thoughts to wander. We must indeed observe ourselves first.

Another very good point about the Ouspensky lectures, is his insistence upon the School, as a means for growth. The implication -- a very valid one, incidentally -- is that man must have his fellowman, even in the business of spiritual development.

Gurdjieff has now been dead for twenty years, and his movement is still alive, but some of the people who are giving lectures with a pretence of authority as Gurdjieffian heirs, are either functioning under conjecture or inaccuracy, because their movements are fanning out in all directions.

I heard that lectures were being given at Virginia Beach a few years back, and decided to make the trip. I sought out the lecturer. He was a young man of twenty five years, if that. Twenty minutes of conversation with him started me in a homeward direction without listening to any of his lectures. In a brash manner he announced with the same blandness that he had quite a start on me, since he had known Gurdjieff in his previous lifetime, or incarnation!

There are about a dozen pretenders to Gurdjieff's throne, and none of them flatters the memory of Gurdjieff. I had a particular encounter with one such self-appointed guru of the Gurdjieff line. This encounter may serve to demonstrate the extreme caution that a person must exercise in order to choose, not only a teacher, but each acquaintance or co-worker. This man came to me practically out of nowhere. He came unrecommended and unsolicited.

This fellow did not write and get acquainted by mail before making his appearance -- a custom required for those coming to the Ashram. He made several flamboyant phone calls, and had his "disciple" make one. He next sent a very wordy and flattering telegram, and followed the telegram in person, accompanied by two men -- one crippled and the other, hirsute.

I picked them up at the nearest train station, and drove them some forty miles. Their smell was an ordeal in itself. Had it not been that part of this smell was an alcoholic one, I might have excused their untidy condition as the result of travelling, and poor accommodations.

The leader was an oily, hairy man with a weak but cunning face. I listened to his tales about Gurdjieff for several days before I realized that he really knew no more about Gurdjieff than myself. He was an unctuous namedropper, and at first some of the Ashram-residents were impressed by him. Soon I noticed that the other residents of the Ashram were leaving, and new arrivals were dissuaded from staying. I also learned that he was running a confidence-racket. When questioned, he did not deny it, and claimed that Gurdjieff had certain sincere students whom he did not charge, but that Gurdjieff, like himself, had no qualms about fleecing "the little old ladies." With an affable smile he would spread his hands and remark that Gurdjieff extracted large sums from people because money was the only contribution that some people could make.

This imposter, whom I shall call Mr. A, took a few pages from Gurdjieff's history that were to his liking. He consumed a quart of wine a day -- if he could get his hands on it -- "For his low blood-sugar." The crippled man was receiving a small pension, and I discovered that the other two were using and abusing the crippled man. Finally the crippled man left.

The younger companion, Mr. J. G., was a very clever disciple. He constantly sang the praises of his leader. He would drop little tidbits regarding the long wait that he had to endure before his teacher answered any of his questions. They spoke nonchalantly about raising the dead, about curing with herbs, and about their common Master who walked through walls.

Then other little stories began to trickle out. They told of having a sort of commune in New York City in a condemned building. The police evicted them. Mr. J. G. bragged that he had shot a policeman in San Francisco. In one city on the West coast, Mr. A. had his followers carry him upon a horizontal cross, upon which he stretched, dressed in sundry clerical vestments, and wearing a crown. This travesty he considered to be very comic.

He also told of serving thirty days in jail for contempt of court. I decided that I had two imposters on my hands, and possibly two extortionists, judging from the money that came to them through the mail. So I moved them out of the house and told them that they would have to leave the premises. They asked for permission to stay for a few days in a house trailer until some important mail came, which they were expecting soon. I agreed, mainly because they did not argue about leaving.

It was very close to Thanksgiving, and they asked me to meet the bus in town and pick up a young lady who was coming in from the South to spend the holiday with them. They had no car. I picked this visitor up, late in the evening before Thanksgiving. Since neither of these men believed in work, there was no adequate fuel at the Ashram, so I suggested to this girl stay at my house in town for the night. I found that she was sixteen years of age, and that she had many startling things to tell about Mr.'s A.. and J.G.

She told me that she did not wish to come and visit them, but that she came out of fear of physical violence and blackmagical powers. She had met them in Colorado. J. G. had encouraged her and a group Of hippies, to join with Mr. A. This little colony was evicted from the area, and they began to hitch-hike toward New York.

