



A
**Symphony
of Silence**

An Enlightened Vision

2nd Edition

George A. Ellis

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A Symphony of Silence: An Enlightened Vision

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Foreword

By Arthur John Anderson

DISCREETLY TUCKED AWAY in an indistinct corner of the universe, hidden somewhere amidst the glittering spangle of countless stars within equally countless strata of spiraling galaxies, a tiny planet silently spins and orbits in serene obscurity. And, yet, because of this inconspicuous and unassuming planet, the entire universe rejoices. For those of us living on this planet, a long awaited awakening has occurred. We are witnessing the springtime of a new epoch. Powerful currents of knowledge, at first but a trickle, are now coursing through the many diverse rivers of humanity, breaking apart and washing away hard chunks of ignorance from winter's long siege. This thawing of ignorance and the concomitant dawning of an Age of Enlightenment gained momentum more than fifty years ago when a holy man from the Himalayas, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, emerged from silence and, responding to the need of the time, offered the world a simple technique to help restore balance and wholeness to life.

What happened next is what this book is about. It is a brilliant compilation of intimate discussions, interviews, and essays by people who lived when Maharishi lived, many of whom knew him personally, some of whom worked with him closely on a daily basis, and all of whom grew generously in spirit and love because of him.

The contributors to this book offer an array of beautiful stories, sparkling with insight and experience, that reveal different facets of Maharishi and of his TM movement—which, as he said, is “meant to move.” They write not of what they have heard from others, but of what they have known and felt firsthand. Their stories tell of how they interacted with Maharishi, of what they observed and learned from him, and of why he had such a lasting effect on their lives and ultimately on the world. This book will enthrall you, draw you into itself, and, as you will soon see, be hard to put down. You will feel

impelled to read just one more chapter, and yet another, and another. And then read them all again.

George Ellis conceived the idea for this book and labored several years to endow it with muscle and marrow, strength and sensibility, and a heart whose pulse permeates every page. The result is a living tribute to Maharishi. It is also, as George envisioned, a legacy to link generations a hundred or a thousand years from now to these first recipients of Maharishi's knowledge who are, in Maharishi's words, the Pioneers of the Age of Enlightenment. They who share their stories here come from many backgrounds and were among the first to break old boundaries and explore the new frontiers of human consciousness that Maharishi opened to them. They are artists, authors, and musicians; scientists, Cenacle Sisters, and civil servants; preachers, professors, and even prisoners—all of whom have been inspired to give to others the gift Maharishi has given to them.

Maharishi saw the world not merely as it is but as it might be, and he gave those around him his vision of possibilities and the means to achieve it. With his TM and TM-Sidhi programs he put forward the formula for world peace in which there would be victory before war—but more than that: for law and order, there would be rehabilitation before crime; for health and wellbeing, wholeness before illness; and for religion and ethics, right action before sin and misfortune. He paid particular attention to all levels of education where his prescription is to expand the knower before inserting the knowledge. And, for a world troubled by divisiveness, he offered the key to racial and cultural integrity, harmony, and reciprocity. Each of these aspirations, which Maharishi patiently nurtured in us, is among the most honorable and altruistic the world has known, and this book helps us steer the ideal course he set to continue his work of transforming possibility into reality.

And, of course, this book contains many stories of personal encouragement that Maharishi gave us. If ever we felt lowly or insignificant in such an enormous universe, as if we were but a trifling speck of flesh on some distant fleck of dust, he reminded us that we are each the pinnacle of creation blessed with an unbounded awareness capable of comprehending within itself the entirety of the universe and more. If ever we seemed overwhelmed by the darkness around us, he taught us not to fight the darkness, but simply to introduce the light, first within ourselves and then to the

world. If ever we wondered about our own spiritual progress, he provided us objective scientific methods to demystify, validate, and explain our subjective spiritual experiences. Of particular significance to me as a Christian has been the manner in which Maharishi's gift of TM is able to foster and enliven the noblest yearnings of any religion. You will find all of this chronicled in these pages.

Having known Maharishi personally or even living while he lived is a privilege, and receiving his knowledge is a gift. But not a gift to keep to ourselves, nor a privilege to be indulged in by a few. It is to be passed on to others who will pass it on to others still who, in turn, will pass it on yet to others until this knowledge is available to all for all time. This book gives impetus to that process, and those who appear in it will continue to be the friends and benefactors of readers in ages to come.

George was the right person to have scored the many voices and melodies within this book into a splendidly crafted symphony. He is indefatigable. He is a man of sizable talents and credentials whose life has been filled with a fascinating assortment of educational pursuits, entrepreneurial ventures, and humanitarian projects. He is also an excellent communicator—both an engaging writer and a gifted orator. He brought all these skills and achievements to the making of *A Symphony of Silence*.

I have known George for more than thirty-five years, and I know that no one else would have attempted or could have accomplished such a monumental tribute to Maharishi and a momentous legacy for ages to come. He knew Maharishi personally and he personally knows each of the contributors to this book. He sought out and found the right balance of diversity that would give it substance and vitality as well as authority and endurance. Simply scan the table of contents and see how the contributors cross the borders of generation and gender, race and religion, education and occupation.

Many books flash for a moment against the horizon like a roman candle and then are gone; but precious few grow and last like the dawn. Every good book, it is said, writes itself—meaning the writer was merely the instrument of an idea demanding to be heard. This is one such book. It is a classic, and it will endure simply because it deserves the acceptance it is destined to receive. Centuries and millennia hence, when people wonder what it was like to have known Maharishi, to have studied under him, or to have worked with him,

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they will consult *A Symphony of Silence*, as you are now doing, and be delighted to hear from those who were there during the season it all began.

What a wonderful time and place to be alive—and how wonderful it will continue to be. Call it nature, destiny, or divine providence, but the time was right on this tiny planet for Maharishi to appear, for this book to be written, and for you now to be opening it.

Sit back and enjoy the symphony!

Preface to the Second Edition

The first edition of *A Symphony of Silence: An Enlightened Vision* was inspired by the desire to share with humanity, through multiple voices, the ineffable beauty we experience in our lives when the veil of ignorance is pulled back and the wonder of our essential nature is revealed. It reminds us that inner awakening is innocent, and once glimpsed—in a quiet meadow, a gentle walk through the woods, or in the many ways it can be known—it is never forgotten. The voices emerging from these pages add vitality and validity to our shared experience of the silence of the transcendent. It is not something beyond our reach, but a reality that has always been with us, quietly awaiting an opportunity to unfold.

Not leaving us grasping at the memory of these experiences, Maharishi gave us his enduring gift of the Transcendental Meditation (TM) technique by which we can experience this inner awakening to transcendental consciousness, directly and repeatably, on a daily basis. His universal message arose from his compassionate desire to give everyone the opportunity and means to cultivate his or her fullest potential and to bring peace and happiness to the world.

In this second edition of *A Symphony of Silence*, several new voices are added to the chorus of the first edition. A Catholic priest tells us of using TM as part of his inspired vision of the power of love to transform the lives of abused and destitute children from the streets of South America. The founding director of an orphanage and school in Uganda, who likewise brings TM to children in need, describes to us his compassionate resolve to eradicate suffering from his community.

A poet expresses for us in verse the essence of pure knowledge and the joy of a seeker reaching for the light. A scientist and his colleagues show us the power of TM to reduce stress and alleviate PTSD in the field of law enforcement. An actor, director, producer, and entrepreneur, who attended a TM Teacher Training Course with Maharishi in Ethiopia, explores with us his innovative projects for inner city students through “Edutainment.”

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Two women, who for decades have dedicated themselves to introducing the TM program to the multicultural community, share with us their delightful and very personal stories of starting TM. They also recount a recent celebration commemorating the 40th anniversary of the Ethiopian TM Teacher Training Course. Their perseverance in advancing a legacy of unity within diversity has enriched our society.

A pioneering TM teacher and social activist brings us into the conversation he had with Maharishi in 1968 at a TM conference in Squaw Valley, California. He talked candidly with Maharishi about the need to introduce TM as a tool to bring inner freedom to the inner cities, helping to fulfill the quest for true civil rights.

The voices in *A Symphony of Silence* create a glimpse into the vast impact that Maharishi has on many lives throughout the world. A book like this might well be written for every country. It is an acknowledgement, an expression of gratitude, to the passionate, visionary people who bring to the world Maharishi's gift of the experience of higher states of consciousness—fulfillment flowing from the silence of the Himalayas to the doorstep of every home.

George A. Ellis

Introduction

This field of inner silence is where a person's true Self resides and experiences their greatness—it is the gift of life, the great mystery, which is life.

—Paul Horn¹

Every human being seeks happiness. We seek far and wide to understand the purpose of our lives. From the echoing halls of high security prisons to the quiet sanctuary of an artist's studio, the diverse stories we read here are founded on a common experience: that of inner silence. Each contributor to *A Symphony of Silence* has experienced this inner stillness of Transcendental Consciousness and shares it with us through his or her own unique perspective. Each inspires us to discover, or rediscover, our own self-awareness.

A symphony is a harmonious combination of sounds emerging from silence. It is the antithesis of the cacophony that is engulfing humanity. The voices in this book lift the heart and awaken the intellect beyond the dissonance. Their experiences point to the mystery and beauty that is resting within us all.

I have observed that every individual, regardless of circumstances, carries an inner beauty and optimism. However, the pressures upon us of economic survival, political upheaval, health, and education often subvert this innate positivity and generate conflict between people and among cultures. In response to these observations, my passion was to search for solutions that were less obvious, and yet common among all cultures. I was looking for the missing element.

Our global challenges catapult us toward harmony or catastrophe. This has always depended, and will always depend, upon the quality of individual and collective consciousness.

Creating harmony begins with welcoming differing points of view. It progresses by recognizing these differing perspectives as valid. And here we find the missing element: bringing the light of coherent consciousness to remove

¹ Please see interview with Paul Horn on page 9.

darkness. Only then can we illuminate the pathway to a more enlightened society. The inner light is within us. Each individual has an infinite reservoir of intelligence, creativity, and love, unfolding in an unending process of evolution. Collectively, we have the ability to find creative solutions to all the challenges we meet.

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, founder of the Transcendental Meditation (TM) program, stated that his intention was to bring a universal and scientific technique that would cultivate the full potential of the individual, and thereby support all traditions of knowledge or systems of belief.² This experience of expanded self-awareness is not foreign to us, but depends on the nervous system being free from the stress that restricts our full potential. Glimpses of the experience of inner silence, as well as stories of its unfoldment, are shared from many perspectives, including artists, musicians, philosophers, politicians, scientists, religious leaders, social activists, and prisoners. Their stories describe how they developed their own experience, and how they made it available to enrich the lives of others.

The underlying thread of *A Symphony of Silence* is the experience of uncovering the ineffable power within. The experience of transcendental stillness gives a person a fuller perception of reality. We often look at the world as if through colored glasses, which affects the validity of our perception, distorting our intellectual and emotional evaluations of inner experiences and the objective world. *A Symphony of Silence* transcends distortion and compartmentalization, presenting a unity of understanding and experience. Self-knowledge is the first step of integrating the various disciplines of knowledge and human development. As William Blake wrote, “If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, Infinite.”

Once this takes place, it is like a seed that should be watered regularly. This experience of inner silence facilitates the blossoming of knowledge of who we are, the purpose in our lives, and the infinite connectedness of every component of human existence, nature, and consciousness. The awakening that emerges leads to compassionate and creative solutions to the challenges facing ourselves and society, which are resolved in direct correlation to our state of Self-actualization.

² Maharishi’s seminal books, *The Science of Being and Art of Living* and *On the Bhagavad-Gita: A New Translation and Commentary*, Chapters 1—6, provide intellectual understanding to enhance our development of consciousness.

The book traverses diverse dimensions of knowledge, experience, and practical application, and in it we see that the experience of Self-knowledge is accessible to everyone. We see a vista of evolving human life juxtaposed with an enlightened vision. We glimpse golden rays of awakening within society. This affirms the infinite potential that we each have, the realization of which is now on the doorstep of humanity. This is our birthright.

The author hopes that the insights and experiences presented in this book will enliven the majestic reality of human life, helping to resolve the uncertainty that walks beside us throughout our life. May readers come to understand that the special moments in their lives of an expanded state of consciousness can become a permanent reality.

Part I of the book shares intellectual and experiential insights of an enlightened vision, which includes a journey from India to the college campus of UCLA. The wisdom of “following your bliss” echoes through the music of legendary artist Paul Horn and the paintings of Vincent van Gogh and Debbie Arnold, demonstrating the universal experience of unfolding creative intelligence.

In Part II Father Gabriel shares his heartfelt work with the abandoned children of Colombia and the world. Members of the Cenacle Sisters (a Catholic religious order) describe their innocent surrender in wordless prayer. A tender conversation between a father and daughter, graduates of Harvard programs in religious studies, explores spirituality and higher states of consciousness. A retired deacon offers his personal perceptions of Christianity and TM that are at once insightful, heartfelt, and practical. A college professor provides brilliant insight into the universality underlying religious experience around the world.

Part III describes an exciting new paradigm for science, presented by David Orme-Johnson, Ph.D., a highly regarded research scientist.

In Part IV Arthur John Anderson, J.D., LL.M., clarifies that the facilitation of human transformation through cultivating the individual from the inside out, rather than employing external force to create the illusion of order within, is fundamental to leadership in the field of justice. Frederick Travis, Ph.D., shares insights and research on leadership and PTSD with profound implications for the law enforcement profession. The power of human transformation through self-knowledge and developing higher states of consciousness is

illustrated in stories from the dark corners of society, such as Folsom and San Quentin Prisons. Part IV concludes by highlighting the compassion of the David Lynch Foundation, which recognizes that “change begins within.”

Part V honors the strength of women. Their perspective and inner silence highlight that strength can be as delicate as a snowflake and contain the power of the wind. In Guatemala, a daughter and her family touched the hearts of the Mayan Indians and their children when she introduced the TM technique to orphanages for the nation’s abandoned children. She also encouraged government, military, and business leaders in her country to begin a process of change based on human development. In Vermont, a wealthy entrepreneur created a developmental model of an ideal society applicable to developing nations. Beginning as teenagers, twin sisters volunteered in prison work, and years later compassionately involved themselves with projects bringing TM into the prison system. An international singer-composer tells her story of setting aside fame and fortune to become a healer through music. A 95-year-old businesswoman, after practicing TM for more than three decades, delightfully communicates what aging can look like. She has come to clearly experience the gradual integration and stabilization of Transcendental Consciousness in her life.

In Part VI an interview with Stan Lewis highlights his historic pioneering role in introducing the TM program during turbulent times in the USA when the search for civil rights and social justice was pressing forward. Bill Duke, actor, director, producer, and entrepreneur, shares precious moments of his life journey—from his experiences at a TM teacher training course in Ethiopia to his commitment to educating the youth of the inner cities. Two other pioneering TMC teachers, Mpingo Griffin, author, and Sibongile West, a business leader, both committed to human development, discuss the value of TMC in providing social activists a new approach to social justice through the TM program. Former defense attorney Candace Martin describes her experiences teaching TM to reduce hypertension in African-American women through a National Institutes of Health-funded program. Ayida Mthembu, a creative artist and educator from MIT, contributes insights into the value of transcending cultural boundaries while enlivening cultural integrity. Mark Mugabe of EDAPO in Uganda mirrors the compassion of Father Gabriel in his commitment to eliminating suffering and enhancing the quality of life for

children in need. These remarkable communities provide care for orphans but also contribute to the harmony of the larger environment through the collective practice of TM—thus providing a model for how commitment and love, with minimal resources, can contribute something of immense value to the world. A scientist concludes this section with a discussion of the “profound common bond” that we share with persons of all cultures – the experience of “cosmic inner stillness.”

In Part VII, several individuals share spiritually transforming experiences that range from early childhood to mature awakenings of inner beauty.

In Part VIII, the author’s final reflections consider how light can remove darkness and how enlightenment transforms ignorance. Every generation has aspired to enrich life and to prepare a bright and fulfilling future for its children. The intention of *A Symphony of Silence* is to inspire people to understand that the quiet, special moments experienced throughout their lives indicate a hidden wonder waiting to emerge: the unbounded nature that is their birthright.

George A. Ellis

Part I

**Inner Vision:
Music, Literature, Art, and Philosophy**

Chapter I

Follow Your Bliss

Paul Horn

I had the opportunity to first meet Paul Horn when he was giving a concert in San Francisco. For decades his music reflected the inner beauty of his consciousness and compassion for humanity. Paul was a Grammy Award-winning artist, and played music since he was four years old. In our conversation we discussed some of the highlights of his spiritual journey, which he expressed beautifully in his book entitled Inside Paul Horn: The Spiritual Odyssey of a Universal Traveler. In 2011 a new CD was released, entitled The Stillness Inside: The Meditation Music of Paul Horn. Paul Horn was a kindred spirit whose music gently reflects the universal and mysterious melody underlying life.

We are traveling in historical time, from the present to the distant past.

We are traveling inwardly as well, through the music of meditation.

— Paul Horn (1990)

George Ellis (GE): You stated in your book that Miles Davis made an observation about people playing too many notes, and the space between the notes being important. The space between the notes is a field of silence and a junction point between notes and impulses of thought. Could you elaborate this insight in the context of meditation?

Paul Horn (Paul): It's a paradox: we are given all this energy, we are given a mind which can think, ponder, try to understand, and the questions that arise in the mind result in an internal dialogue almost continuously in our life. The great value of TM is that it gives me the experience of silence and through my studies with Maharishi I gained the intellectual interpretation of the silence and the process of transcending. The test for evaluating the benefits of transcending is not what experiences you have in your meditation, but how your life is going, and then you will see the value of TM. We come to see the real value is that you get out of the way, and let it happen without effort. You

experience the silence, and in that silence when the mind can be still, even for a few seconds, we transcend and that experience is a personal experience; it is the experience of deep silence where all the potential is located—the field of unlimited potentiality.

GE: I am wondering how you correlate your experience in music and your meditation, particularly the concept of experiencing the space between notes. For example, you started playing the piano at four years old, and throughout your life, before meditating, music must have given you some experiences and insight into this transcendental experience. Is that correct?

Paul: Certainly I did not view it that way or think in those terms when I was four or many years after that, but that is right—the experience of being quiet.

GE: I read your beautiful book, *Inside Paul Horn: The Spiritual Odyssey of a Universal Traveler*, and you say: “We are traveling in historical time, from the present to the distant past. We are traveling inwardly as well, through the music of meditation.” In the book you tell the story of your own life and journey. Could you share the essence of what you expressed in that book? What were you trying to communicate to the reader?

Paul: Music is organized sound. Sound is the basis of creation. The whole universe is comprised of sound. Music, being organized sound, is the vehicle through which you travel as a musician—and everyone relates to music in whatever way. Our essence is sound, the vibration, which is music—organized sound, organized vibration. In all the travels I have done, I do not think I have met anyone who does not enjoy music in some form because it is in our basic nature; it is what we are composed of—sound. I believe the value of music is that it allows us to transcend the thinking process. If you really get into the music, people have a transcendental experience, they lose themselves for a few seconds, maybe a few minutes, maybe even longer, and that is silence. People who practice TM are comfortable with that silence, but normally most people do not experience it from the time they wake up in the morning until the time they become unconscious at night and place the head on the pillow. There is always motion, thought, or something going on. We need to get to a point where we can experience deep silence without fear. The unique experience of deep inner silence can make a person who is not familiar with it insecure and ask themselves—what do I do with it? A person becomes insecure with silence

because they are accustomed to something going on all the time, and find themselves alone with his or her self, and questions—what do I do, and what is this experience? It is important to have a qualified person provide guidance in these areas because it is uncharted waters for most people to consciously be moving in and out of the silence. The paradox is to get out of your own way, and see the value in our daily lives. The experience of transcending into the silence and eliminating fear through knowledge requires a guide, a master, or a teacher to make you feel safe when you move into this unfamiliar area. This field of inner silence is where a person's true Self resides, and he or she experiences their greatness, if you will—it is the gift of life, the great mystery, which is life. We need to stand still, be quiet, and let these feelings emerge, and appreciate and value them. I believe everyone has these experiences sooner or later while watching a sunset, having a walk by the seashore feeling the warm sand under your feet, the sun on your back, and the glory of it all—but most of the time we are too busy for this. We are fortunate to have a technique available where you go into the quiet, unafraid, and know intellectually the value of what you are doing. As a result we see the experience and the benefits of TM in our own life manifesting in terms of experiencing and understanding the process of developing inner silence in activity.

GE: Did you experience this inner silence prior to meditating?

Paul: Probably I did without intellectually knowing, because it was related to music. I fell in love with sound, which is music, and it reshaped my life; it made me aware of abstractness—music is abstract. It is the most abstract of all the arts.

GE: Why do you believe people are afraid of silence, and how does it affect musicians?

Paul: It is uncultivated territory for most people. Most of us are subject to the waking, dreaming and sleeping states, and that is life. A conscious awareness of the experiencer normally is not present in these states of consciousness. We are experiencing objective reality all the time and our senses are bombarded during the waking state, they are lost in the dream state, and then unconsciousness in deep sleep—you run out of conscious thoughts. I think we find eventually through our lives when suffering sets in, in its own way, that something is missing—I do not believe we intellectualize on that issue. For example, we can have good health, a roof over our head, food on the table, and

the basics are covered. Additionally, maybe we are succeeding in what we want to do in life; whatever our goals are we are moving in that direction, and yet an inner voice is asking—why am I not happy? That is what happened to me one day. However, I was fortunate to meet Maharishi and went to India to explore the answer to this critical question.