When the group arrived in New York, it only consisted of the two-men and this young girl. They immediately tried to put her to work as a prostitute, and when she resisted, they beat her, and broke her nose. And yet, this same girl was ready to go back for more punishment. The girl's mother had been sending them large sums of money. When I talked to the mother by phone, she admitted that the money was sent out of fear.

When I ordered the two to leave the trailer, they threatened me, and burned the trailer completely as they left. This is the price that can be paid for being impractical, or being slow in setting oneself up as an arbiter of people coming to stay and work at the noblest of undertakings.

I believe that the only way to get anything from the Gurdjieff system is to study the books by Ouspensky and the other disciples. After having done quite a bit of research I fail to find anything outstanding about Gurdjieff that would give him the position of a spiritual leader. That he had wide experience is true, and that he was also gifted with extra-ordinary common sense, is also true.

He comes in with a new approach. We do not have to listen to an interminable symbology of no worthwhile meaning. We do not have to memorize a foreign vocabulary to study Gurdjieff. Yet he says many of the same things that we could learn if we labored through oriental philosophy and transcendentalism.

Gurdjieff furnishes us with a system by which we can escape mechanicalness and find self-determination. He also proposes the school, or brotherhood. He is one of the few authors that emphasize that man is victimized by nature.

The theory of Kal tells us the same story that Gurdjieff tells, but in a different way -- about man's hopeless condition as a slave of nature. Gurdjieff also reaffirms the "Many are called but few are chosen" line that relates to the percentages of people who have evolved sufficiently to desire to escape, or search for an answer. Gurdjieff categorizes the evolvment of man as having seven steps, and claims that most of mankind falls into the first three steps or numbers. Thus, man number four is the one most likely to escape from the net of nature. Gurdjieff also places significance upon that which he calls the "sly man."

This little reference that we find in the Gurdjieff teachings is often overlooked. It has significant meaning. It means that we do not get to heaven by being saintly, because trying to be saintly is a fool's endeavor a fool who pretends to envision the will of some invisible deity, and to judge that that deity sees mankind acceptable if sweet and gregarious. Likewise, in ancient times the same class of fools butchered human sacrifices, because they thought the act of sacrifice to be pleasing to the gods.

The Gurdjieff-system teaches that man must first have common sense, and must discover the many, many ways in which each human being outwits himself about the most serious of subjects, -self identification and survival. It is worthwhile to note that if a man does not know the looker -- there is little use looking. The evidence which has been brought back by lookers whose cognitive apparatus has not been checked out, is not very reliable. In fact, down through the ages, the masses have chosen to use their emotions and desires as eyes. The Gurdjieff-system automatically places man as the field of study. This is nothing new either. There is a very ancient adage, "First know thyself."

The Gurdjieff teachings have some inconsistencies. Much of the writings consist of a complex cosmology, and this comes as a bit of extra padding -- if his system is designed to bring man into the exaltation of being fully "awake." Knowledge of the universal cosmology has no value to us if we cannot utilize that knowledge in the direction of our own immortality. Also we can only conclude that being "awake" in the fullest sense, is synonymous with reaching the Truth in the fullest sense. And since Gurdjieff does not describe for us this ultimate goal, but recommends a path similar to the three-fold directive of Buddha, we can only assume that the goal must be the same in any case. And if the goal of the Gurdjieff or Ouspensky system, would be, (even without their intention) cosmic consciousness -- there would not be much use in categorizing cosmologically, an illusory world.

Unfortunately neither Gurdjieff nor Ouspensky tried to describe the condition of the man who is fully "awake." We do learn that man number seven is more awake than man number four. But a person almost gets the impression from the writings of both, and from the lives of both, that they were not sure about the state of being that might be expected from a "man number seven." In other words, the goal is never really named. And for this reason, I have come to the conclusion that the Gurdjieff system is a good and worthy system for a person starting out on the path of self-liberation. But it is not complete. Perhaps there was a personal teaching that was not recordable because it would naturally differ in each student-case. If this latter supposition is true, then of course, the Gurdjieff system would be more complete, but it would still leave us in the dark about the reasons for the complex cosmology which is part of the writings.

I realize that many opinions have been given in this book, and only a little information has been given as to the manner of collecting the information that must necessarily have led me to a strong opinion.