GE: How did you arrive at the decision to learn TM?

Paul: I was always interested in philosophical issues, and mainly—what is the underlying mystery of life? My wife Ann Mortifee just finished a book which is out now, called *In Love With The Mystery*. (See Chapter XX.) If everything is going well in your life and you are moving toward your goals and succeeding, then how come you are not smiling from ear to ear 24 hours a day? I think that unhappiness and suffering can be a catalyst that pushes a person to say: “I better look into something.” Suffering can be on so many levels, but basically it would stand for not being fulfilled—that was my experience. I was looking in the mirror one day in my early thirties, and reflecting that I am achieving all the goals I set out to do, and I am not happy. How come I am not smiling from ear to ear? I had been reading about spirituality, human development, and meditation. I also tried to sit down and meditate on my own with minimal success, and at that time Maharishi appeared in my life.

GE: Where did you first learn TM and when did you meet Maharishi?

Paul: That happened in the early sixties, around 1964. I had been reading about meditation without success; I thought this is difficult and not for me. I met some old friends I had not seen for a while; they were a couple and seemed very happy. I posed the question, what is going on here? They responded they had been meditating. I said, that is interesting because I have been reading about it, tried it myself, and it does not seem to be an easy thing to do. They explained the benefits of TM, and there was a teacher in Los Angeles who would come and teach when there were enough people in that area to learn. There were not many TM teachers in those days. I learned TM and I started to feel good, but no lights went off. And then I heard that Maharishi was coming to town to give some public lectures and be in Los Angeles for a while. In those days Maharishi traveled around the world once a year to expand the knowledge of his teaching.

I met Maharishi because I was meditating and felt comfortable with good benefits from the TM practice. However, I did not appreciate the subtle positive influence the TM technique was having on my life until I stopped

meditating for a little bit because I was on the road and playing music, in Las Vegas and other venues. I got into my old habits again, and I was not meditating. When I came back to Los Angeles about a month later I found myself leaving my bags by the front door—I am still leaving my bags by the front door—sitting down on the coach and spontaneously starting to meditate. A little voice in my head said “If you do not do this every day for the rest of your life you are going to die,” and that was the catalyst for me (mutual laughter). The impression was very strong. The contrast of practicing the technique, not doing it, then coming back to it made me realize the profound value. The process of transcending is subtle, fireworks may not go off right away, and a person may question the benefits, but the value is in the person’s experience in his or her daily life. Sitting down, closing the eyes, and transcending—Maharishi emphasized we normally do not talk about experiences during the process of TM because it is so personal. A person does not judge the success or value of TM during the practice; just do it and “the proof of the pudding is in the eating.” I saw how my life was going, and that was really clear. Shortly after that experience Maharishi came to town; I met him and it was wonderful. I decided to go to India. So did my friends, the man and the wife who were the catalysts for me to learn TM.

My trip to India was fantastic—in fact even better for me because this was a Teacher Training Course. I want to back up a little bit because you just do not pick up and go to India to be with Maharishi. I asked my friends how I could arrange to go to India. Maharishi was coming to town and I went to see him. I mentioned to him that I would like to go to India. Maharishi asked some basic questions such as how long I had been meditating. I had been meditating only three months and the meditators in the group, who were preparing to travel to India, had been meditating three years or more. In my mind I believed this was a lost cause. I mentioned to Maharishi that even though I had been meditating a short time I have experienced fantastic changes happening. I said to him, I believe if I could be in your presence a little longer, and if you would allow it, it would be just magnificent. Maharishi asked if I was married, and what did I do in life. I tried to explain a freelance musician to him (laughter) and it was not so easy. I told him I was divorced and I had a couple of children; he asked who was going to take care of the children while I was gone. I mentioned to Maharishi that I was a responsible person and they will be taken

care of, they will be OK. Maharishi was trying to check out that I was not just running away and that everything will be OK. Then there was a long silence and Maharishi stated OK, it will be good that you come, but do not expect anything (laughter). Then I said that is good advice. “Don’t expect anything” are good words—if you live your life like that it will be pretty good.

I went to India and everyone was concerned about becoming a teacher, but I had never thought in those terms. I just wanted to be near Maharishi, and it was an amazing experience meditating under his protection. Deep meditation in India in those early days with Maharishi could be long hours. Little by little we were able to meditate longer hours, sometimes days at a time, and I had an epiphany—something happened and it changed me.

GE: When you say you had an epiphany, what do you mean?

Paul: I experienced a perception of Unity Consciousness often expressed as: I am That, you are That, all this is That. Yes, it was an awakening. In those days you could sit for long periods of time in deep inner silence. The way we did it then was that you worked up to it because there was too much stress in a person’s nervous system and you could not just sit for a long time at once. After a month, little by little individuals increased the time. In the morning, a couple of hours, and again in the afternoon a couple of hours, and then eventually you would meditate all morning and all afternoon. You did not have to, but the time was set aside to do that. Little by little it became more comfortable to sit in deep inner silence for a long time. If you became tired you just kept your eyes closed and switched between the chair and the bed. Someone would bring you an apple, a piece of bread, and some tea once or twice a day, whatever you wanted. You would tell someone that you will be meditating for a while—it was quite wonderful. I did it for five days once and then someone said, “Maharishi wants you to come out now” (laughter).

GE: Did Maharishi meet with everyone every evening on those courses?

Paul: We did meet in the morning and the evening with Maharishi and time was set aside for meditation. It was quite magnificent.

GE: You were in India in 1967 and went back in 1968 when the Beatles, Donovan and other artists were there. How was the 1968 course?

Paul: It was very different, and I am glad I was there the year before because it was quiet. Maharishi was not a household name all over the world. Just a few people knew about him. The year before, there were only 35 people

there from 12 different countries. It was quiet. The world was not up in the trees with photographers.

GE: Was Jerry Jarvis there?

Paul: He was, and he was the instrument for me becoming a TM teacher because he talked to Maharishi when everyone was becoming teachers. I was not the least concerned with any studying because it was never my intention to become a teacher. Jerry communicated to Maharishi that there was such a big movement with the students at UCLA and Berkeley and he needed some help. The people on the 1967 course did not include many from the United States; it was a quiet time. Jerry suggested maybe Paul could become a teacher because he is younger—I was in my mid-thirties. Furthermore, Jerry remarked that many of the students knew me because I was a well-known jazz musician. I became a TM teacher, helped Jerry initiate people, and I loved it. There were so many students and we were initiating about eight hours a day, seven days a week in Los Angeles. Jerry and I would travel to Berkeley and follow the same routine, and then return to Los Angeles to continue the process of teaching people to meditate. I was not playing much music. I did not miss it at all, I was really enjoying teaching TM, and I was very happy.



Paul Horn (second from right in the second row) and participants at a TM assembly with Maharishi in Squaw Valley, California

GE: That period of time after the epiphany in India and teaching all those people TM—it must have had a wonderful effect on your consciousness.

Paul: I was never happier or feeling more fulfilled, comfortable; I was just enjoying. I guess I was a type-A personality. I was driven to be a musician and pursue my music. This desire for greater fulfillment motivated my trip to India and being with Maharishi. I was successful in achieving my life-long professional desires. Nevertheless, prior to India I asked myself why I was not feeling fulfilled and smiling 24 hours a day. These reflections propelled me into searching, which led me to Maharishi and the whole story so far that I have been telling you.

GE: Did the albums *Inside* and *Cosmic Consciousness* come after your time in India?

Paul: *Cosmic Consciousness* came as a result of my first trip to India. I went back to New Delhi and recorded those albums.

GE: What was the back-story to that beautiful picture of you with Maharishi and the Indian musicians?

Paul: We were in Kashmir and Srinagar. This was the third Teacher Training Course Maharishi had given. It becomes very hot in India—Maharishi said let's go somewhere where we can enjoy. We went to Dal Lake located at a high elevation and it was beautiful. The picture was taken on the roof of the houseboat. During my time in India I expressed to Maharishi that I would like to do a documentary on him and what I had just experienced with him in India, and when I returned to Los Angeles—he said to go ahead and see what happens. I organized a film crew and we went back when the Beatles were there, not to film the Beatles, but Maharishi. I did not know the Beatles would be there. Of course that fact became news all over the world—the film people became excited and I made it clear that this was not a film about the Beatles. I wanted it to be a film of the experience I had the previous year with Maharishi and the phenomenon that is taking place. Unfortunately, the film was not completed because the situation was too chaotic. However, there is 100,000 feet of footage of Maharishi that the TM movement has somewhere in their archives. Alan Waite was a producer with me.

GE: Paul, I bought the album *Cosmic Consciousness* and I loved the picture on the cover of your album with you and Maharishi on Dal Lake—it is so beautiful. When did you do *Inside the Taj Mahal*?

Paul: It was the year when the film crew was there. We had a 16-man crew and one of the location sites was the Taj Mahal. I had originally gone into the Taj Mahal to record it as a memento just for myself. When I came back to Los Angeles I played it for some friends, and they enjoyed it because it was a great



Maharishi on Dal Lake with musicians including Paul Horn (far right)

sound, which I knew it was from the previous year—that is how all that came about.

GE: That album sold a million copies, I believe.

Paul: *Inside*, yes.

GE: So destiny is interesting, isn't it Paul?

Paul: Very interesting!

GE: You go over to India with a pure heart and good intentions to film Maharishi and your gift is *Inside the Taj Mahal*!

Paul: Yes, and the film that I wanted to produce on Maharishi did not turn out.

GE: I heard you have a new album coming out in September?

Paul: My wife Ann organized the new album. Ann took my various albums and listened to them; she pulled out the ones she liked, and put them together. It was not an easy task, but Ann did a wonderful job. I am happy with what she accomplished. She put together the music in what she felt would be a good sequence, various tracks from different albums, which was a challenge because

they are all so different and yet the album, *The Stillness Inside: The Meditation Music of Paul Horn*, sound like they belong together.

GE: I saw a photograph of you playing music to a whale. I can imagine that must have been an extraordinary experience, playing music to a killer whale that seemed to love it.

Paul: I moved to Victoria, British Columbia, Canada with my two boys, who were 10 and 13 at the time. I was divorced and had obtained custody of them and moved to Canada, where I had visited a couple of months previously and thought “This is it.” In British Columbia there was an aquarium that had two killer whales. My neighbor owned the aquarium and we became friends. A researcher was conducting experiments on killer whales trying to measure their intelligence. One of the elements the researcher wanted to explore was music, how would they respond to music, and in what way. I just became a part of the experiment; they asked me to come down and play my flute to see what happened.

I was with the trainers on the feeding platform playing my flute. There were a male and a female whale. At first I was not certain what was going on because they were swimming around individually, and spending a moment or two in front of the feeding platform, and then swimming off again. One of the trainers suggested I do what they did as trainers, which is called reinforced normal behavior. When the whales came and stayed with me, I would play the flute, and when they would leave, I would stop playing. The researchers wanted to observe if the whales came and stayed longer because they were interested in the music; otherwise we would not know.

I did that and it worked. When they swam away I would stop playing the flute, and when they came back I started playing. Sometimes they would stay longer, which indicated that they had an attention span and they were interested. I continued participating in the research and the National Film Board came out and filmed the process—it became news all over Canada. The story highlighted that these whales responded to music and were very intelligent. It affected me too, because when I was playing music for the whales my head was in an entirely different place. I was not thinking in any musical terms at all; it was my way to communicate feelings to them. I knew we were conversing through the sound of music. I got a sense for their consciousness and believed they were intelligent beings in many ways, and I was feeling it, but unable to

articulate it. The music was just feelings coming out, so whatever notes I was playing — in my head, I was not thinking about any of those notes I was playing. It was an interesting experience for both of us.

GE: Paul, in one of the videos it appeared that the killer whale had kissed you?

Paul: Well he did, but that was in another aquarium.

GE: How did that happen?

Paul: That was an aquarium outside of San Francisco—by that time the word had spread that I played flute to whales (laughter). The aquarium staff asked me to come down and play, so I said sure. The whale was used to moving back and forth when he was being fed. However, when I started to play the flute the whale was not being fed; the reinforcement was tied to the music. I knew the music was in some way communicating on a nonverbal level my feeling of respect and appreciation.

GE: The whales communicate through sound.

Paul: Exactly.

GE: This must have been extraordinary.

Paul: It was.

GE: This is such a beautiful story. When I saw that and I watched the whale almost turn on his back as you were playing for him—it was amazing.

Paul: That was very sweet. There were two whales there, a male and a female. The trainers isolated the female in a smaller area of the pool and the male was the one out there. The male whale would go back and forth to tell his girlfriend, who was held in a little pen, that he was not abandoning her. He seemed to be saying “hi” to her, and informing her that the music was interesting, as he would come and listen to the flute, and then go back and see the female whale. It was very sweet to observe; at least this was my interpretation.

GE: The experience with the whales reflects the universality of intelligence and love, which I believe was expressed in those moments you articulated so beautifully. How do you think that the experience of transcending impacts your music?

Paul: I came to a place where I was more comfortable and interested in doing solo concerts. My music became different—quieter. I love jazz. I was surrounded by jazz musicians and the art of improvisation that was revived

in the 20th century under the name of jazz, and now it is the 21st century. During the time of Bach and Mozart they all improvised. However, it dried up, and for some reason classical musicians stopped including improvisation as part of their training. Jazz came along and used the art of improvisation, and I was always interested in that. It is freedom; you express yourself through the language of music.

GE: Unless an individual plays a musical instrument he or she may not fully understand the internal influence on our consciousness. How do you define your experience when you are playing with a group of people and you all start to ride the same wave? Although the group is made up of individuals there is a synchrony where the individual members seem to share one consciousness. Can you describe that experience—is it transcendental for you?

Paul: Yes, I would think so, that is why I have had my own groups in the past. Somehow like souls gravitate as much as the music because you are philosophical and on the same wavelength as far as enjoying delving into the mysteries of life. The band members would have interesting discussions along the way as we were traveling through the different countries. The relationship in the group reflects in the music, which is hard to articulate, but there is a feeling among us as a group, not just the music.

GE: Many artists struggle because of their sensitivity, and they go through so many troubled times because of their sensitivity, and then they become confused, thinking that they have to suffer to be creative. How do you interpret that perspective?

Paul: I do not know logically if you could equate the two, but I do not think you have to suffer to be creative. I do not think many people can go through life without some kind of suffering. It does not have to be material suffering; it can be emotional breakdowns and confusion, all kinds of things. We are here to learn—it is a big school. Some kind of suffering forces you to ask what you are really here for, and that's an individual consideration.

GE: I believe your music lifts the human spirit. Just like that beautiful story of the whale—it brings people to a new feeling level. At this point, what is behind your motivation in creating music?

Paul: Thank you. Music has been an instrument of pleasure throughout my life. I was fortunate that I could make a living with it and do what I loved to do. I often talked about the joy of music when I used to go to schools, high

schools in particular. Many of the students wanted to go into music, but their parents and teachers did not support it because they would often say: look, it's an insecure career, and how are you going to make a living? I started music because I loved it and that is what I shared with the students. Just go for what's in your heart. Follow your bliss, and do not be afraid to do that. If you cannot make a living playing music then you wind up not making a living through that art form, but there are other benefits. If you find you need to make a change, you make a change. Don't live life with fear of failure. That is not what life is about anyway. Follow your bliss and give it a try.

GE: How do you feel regarding the connectedness between your consciousness, your breath, and the sounds that you put out?

Paul: When I am playing I am usually in another place and always have been. That is why I love improvisation. Although I have had a lot of schooling, it started as a child with an innovative approach to music, and remained with me throughout my professional career—that is the essence of jazz: it's the art of improvisation. I prefer to use the word transcend when I play the music, especially when I am improvising. If you are playing music that you memorized and then have to perform it, obviously you are thinking in terms of not making mistakes—all of that disrupts the flow of the music. That is why I love improvisation, because none of that is there. I am not afraid to make a mistake, there is no mistake, this is what I believed in that moment, and I am using the language of music to express how I feel. I think any musician who does not have that in his or her experience on the road to becoming a musician is strictly classically trained—you don't improvise—and he or she is missing an important part. I just show up and play, I do not worry about right or wrong, if anyone is going to like me or not, or if the critic is going to like it or not like it.

Transcending is exactly what I was doing. If you are improvising and involved in the music then it takes you somewhere; if you are playing a piece of music that you have memorized, right or wrong will exist. For example, if you do not play a particular note at a specific time, then you will have made a “mistake” and you do not want to make mistakes.

GE: You have created beautiful music and lived a magnificent life.

Paul: I have been fortunate.

GE: Your music is transcendence in action. The essence that I feel and see in your music is thoughtless, wordless Being. Your life has been a platform for uplifting humanity. Do you have any thoughts you could share in that regard?

Paul: I never thought of it in those terms, using the word platform. If my life could be an example of following your bliss then that would be good. We are all different. We are all here following our karma. We are hoping to graduate, the sooner the better, and move on, by becoming enlightened, and aware of the deep value of life. We are here to learn and to help others. My book, *Inside Paul Horn: The Spiritual Odyssey of a Universal Traveler*, was written 20 years ago. I was thinking about it the other day. When someone writes a biography, which I was asked to do, it is normally toward the end of your life. Well it is 21 years later and I am still around. The last 20 years are not much different from the first. I would hope that others would find the courage to follow their bliss, which is an essential message in my book. It is never too late; a person needs to look into his or her heart and ask the question: what do I really want to do? The answer to the previous question will define an individual's purpose in life because that will come from within.

If you have a deep feeling for something, then do it and follow it. It is not so much in a person's success or lack of success, but what you learn along the way. We are all in school, and we are supposed to graduate at some point. Maharishi said value your human life, don't waste it! Part of not wasting it is following your bliss because that is telling you where you are supposed to be. If you see and feel the world you will be successful in serving others. If you want to be of service, you need to see the great gift of life. "They also serve who only stand and wait" is a wonderful saying. Just take a moment to be still, use your senses and look out there in the world; it would be nice to experience the stillness in a park, nature, down by the seashore, a lake, or something that is beautiful. Move away from the hecticness, take a breath, and breathe in and breathe out through your nose; just hear life and realize that someday you are going to do that, but you will not be able to breathe in. Our time here is limited, and you need to be still in order to have that thought, let alone that experience, which will add to your happiness and effectiveness in life.

You have to take a picture of yourself and appreciate and value who you are—you have to appreciate what is there. If you do not have that appreciation, you are sort of lost. It has nothing to do with what you are doing

professionally in life, but it is more about the value of the gift of life itself, and to try and get out of the way—TM helps that to happen. After a while you do not have to think about it because you are appreciating the gift and the value of life automatically. You do not have to be an old man or woman to see and get the picture. The only question is why I am here, and pursue this as a gift.

I have one more chapter to add to my book, which is 20 years later and I do not know if I have any more to say other than I have met my soul mate, which is just wonderful, with Ann; it took my whole life to find her. It is fortunate if you can meet someone where you never argue, never have any fights, and never go through those things that you do when you are younger, and enjoy a relationship based on respect and appreciation. That is a great gift; it took me a long time to gain that experience, and I am having it right now. If you are fortunate enough to meet your soul mate, that is astonishing. If not, you travel on the path alone; I did that for many years, too. Either way, life is an unbelievably precious gift. That's about it, George.

GE: That is beautiful, Paul.

Paul: I really look forward to your book, and I am proud to be a part of it.

GE: I am honored to have had this conversation because it is all about love. This was a pleasure and a joy for me.

Chapter II

Literature and Self-Reliance

Rhoda Orme-Johnson, Ph.D.

Rhoda Orme-Johnson was one of the founding faculty members of Maharishi International University (MIU), which is now called Maharishi University of Management (MUM). She holds an undergraduate degree from Vassar College where she studied Mathematics and Philosophy and has an M.A. and Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from the University of Maryland. Rhoda taught at MUM for 19 years. She was Chair of the Department of Literature and Languages and supervised programs in literature, writing, drama, French, Spanish, and professional writing. She transcribed and wrote the general introduction to The Flow of Consciousness, a collection of lectures by Maharishi, which provides profound insights into the processes of writing, reading, and teaching literature. She edited the volume with her colleague Susan Andersen, and wrote the introduction to the lectures on literature, summarizing how Maharishi viewed the mechanics of literature. She followed her academic achievements with a successful and prosperous business career. Dr. Rhoda Orme-Johnson is committed to facilitating the creation of an enriched humanity on a continual path to becoming better men and women.

Philosophy was my interest from a teenager. I wanted to know what life and what God was all about. I had issues with God because I wondered what kind of God would create a world with so much suffering. It started when I was a child in Sunday school, and my teacher said that God hardened the heart of the Pharaoh so he would not let our people go. I raised my hand and asked, what do you mean? Why didn't God make the Pharaoh a nice person? I did not receive a satisfactory answer and soon persuaded my father that Sunday school was not for me. However, I read widely in works of religion and philosophy during my teenage years and it continued to be a larger abiding interest of mine.

I majored in mathematics because I was good at it and it was fun for me. My father was not college educated and as a young man he worked hard at physical jobs. When he attended night classes and entered the warm classroom

after working all day in the cold, he just fell asleep. He knew he could not do it. He could not acquire an education and a better job, but he wanted his children to go to college. He wanted me to learn something practical and important so I could earn a good living.