When I was about twenty five years of age, I began to meet other men who were of the same mind as myself about the search for Truth. Since I do not have their permission, I will not identify them. Not that they would object to being know perhaps. But they have grown families, and children and grandchildren, who may feel that such divulgence would not be compatible with a particular game of life that they might be playing.

We were not many....the more faithful ones numbered six or eight. Then there were other contacts who knew of our interests, and these friends also supplied us with information, and attended our meetings. We decided to prospect in separate environments for systems and for people who might know more than ourselves. In the early days of the search we were afflicted with the "Hunt the Guru Syndrome." We promised one another to learn all that we could, and then compare notes. Each of us joined different sects, and became initiates of those sects which held initiation requisite to learning that which the sect claimed to be valuable, esoteric knowledge. Needless, to say, on many occasions we were disappointed with the trivial offerings of most sects.

In this manner we learned, as a group, that which could not have been learned in three life-times by any of us alone. We became acquainted with the initiation rites of SRF and Radha Soami. We obtained heaps of Rosicrucian private lessons of mandami. One of our group was "opened" in the Subud movement. Two others attended latihan sessions.

We made long trips to investigate materializations, spiritualistic phenomena of all sorts, and individuals who had particularly unique talents. We visited witch-doctors, priests, protestant ministers and fortune-tellers. One member took time out to help set up a scientific research-group -- the Mind-Science Foundation of San Antonio, (endowed by Tom Slick.) We worked with smaller "psychic research" groups whose investigations were along the lines of ESP, table tilting, and hypnosis.

We subscribed to magazines that dealt with occult or transcendental matters, and occasionally placed ads in them to contact people who might be sincere.

We had several things in common besides ignorance, and the admission of it. We agreed that moneyed cults, power and glory cults, and movements with excessive secrecy, were not worth the bother. Of course we argued among ourselves over the relative worth of some movements.

I feel that the history of our search is secondary to our conclusions. The history of our diggings would include many movements and teachers not even discussed in this book. Some are not worth mentioning. Some were found to be created out of whole cloth. And, a few of those mentioned in this book, are not worth the following of one day, but they are examined here nevertheless, to demonstrate the negative effect they have upon the minds of too many people.

By the same token, there are individuals who were instrumental in either encouraging me to continue my work, or who were directly helpful, and who beyond a doubt held the rank of teacher, who will not be described here because their value was recognized only by their conversations and their manner of working. If any sort of bridge has been built by our collective labors, a picture of the bridge is more important than a portrait of ourselves.

And still, in this chapter devoted to observations of teachers and unique systems, I should admit that those who played possibly the most valuable role for the most of us were not the teachers of any cult or well-known system, but were individuals largely unseen by the general public ... whose real value to us was forever unknown to their next door neighbors, employers and associates.

To give them justice, would require a chapter or a book for each of them. And to write less would leave the reader with fragmentary evidence, or would give only the human picture of mistakes made, and blind struggling. It might be interesting here to give a sort of summary-conclusion of our group as regards to the systems encountered. I am sure that nearly all of us would agree that systems that aid in "becoming" rather than "learning" are endorsed.

The real science, we concur, is knowing the self, which we somehow sense, is the door to Reality. The observation of magic, the study-and classification of phenomena is mostly an interesting divergence for the mind when it is too tired to do anything else. The study of phenomena and phenomenal men does us no good if

we cannot relate that study to the better understanding of our Self, or at least formulate laws of phenomena by studying them.

An example of one of the phenomenal men, is Edgar Cayce. I made a trip to Virginia Beach to see his place, and talk to some of the people who came there. Edgar Cayce was dead, and his son Hugh Lynn manifested none of his father's psychic ability. And Edgar Cayce, while living, gave reams of advice and perhaps issued some semblance of a philosophy, but he left behind no system, nor explanation of his own peculiar powers answerable to scientific investigation.

Nor did he give a formula for a student who might like to be a psychic doctor, or even finder of lost items. Cayce was a phenomenon, not a teacher. And now being gone, he is only a history of a phenomenon. It is good to read of him, and to read his writings. It is not wise to make of him a religion or a solitary path to Truth.

Phenomenal men are more valuable contacts than are phenomena. The study of phenomena includes the wide range of flying saucers, Fortean research, spiritualistic phenomena, magical mantrams, astrology, numerology and thaumaturgy. None of these deserve an all-out application of our life's energy, but they are more commendable pursuits than remaining inert on the soft bed of organized religion.

[End]

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