Vassar is a liberal arts college and we did not really understand what that meant at the time. It does not offer degrees in engineering or any practical areas; nevertheless, I majored in math, which my Dad thought was wonderful. Neither of us knew that you needed a Ph.D. in math to obtain a professional job. Math without a Ph.D. does not automatically lead to a good job. I did it for my father, even though I preferred philosophy and literature and took all my electives in these areas. When I graduated I did manage to secure jobs in practical areas, with the engineering group of the New England Telephone Company, and after that in computer programming in Washington, DC working on abort trajectories for the Apollo project. However, my real love was literature. My career in literature started when I was working in DC and began going to graduate school in comparative literature.

Regarding TM—if it had not been for my husband David, I may not have learned to meditate. He took me to a lecture on TM and I was not impressed. It promised a lot, but there was no proof, no scientific research. How did I know it was the real thing? But David wanted to learn, because he had seen the proof in an old friend who had started, so I said, “OK, you learn and I will see what happens to you.” David learned the TM technique, and I immediately observed dramatic changes in him. I recognized the value, and I learned a few months later, when the next TM teacher came to town. To me, a purpose-driven life is necessary. I need a purpose. I do not engage in random behavior. I do not know how to have fun very much. Once I started TM, I saw that it was changing me, and thus it intersected with another major interest in my life, self growth. What propelled me through my teenage and college years was finding myself, growing, evolving, and changing through knowledge and self-knowledge. After I learned TM I had a word for it—evolution, and I had a path for it—meditation. This interconnected not only in the search for truth but growth in truth. They came together.

I have been meditating 41 years. I am nicer. I was mean; I am not so mean now. I was too critical, and I am now more accepting. I feel better, happier, more energized, and I feel the stresses leaving. One example of how this

came about: my father died unexpectedly and much too young, several years before I started TM. When I started meditating I would cry in meditation and thoughts in meditation would be that someone near to me died (like a child) and the grief would overwhelm me. It took some time for me to realize that I was healing from the grief of my father's death. It took me a while to figure that out.

Maharishi explains that in meditation the mind does not sustain a mood on an abstract basis; it attaches that emotion to something more recent, or close by. So I attached it to something in the close environment. But that is not where it originally came from; it came from the deep grief over the loss of my father. I realized that I was healing. Now I can think of my father with love, and some regret that he was not able to enjoy my interesting life, but the pain is pretty much gone. So that is the story. A lot of healing has been going on over the years, on many dimensions.

Through TM, ignorance and suffering leaves us quietly; one does not always notice the lack or absence of pain, because it is natural to be happy and healthy. I find the scientific research very heartening and validating of my personal experience. My coherence, my appreciation, understanding, and ability to enjoy life have been growing. No question, I completely appreciate the evolutionary process and results.

I met Maharishi in the summer of 1971, at a course on the Science of Creative Intelligence at Humboldt College in Northern California. We were invited because my husband David had just published one of the first scientific studies on TM. I did not understand what Maharishi was talking about, either experientially or intellectually, or what he meant by Being. Nevertheless, I understood that it was important and I wrote it all down. I recognized I needed to know more of it. I dutifully took notes and David and I would look at each other and shrug, and say that maybe we will understand it later. It was completely new to me, from my materialist and scientific perspective, but Maharishi was so appealing personally. He had such love and humanity. I knew I was sitting in the presence of a great man.

We were later invited to join Maharishi's international staff in Switzerland, based on David's contribution to the scientific research on TM. David had an ability to make the research understandable to ordinary people, which came out when David interacted with Maharishi in Italy on our TM Teacher Training

Course. In the four years we lived in Switzerland, I personally had the opportunity to interact with Maharishi almost daily regarding the various tasks he gave me to do. One major job was to collect course fees from the students who were there to study Vedic Science. He needed someone to evaluate their situations. The task fit my practical, motherly, teacherly nature. It seemed that a lot of the students were in arrears and I was to see if (a) they were living on a promise, (b) there was money available, (c) they were spending money they did not have, and so forth. If the students did not have the money, they needed to go home and make it. If the learners were spending money they did not have, they should stop it. If students had it, they should pay the cost of their room, board, and tuition. But because of me there were soon fewer Ph.D. students. Anyway, Maharishi liked what I was doing and when he saw me riding up and down the mountain from my hotel to the students' housing in taxi cabs he provided a car so I could get around more easily, and he gave me other jobs.

Literature is an engine for self-discovery. When I read and saw how characters lived life, I lived and grew through them. I did not have to commit adultery and throw myself under a train, like Tolstoy's Anna Karenina, but I could see how her suffering resulted in such outcomes.

Regarding creativity, Maharishi said that suffering does not drive creativity. Creativity is an escape from suffering. The artist may be having a miserable time in his or her life and then some impulse comes to paint, or write, and it is so blissful or joyful. The artist moves in that evolutionary flow and it's an escape, a relief, and the artist or writer creates something wonderful. The suffering does not inspire the work or create the work. In fact, suffering interferes with work. We all know that. Suffering is not essential for art, and the best thing you can do as an artist is to get yourself out of suffering. Start meditating and increase your ability to deal with your stresses and enhance your inner happiness. Live a happy, successful, and creative life!

Literature impacts my consciousness and is an engine of self growth. Emily Dickinson said that you know when a poem is good, because it blows the top of your head off. It really does. So it was like that; I experienced in literature a means to evolve. Maharishi explains in the lectures we collected in our book, *The Flow of Consciousness*, how evolution occurs through the writing, reading and study of literature. Self growth comes partly from the knowledge, and the truth in the work of literature. Emotional growth comes through the

emotional truth in the work, and from the power of its language. Most important, Maharishi explains, literature swings the reader's awareness from concrete images to abstract ideas and emotions, and the jerks and jolts one's consciousness experiences through these swings cultures and purifies the mind, the intellect, and the emotions, and can lead, in fact, to higher states of consciousness, and enlightenment.

During my readings I experience a sense of going deeper inside, my consciousness becoming subtler and subtler. In the process of experiencing quieter levels of the mind and staying there for some time, I definitely transcend. For example, the other day I was reading in the living room and my husband David was working on framing the wood around the new wall air conditioner. When I finally looked up from reading I noticed he had completed it, and I remarked that it was fortunate that he did not have to cut the pieces the contractor had left and could just put them right up. David was shocked. He told me he had been sawing the wood and then hammering up the frame. How had I not heard that? I looked at the floor, and saw that there was sawdust on the floor. Where have you been? He laughed; he could not believe it. I was deep inside. I was not aware of hearing anything. It has always been like that for me. I start reading and the movie starts rolling. I think this is true for many readers, and also for those deeply involved in research, in solving a mathematical equation or developing a scientific theory. The mind goes inward and lives in the inner depths for some while. It has to be evolutionary; nevertheless, transcending through reading is not as profound as transcending with TM. However, any experience of Transcendental Consciousness is valuable and evolutionary.

I believe that transcending through the TM technique deepened my experience and understanding of literature. Through my experience of transcending during TM I became familiar with slipping inward, and as a result I gained a deeper comprehension of literature than I ever had before. My vision became broader, more comprehensive. I saw that as a teacher, with this knowledge and understanding, I could help others to see more deeply into something, become better perceivers, seers, readers, and experiencers, and become more deeply engaged. That is what I tried to share. I tried to lead my students to see more deeply and take note of what they were seeing. I would give quizzes with questions on what happened, small but important details, and then we would discuss the meaning of those details. I tried to help them become better

noticers. I was helping them learn to read literature, and I was sure the evolution would take care of itself.

In the context of academia, I started to work on a book entitled *The Flow of Consciousness* when I was teaching at MIU because it was my job to connect literature and consciousness to Maharishi's knowledge. Maharishi helped the faculty at his new university make these connections by giving lectures with examples of how to do it and how to think about it. We often played the tapes of these lectures to the students, and we all tried to become better readers and literary critics using his knowledge. These tapes were very useful to the students and to the faculty, but they were not easily accessible because they were video and audiotapes that could only be played in a classroom or in the library. For example, accessibility is necessary for scholarship. I am not a musician and when I hear a piece of music, it goes through me like a river and when it comes out the other side I cannot tell you anything about it. I cannot listen like a musician. Even with literature or speech, I cannot fully understand and intellectually process what I hear as well as I can when I can see it, and read it. I have to see it with my eyes to be fully engaged. So I knew that these lectures had to be written down. The students also needed to be able to cite them in a scholarly way and to go back and forth between the literature and Maharishi's knowledge.

I asked Maharishi if I could transcribe these lectures and bring them out as an aid for the students in studying literature. Maharishi thought it was a wonderful idea and gave me the go-ahead. I transcribed all the tapes that my colleague Susan Andersen and I chose, and I have to tell you, it was like sitting with Maharishi again, sitting in the presence of an enlightened man, being drawn into his consciousness, and transcending to subtler levels. I think the reader has this experience reading the transcripts as well.

We put all the transcripts together and I wrote an introduction to the volume. I thought this book might be given to someone's aunt, an English teacher, or a poet who knew nothing about Maharishi and who he was. The new reader needed an introduction to Maharishi, to the TM movement, and Maharishi's major ideas, like states of consciousness. Additionally, there was the scientific research, and topics from physics; therefore, footnotes were needed. I edited and introduced the literature section, and Susan edited and introduced the language section. I regret to say that we finished the book about 17 years ago

and I printed 10 copies. I visited Maharishi when he was based in Holland and gave him a copy to approve, but he was busy dealing with governments and other major projects, and a book on poetry and literature could wait.

Some years later Dr. John Fagan, who was inspired by Maharishi to investigate the hazards of genetic engineering, was visiting him in Vlodrop, Holland and while he was waiting to see Maharishi he was asked to wait in a room that Maharishi used for puja (a traditional Vedic ceremony of gratitude). After meditating he began to look around; he saw my book sitting on a puja table and he told me about it when he came back home. This meant to me that Maharishi had given it a place of honor and had not forgotten it. I was very heartened by this news. I mentioned it to Dr. John Hagelin, the head of the TM movement in North America, after Maharishi passed on, that for every physicist we have in the movement we must have 1,000 people more interested in reading about literature.

John Hagelin thought it was a fabulous idea to bring out the book, it was approved, and MUM agreed to print it. The introduction was 15 years old (and quite a lot had occurred with the TM movement over that time), as was the scientific research. I had to bring both of these subjects up to date. I worked on the book for another two years, added an index, and it finally came out in 2010. The lectures in the book date from 1972 to 1976 because those were the years that Maharishi was helping his university get off the ground; he was giving lectures in all the disciplines to help the faculty determine how to teach their area in the light of consciousness. During that period he held symposia and spoke about different fields of study. After the symposia he went on to discuss government and collective consciousness. For literature, art, and music that was a special period in which the relevant tapes were recorded. Soon a book of Maharishi's lectures on art will be available. Another treasure!

I would like to make a comment about the different energy and power of women and literature, although I am not sure I can define it. I derive a certain enjoyment just being around women. There is a comfort level I have found around women, and also in my career I gravitated toward teaching works by women. I had been reading dead white men all my life, and I thought I was one of them. It took me a while to learn, to experience, that I was not. First, I needed to know who I was, and what it means to be a woman, and a woman in society. What I prefer and enjoy most is reading works by women, which

I pretty much always do when I read for myself. I do occasionally read something by a man. I really enjoyed *Driftless* by David Rhodes recently when my book club chose it.

I had an interesting experience regarding the difference in teaching men and women. For a time at MIU the women and men were in separate classes, only the first year students, because the classes were so large. It was a totally different experience. It was so much better to have them separate. When the young students were together there was all this mating, and dating, note passing, flirting, tickling and carrying on with minimal paying attention to the course. When they were separated, the girls, who always did their homework and read the book, would be right there and totally focused. They would have wonderful insights and were marvelously responsive students. The boys, although it was like driving a team of 16 wild horses, were basically there also, and when the girls were not there to distract them, all the wasted energy disappeared. The students became better learners; they focused more deeply on the knowledge.

In the world, women can come into in an area and soften it, but the world can also make women harder. My experience is that having a woman in a power position is not going to change it that much, because that change can work in both directions. What I see is that TM is the experience that can change it. It helps men be better men and women be better women. Both will become better, more effective people. I think the issues focused on by the women's movement—equal opportunity, equal pay and so forth—are important issues. Nevertheless, real change has to come from another place. It is the same situation with civil rights: change has to come from another place. You cannot legislate prejudice away. Consciousness has to change. The legislation is vital, because it creates the opportunity to be with and learn from the feared "other," but real change will only come from a change in consciousness. Look at today's younger generation. They grew up with women in charge. They grew up with kids of all races and orientations, and they see the world differently from how their parents did. Their parents may talk a good game, but inside they are still fearful and prejudiced—I know mine were. Meditation can change that.

Maharishi was aware of the women's and the civil rights movements, but he did not speak publicly about either. He stayed out of the political areas, because he was working in a deeper region. He knew that what you had to do

is change a person's consciousness. He was not unsupportive of anyone working for civil rights or the women's movement; he just placed the emphasis on the development of consciousness. It has come to pass that he was absolutely right; only evolution of consciousness can produce lasting change. You can legislate, you can litigate, but real change can only be facilitated through the development of consciousness. Thus, I became less interested in social movements and more interested in consciousness, because that is most profound. I had a professor at Vassar who was very interested in women artists. It opened my eyes in that area. Now when I go to a museum or a gallery I notice all the works by women, pretty much unknown women, who are really good. I believe they were always there, just swept away or forgotten by the men who created the anthologies, what we call the canon of important works. When you read about history you read that women were not in business, that they stayed home. But the real history of it is eye opening. Almost every time a man died without a grown son, his wife took over the business. When fathers needed a level head in the business, the daughter would take over the accounting, but she often did not receive credit for it and took her training on the job. Women have always stepped into these roles, but the history of it becomes lost. When we look back in time we see there is no her-story, just his-story. Nonetheless, women have always been in the deepest areas of society and social change, working behind the scenes if they had to. A correction in this imbalance and injustice, I believe, is happening now.

The rise in collective consciousness being brought about by the large groups of meditators in the U.S. and India is bringing all those situations into the public sight. They are no longer hidden from view. The light is being shown on these dark, hidden areas, and then change is possible. We still have a long way to go. I see the rise of the collective consciousness as supportive to all movements seeking justice and fairness in society.

After my work at MIU, I went into real estate, in which women outnumber men, or at least are as common as men. My boss was a man but it was a very comfortable and welcoming world for me because it was full of successful, vibrant, dynamic women. Several of them mentored and helped me to close my first few big deals. Because of TM, I was flexible, able to learn the business quickly, and not burn out. Women are very good at helping people find a home. Women are interested in homes and so I think people are comfortable

with a woman; they are looking for a house to live in and the wife is looking for a kitchen. A woman understands what the wife wants, a place for the children to play, a yard. It is a shoe that fits. For a woman it is a natural situation to help another woman and her husband buy a home. Although, I have to say that most of what I accomplished was to sell resort real estate, second homes, and investment property. People respected my Ph.D. and trusted me on a deep level to be honest with them.

Another aspect of the business that favors women is the erratic pay. If you happen to be married to someone with an income, then your income can come and go but you can still continue. At the time I became a realtor my husband was working on a grant and we lived off his salary and we pretty much invested my real estate money. It was a little slow at first, and then it picked up and we invested almost everything I made. I was very comfortable as a woman entering that business. I did not feel any prejudice or glass ceiling. There is nothing keeping you from making as much money as anyone else, so that was an easy transition. I was always practical, but I did not have any business experience. I had to learn the business and to brand and promote myself. I learned from the women around me and from my experience. It was a dynamic time. The salmon were running and I realized that now was my time. I would be a fool if I were not out there up to my chest in water, wielding my net. I was working seven days a week. I was able to do it, and I felt driven to do it, because I knew this was my moment in time to make money. When we left MIU, now MUM, we did not have much money and very little Social Security, because we were mostly volunteers. I felt nature had provided this opportunity and was supporting me in this new professional activity; because of my daily TM I could keep up the pace.

I worked hard, but I never missed a meditation. Other people around me would become angry or upset because of deals falling through, or difficult customers, but not me. I was calm and I was even. The entire office admired me. They knew I was meditating and they recognized that quality in me, that I had a steadiness. They saw that I rarely lost my temper. I realized I could not have accomplished our economic independence and survived the intensity of that real estate environment without all the years of meditating and being an even-tempered, cosmic soul. My practice of TM allowed me to accomplish what I did in a short time, without burning myself out.

I have been seeking self growth and its practical value was clearly apparent in my business life. I could not have succeeded in achieving my business goals without meditation and the consciousness I had developed. It enabled me to do what I had to do, but it also enabled me to evolve through this very dynamic activity. I grew in self confidence and in other qualities. It was evolutionary for me to work in business at that time of my life. My self-knowledge and self growth continued in that activity, supported by TM. When I finished those hectic years and the market slowed down, I realized who I was and what I could do in the world. You wonder about that when you spend your life cloistered in the academic world.

I was fortunate to spend 20 years to help build MIU, now MUM. However, you do not stand up and say you are going to dedicate the next 20 years of your life to a project. That is not how life works. You wake up day by day, working on project after project, and one day you realize, I've invested 20 years into this project. At the time it was very normal, fun, inspiring, and we could never think of anything better to do with our time and energy. Our young son was always more interested in money, brand names, and having stuff. He would say, why don't you and Dad go out and search out jobs and make a lot of money? I would say, we could do that, but then we would save our money to come back to MIU and round (periods of deeper meditation), and while we are here we have it all. I have spent 40 years in the subtle, transcending to refined states of consciousness. It adds up. The scientists would tell you I have increased coherence of my brainwaves. It has made me a nicer person. I have a more precise intellect, broader comprehension, and I am a better person. Someone asked Maharishi what happens to criminals when they start to meditate. Would they become better criminals? He said they would become better people, and a better person is less of a criminal. I am less of a criminal, I am smarter, I am nicer, and I am more generous. It seems like a small change, to be nicer, but it is not a small issue. It is a very big transformation to become a better person. I cannot think of anything else I would rather be.

Chapter III

Art and Creativity: van Gogh to Maharishi

Man is not on this earth merely to be happy, nor even to be simply honest. He is here to realize great things for humanity . . . Art is not vague production, transitory and isolated, but a power, which must be directed to the development and refinement of the human soul. The artist must have something to communicate, since mastery over form is not the end, but instead the adapting of form to internal significance.

— Vincent van Gogh (Graetz, 1963)

Creativity is the nectar that nourishes our intelligence and sweetens our lives. The artist climbs a hilltop to gain more vision of human capability. The enlightened artist, like the ancient Rishi, urges humanity to climb the mountain and share the vision. The unique value of art lies in its ability to articulate and evoke the full range of consciousness. Maharishi provides a technology to unfold and access the inner reservoir of creativity and intelligence, beyond duality in pure unbounded consciousness. On the practical side, artists, after they learn TM, report remarkable benefits including increased richness of perception, expanded imagination, and effortlessness in realizing ideas. In Maharishi's book *The Science of Being and Art of Living* (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1966), he discusses the experience of speaking from the level of Being. This is an experience that applies to any field of knowledge. It is a unique state of consciousness, with moments of unity, in which everything flows effortlessly—it is a great gift to the artist in particular; it is the centerpiece of the creative process:

The artist has to be a man of fully developed heart and also fully developed mind. With full development of his heart, his life will blossom in fulfillment, and with full development of his mind, his life will be in harmony with everything around him and should be the quality of his

art. The piece of art should speak of life, should blossom in life, should radiate life, and that life should be in harmony with everything in the environment (SCI, 1972).

The father of abstract art, Wassily Kandinsky, in his book *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, affirms Maharishi's perception of the purpose of art. Kandinsky believed that art was an expression of internal necessity. Every artist has something that demands personal expression, and as a child of his or her time is impelled to reflect the age and style of that time. Every artist is a servant of art, and this is a constant in all ages (Kandinsky, 1955).

Maharishi, in *The Science of Being and Art of Living*, emphasized the interconnectedness of knowledge with the individual. In my graduate years, I studied van Gogh because I was impressed by his love and compassion for humanity. Furthermore, after exploring Maharishi's insights on the origins of creativity, and reading van Gogh's letters to his brother Theo, I determined that the source of his creativity had nothing to do with suffering. Therefore, it was natural to juxtapose van Gogh with Maharishi because all human beings are connected on the level of pure consciousness. The enlightened Maharishi and the troubled seeker van Gogh share the universal nectar of creativity, but from different levels of consciousness and perception.

Maharishi was permanently experiencing the unity of individual and universal consciousness—the origin of creativity—and van Gogh was seeking to find it through his art. The similarity that I wish to highlight is the compassion for humanity, the guiding force of love that each individual expresses from his unique perspective. The artists and visionaries of every age add their voices to the human choir, and touch humanity as they pass through. The essence of significant art is the unity of ideas and material realization, which fulfills its purpose by touching the soul of another through the senses. Creativity and inspiration interlace with one another and are the quintessence that makes art such an enjoyable and uplifting experience.

Art is an instrument of human transformation because through it we can glimpse the transcendent. The ability of every human being to transcend is inherent, and the vehicles vary. Some methods are more efficient than others in facilitating the process of transcending, such as the TM technique. Art is a process of experiencing a pause of silence between each thought, in which the origin of creativity is hidden. The expressions of art can influence human

perception and consciousness like a mandala, a marriage of form, color, sound, and silence in the depths of awareness. The function of art is expressed by Robert Schumann, who declared art should send light into the depths of the human spirit, and is the artist's vocation (Thomas, 1964).

Van Gogh was an expressionist and in every painting he was sharing his visions of life, reality, and his purpose. Van Gogh felt his mission as an artist was to bring solace and love, and to transcend human boundaries and suffering. Artistically he illustrated these aspirations through two famous paintings, *The Potato Eaters* and *Starry Night*. Van Gogh stated:

“Art although produced by man's hand is something not created by hands alone, but something that wells up from a deeper source out of our soul. Art is something greater than our cleverness or knowledge of science . . . the painted portraits have a life of their own, which comes radically out of the painter's soul” (Graetz, 1963, pp. 209-210).

Van Gogh through the tools of color and form took the observer into his heartfelt compassionate perception of reality and helped him transcend the immediate and grasp the essence. The excellent book entitled *The Symbolic Language of Vincent van Gogh* (1963) highlights the symbols employed by van Gogh to express his experience of Transcendental Consciousness, and his love of using his paintings as instruments to console humanity. Van Gogh remarked in a letter to his brother Theo that:

Love is something eternal. It may change in aspect but not in essence. And there is the same difference between one who loves and the same person before he loves as between a lighted lamp and one that does not burn. This love is the light of the world in which we live. (Graetz, 1963, p. 19)

The Potato Eaters is an example of this sentiment: at first the painting appears dark, but the longer one looks, the lighter it becomes. The stable-like room with five people sitting around a table eating their supper of steaming potatoes is painted in a greenish-gray color, which produces warmth based in restfulness (Graetz, 1963). Although the figures seem isolated from one another by their glances and gestures, there is one unifying feature—the light of the lamp. The lamp throws light on everyone in the room and brings out the warming effect of the steam from the hot potatoes and coffee. This was the light of love, which emerged in the silence between each brush stroke, often described

by van Gogh as the source of his creativity. The burning lamp is van Gogh's symbol of love, and is the means to console them in their loneliness (Graetz, 1963).



The Potato Eaters

Van Gogh states:

I have already said a few words about humanness. I am not ashamed to say that for my part I have had and always shall have the need to love another creature. I find it something so natural and self understood that I cannot understand that people can usually be so indifferent to one another. (Graetz, 1963, p. 207)

In van Gogh's *Starry Night* his soul reigns in its spiritual transcendental domain and the life of the sky becomes the real life as opposed to the world of humanity. Van Gogh painted himself in the giant cypress trees that unite with the spiraling stars and clouds (Graetz, 1963).

The painting was a self-portrait of van Gogh's quest for transcending the burdens of the world, and experiencing the inner silence of spiritual awareness. Van Gogh's empathy and his attempt to eliminate human suffering were noble.



Starry Night

A contemporary example of the juxtaposition of art and Maharishi's knowledge was observable behind the granite walls of Folsom Prison (Ellis, 1979). For example, the Folsom art program was an attempt at locating the reservoir of creative intelligence described by van Gogh and Maharishi. Art is a silent language experienced in the quiet depths of consciousness and manifest in the silence of the canvas. This silent medium was the instrument whereby captive voices could transcend their physical circumstances by expressing their innermost thoughts and feelings. In listening to the prisoners and observing their visual creations one is deeply moved regarding the value of freedom, and realizes the importance of being loved, and loving. George Hannaford, an art instructor at Folsom, remarked: "Art restores a man's self image as they find that they can accomplish something aesthetic for themselves and others" (Ellis, 1979).

Many artists in contemporary society have had the idea that they are expected to be temperamental and subject to excesses of emotion. Some artists have assumed that suffering and tension are necessary for artistic development, and falsely attributed that perception as the source of van Gogh's creativity. But this thinking is the reflection of those who lack the creative intelligence to express themselves without struggling. When one has less access to the reservoir of creative intelligence, he or she naturally

strains. The artists of Folsom refuted the need for suffering—they knew its effect too well. An artist from Folsom nicknamed PeeWee states:

Art is a way of bringing out one's true being, which results in a sense of accomplishment. If I am tense, that mood comes out in the painting. When you are uptight, you force more and that affects the quality of your painting. I strive for a unity with my work. At times, when painting, I become part of the painting itself. (Ellis, 1983, p. 56)

Marquez, another artist at Folsom and successful painter, remarks:

Because of tension and stress, it is hard to obtain ideas. Also, due to lack of outer stimuli, originality is difficult to achieve. One problem in being original is due to the lack of inspiration. Thus one's subject is done over and over in different ways, resulting in repetitiveness. (Ellis, 1983, p. 56)

Color can be an avenue for expressing emotions; it is well known in art theory and from common sense perception that more somber colors express and create depressed moods, and brighter colors symbolize joy. Marquez shuts off his outer negative world and chooses the brighter colors to express an emotional effect reflecting a joyous celebration of life, rather than focusing on his present condition. Most of the artists at Folsom were self-taught. Perhaps their accomplishments are a reflection of the understanding that art unfolds because it is a natural organic part of being alive. Even in the midst of human tragedy, the inner joy of life is significant to everyone. The TM program offers to the artist a greater resource from which to draw. The mind is fundamental in integrating our perceptions and feelings; it is essential to intuitive insights. The combination of intellect and feeling enriches imagination, thereby enlivening one's originality. As stress is reduced, energy increases, and an individual naturally comes to all activities more refreshed and alert. It is important that an artist become less bound by his media during his or her creative process. Alertness is essential in order to grasp the intangibles that make a work of art significant.

On the individual level the TM technique, by increasing a person's creative abilities, allows him or her to make maximum use of the environment, both subjectively and objectively.

Van Gogh echoes the universality of this truth—that art is guided by an internal dictation in intuition and quietness. An artist creates because he must. Van Gogh in his passion and love for humanity expressed:

I sit down with a white board before the spot that strikes me, I look at what I have before my eyes, I say to myself that white board must become something . . . I see in my work an echo of what struck me. I see that nature has told me something . . . I am searching for a great thing . . . I look for the root origin of so many things at the same time. (Graetz, 1950, p. 38)

Van Gogh, because of his experiences of inner creative silence, had insights into the origin of creativity. He is an inspiration as an artist, but he suffered as a man. He had no system to integrate and intellectually understand how that silence could become a permanent feature in his life, which could have minimized his personal suffering. Maharishi has provided a practical tool for every artist and non-artist to enliven and integrate the full value of that inner silence. The experience of a unified field of creative intelligence does not compromise the uniqueness of each individual. Maharishi's simple TM technique allows the blossoming of an individual's full potential.

Chapter IV

Love Lifted Into Light

Debbie Arnold

Debbie Arnold lives in Boone, North Carolina, and her artistic process can best be described as a stream of consciousness. She has produced more than 400 paintings over the last 35 years, expressing fluidity and lightness learned through the years as a watercolorist, which she combines with the ability of acrylics to be layered. The process creates unique paintings with as many as 15 to 20 layers of transparent paint. Debbie remarks that she normally has no preconceived ideas or plans when starting a painting. She presently does not use drawings, models, or photographs, and begins a painting spontaneously with color and texture, but without a subject, employing different techniques. Debbie continues to layer transparent colors and textures to form a veil painting—rendering an effect that is like looking through water (Arnold, 2011). Her accomplishments include several one-and two-person shows, and numerous juried and invitational exhibits. Debbie’s paintings are included in several public, private, and corporate collections.

Debbie is a hidden jewel with an inner wisdom and insight into the human condition. Her work, as the work of many artists, is a self-portrait telling the story of an evolving soul. She recognizes her innocent role as a contributor to a better world by unfolding her own inner silence and beauty, and sharing it with the world through color and form. Debbie’s art and creativity whisper a message of illumination that the transcendental flow of consciousness is within and accessible to everyone; she creates a visual rendering of its manifestation. Selected paintings have been included in this chapter to highlight her immense talent. Debbie’s extensive collection can be viewed at her website: www.arnoldfineart.com

Debbie: What is the purpose of *A Symphony of Silence*?

George Ellis (GE): One purpose of the book is to elucidate that the experience of Transcendental Consciousness and inner stillness is available to everyone, and is fundamental to a fulfilled life. We need to find tools and knowledge that can accelerate the process of integrating the inner silence of pure consciousness in our daily thought and action. The TM method integrates the inner stillness of pure consciousness, and breaks the illusion of duality

through the embrace of unity. Regarding your paintings, they are beautiful and reflect an evolution of consciousness, and we want to tell that story. From early childhood did you know you wanted to be an artist?

Debbie: Yes, according to my mother, as soon as she handed me anything I would start drawing. Art has always been a part of my life, and I have been passionate and focused. I have had experiences throughout my life of expanded awareness because of my connection with nature, and I believe the first time I thought of it consciously, I was 5 years old. I remember being outside, barefoot, running through the grass and clover. I came inside, and my mother told me I needed to put shoes on because I might step on a bee, and the bees would sting me. I considered this statement one of the most shocking comments anyone had ever said to me, because I knew that the bees and I were friends, and I questioned—why they would sting me? I asked my mother why they would do that because the bees were my friends. The disparity between her viewpoint and mine made me begin to realize how different my world-view was from everyone around me at that time.



Celestial Gardener®

I was born with an innocent sense of spirituality and throughout my childhood experienced joy, connection, and passion. I believe most children share this innocent experience—you are born with this inner reality and then people talk you out of it. As a child it was just there, a deep connection to everything

around me, a deep love. I was fortunate to be born into a very loving family. I had a wonderful childhood and support for my art from my parents. My art has evolved through different stages. For example, because of limited resources I used myself as a model for *Celestial Gardener*, which I consider a self-portrait of my inner feelings; it was like putting together a puzzle.

In *Celestial Gardener*, I was thinking about how flowers have their own light, and trying to convey the idea that the flowers were forces in life. I also had an interest in different textures. It was the creation of a subconscious puzzle of textures. Everything was fabricated out of my imagination. Most of my paintings came from my inner inspiration because I did not paint directly from nature. My paintings often were the result of images emerging from within my consciousness. At the time, I was making a transition from watercolors to acrylic. *Celestial Gardener* was a transitional painting where I was learning how to use acrylic as watercolors. I strongly relate to color more than any other component in my art. I do not make color choices consciously. I will sometimes use color in mixtures to convey different feelings. In *Celestial Gardener*, I wanted to convey the feeling of light. For example, there are purples and yellows in the painting, which are subtle; yellow makes purple more purple and purple makes yellow more yellow, and the mixtures helped me to convey the feeling of light. I wanted to make the colors in the flowers and the moon brighter. I have been painting for over 35 years, and I do it both consciously and unconsciously.

GE: Kandinsky (1947) in his book *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* discussed the spiritual power of color and form. What is your experience with color and form?

Debbie: Color is like eating chocolate cake, or smelling a wonderful fragrance; it is a three-dimensional vehicle. I love color; it is a passion.

GE: Color within form creates movement. If you take certain colors such as blue, it will pull the spectator into the painting, and yellow moves outward to embrace the spectator. Van Gogh used color with form as an instrument to express his love for humanity. Color moves in different directions, and according to Kandinsky when you put it into a structure it has different effects.

Debbie: I do not analyze or choose color based on an emotion that I am trying to express. A color chooses me.

GE: If I am interpreting you correctly these colors are emerging from within you?

Debbie: Exactly, my job is to get out of the way.

GE: That is what the legendary musician Paul Horn said about jazz improvisation.

Debbie: I have read some of what he said, and it seems we work in a similar way. I would do things to keep my mind occupied or listen to the radio while I was painting. It sounds strange to people because I was trying to move my individual consciousness out of the way. Does this make sense?

GE: It is not that you moved your consciousness out of the way because you are consciousness.

Debbie: The ego part of myself.

GE: TM is a technique to transcend thought and effortlessly helps the artist to move out of the way. Have you noticed that there are moments during your creative process where there is a sense of non-attachment, and everything is happening almost automatically?

Debbie: Yes, that is the entire point. I have learned through the years to get out of my own way.

GE: The practical benefit of TM for an artist is that it naturally cultivates a different style of functioning of the nervous system. An individual can transcend the boundaries of the senses and become an observer of his or her creative process. If that experience is available during the creative process the artist effortlessly does not create obstacles in the process. The diversions you were speaking about had the intent of accomplishing that goal, but they actually could defeat the objective because they divided the mind and required effort.

Debbie: I had been trying to trick myself into moving my individual ego out of the way.

GE: This is exactly what I was discussing with you when we began our conversation. People complicate the process because they do not understand intellectually that setting aside the individual ego during the creative process can be cultivated to happen spontaneously. TM cultivates higher states of consciousness in which the individual spontaneously witnesses the creative process and activity in general. Higher states of consciousness increase in the artist the experience of refined perception, and identification with a non-changing field of Self-knowledge. In other words, an individual is no longer controlled or dominated by experiences through the senses, and the individual identifies that

their true nature is unbounded. That is also one reason your painting *Celestial Gardener* caught my attention; it reflects an inner beauty and a refinement of perception.

Debbie: Many of my paintings are like that and reflect the inner reality from where all of my artwork emerges.

GE: In your website Galleries your paintings are listed under Intuitive, Landscapes, the Feminine Mystique, and so forth (Arnold, 2012). I assume they represent your evolution as an artist. Does the Intuitive artwork represent a unique step in your evolution?

Debbie: The intuitive pieces represent creation without preconception, which is a journey that I have been on for many years. *Celestial Gardener* was a visioning process. It was an idea of a feeling, but it was still a conception; it was pre-conceptualized and formulated in my mind, and then I would deliberately create it.

GE: Nevertheless, it emerged from within you.

Debbie: Yes, but it was a deliberate creation. I posed for the *Celestial Gardener* painting; I drew it, and so forth. They all come from within me. About 10 years ago I stopped painting for some time, almost seven years, because I had a child, and wanted to devote my full attention to my child. I quit because I was obsessed with painting, and when I had a child I wanted to be a good mother. It did not have to be either/or, but it was simply a choice. When I came back to painting, I decided I could find a balance. At first, when I began to paint again, I believed I was out of practice because the painting seemed to be taking over. I would have a conception or an idea about what I wanted to create, which was a deliberate creating process. However, I found the painting process was taking unexpected directions from my original idea or feeling. The painting process was moving in a direction that I was not consciously planning. It appeared that I was driven by my inner Self to let go, but at first it did not feel like a choice. I would be going along, and I knew what I wanted to do, but it felt that I was not allowed to do it. I could not consciously create in the same way I had been. I finally realized the inner message was to let go of the process—let go. It took a while, but over the course of a couple of years the intuitive paintings emerged with no preconceptions when I started to paint. My job was to remove my individual ego out of the way, create from a totally subconscious level, and remove the boundaries.

I needed to remove the boundaries, the judgments, the idea of something not working, and that I should try something else. I had to learn to create with no judgment. It took time, but all the paintings in the Intuitive Gallery were created by letting the process take over; it was an amazing experience, and I began to take photographs of the process. It was like being in a darkroom and developing a photo, and watching images emerge. You put the negative into a fluid and what you observe is that images gradually emerge; the images then appear on different parts of the negative, and eventually the artwork becomes a complete image. I was in awe of what was taking place. I had no idea that I could do what I was doing. I might have been working on the painting upside down or sideways from what eventually ended up happening. I did not make any judgment regarding what the painting would become, until maybe halfway through the process, when I would start seeing what it was. My job was to keep my ego out of the process, and let the canvas become what it wanted to become. The complicated pictures came together and told a story of a spiritual process.

When I look at the Intuitive Galleries they are telling stories. In September of 2001, I began a painting that I called *The Blue Wall* (Arnold, 2011). I was going to paint a lily pond, but when I originally started the painting it was a beautiful peaceful place; it was more about the colors than anything to me. I added a blue mountain wall because I believed I needed to feel safe from the world. Something within me pushed me to do it, although I did not want to do it, but it had to be done. This happened right before September 11, 2001. After September 11th, it made perfect sense that I needed to be secluded and safe. It was with this painting that I began to become cognizant of the intuitive process.

After the Blue Wall painting, I did not paint intuitively again until the spring of 2005. The painting *First Sign of Spring* represented light breaking through in a dark place. It was a self-portrait; I was going through a difficult time in my life, and I realized that what I had to do was to let go. That painting is a manifestation of letting go in the creative process. This was the first intuitive painting I had ever done. I just started with color and let whatever happened, happen. The next intuitive painting *Out of the Woods* was fascinating because the figure in the painting was just standing there. I thought this was a landscape of color and texture. Then I looked and saw a shape in the center of the painting, and I just enhanced the figure. I did not draw it; it was just there.

GE: From your observations on the creative process, you are describing yourself as an instrument to manifest creative intelligence.

Debbie: Exactly, I was just the conduit. *Out of the Woods* was completed in 2007. I have always been a spiritual person, but at this moment a large life passage began to take place and accelerated my personal and artistic evolution.



First Sign of Spring[®]

GE: It appears that your process of creating art is reminiscent of a mandala.

Debbie: Yes, that is a great way to put it because I am intuitively being led forward, and I have no clue, but it is a very specific direction.

GE: When you say you are being led, I interpret it to mean you are surrendering to a higher level of consciousness within yourself, which is directing your life rather than being controlled through your senses. Would that be correct?

Debbie: Yes, and that has become my path to walk, and I walk it through intuition. As I continue to walk down this path, situations arise. When I finished the painting *Out of the Woods*, it reflected back to me that I was emerging from a period of my life in which I had been completely focused on the three-dimensional world. I had passed through a period of my life where I had been focused in a world I did not like very much. The physical world has never made a lot of sense to me. It has never felt right. We focus on all the wrong things in life; it was like a suit that did not fit me very well. When I finished the painting *Out of the Woods*, the message to me was—you are coming out of the darkness into the light. I then moved to the next level of development, which

was to seek to arrive at the Self. I was fortunate to participate in a community of spiritual ladies who provided the support and strength to move forward. It is similar to when people come together to practice the TM-Sidhis and you raise your vibration, which is harder to achieve alone. I understand, now that I am self-sufficient, and have the capability to accelerate my inner evolution.

In the summer of 2007 the next intuitive painting *Butterfly Dream* was created. This painting reflects an inner message to renew the TM experience to accelerate and integrate the process of my evolution. I looked at *Butterfly Dream* as a meditation painting. That is when I began to let go and move completely into the intuitive painting process. That was the message that came to me from the painting. Although this was happening to me personally, I felt something was happening to the planet. The paintings seem to follow a planetary guideline or evolution of consciousness.

GE: Kandinsky, in his book *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, speaks of the artist as being a servant of his or her time, and they have no choice but to express an internal necessity as a voice of the time.



Butterfly Dream®

Debbie: Exactly. When I first started thinking about what I was doing with the intuitive paintings the feeling I had was that I was creating beauty and light. I was attempting to bring beauty and light into a world that needed it badly. I believed I was transmuting energy in some way. As I created the intuitive paintings, it was not that the paintings in themselves were important, but instruments to ground positive energy into the planet containing love, light, and beauty. The intention behind the paintings was similar to the efforts of many people helping to raise the vibration of the collective consciousness of the planet to create balance.

In 2007 a shift began in my life with the three-dimensional world, which led to nowhere. It seems like I needed to look somewhere else, and the only other place to look was within. *Drifting Thru the Day* is about surrender, it is about letting go and surrendering completely to the process.

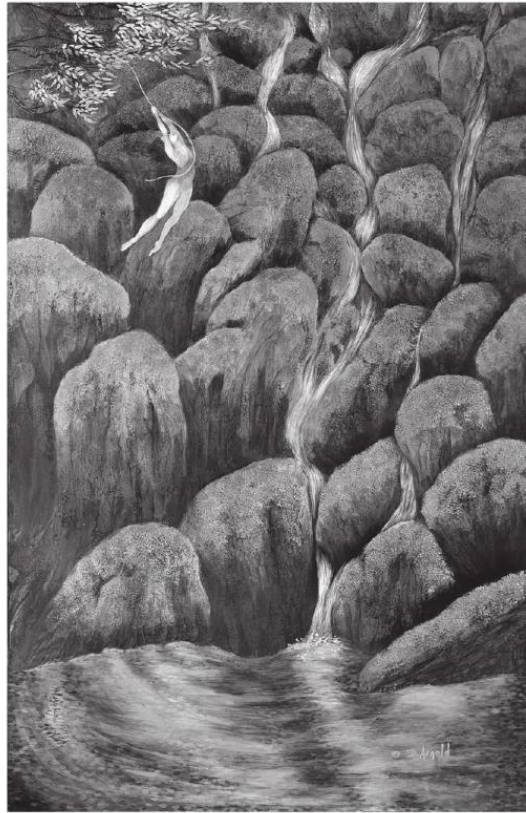


Drifting Thru the Day©

That is the way I saw *Drifting Thru the Day*, it was an intuitive painting, but it was also co-creative because the background was intuitive, and the woman in the water, I believed, needed to be there. When I finished looking at this painting, I realized it was about surrendering completely. The aspect of the painting that bothered me for a while was that the woman in the water did not look alive, she appeared dead. No matter what I did she did not look alive. But then I realized that this is what death is. Death is the ultimate surrender to the light, to the Divine—the returning to the great consciousness. When I looked at this painting, I reflected that you get to a place in your life where you cannot plan and cannot force, or push; so what you do is you surrender, and let the water support you. It is like you are floating, and the support of nature is always there, but if you do not surrender to it, you are not allowing the natural evolutionary process of life to happen. I believed I needed to control my life; my ego thought that I needed to be in charge. However, I recognized I could not do it anymore. *Drifting Thru the Day* is about surrendering to the God-force; it is about drifting and flowing with the stream; it is about letting your canoe go downstream. Insights emerge in my consciousness during the process of creating these paintings, but the knowledge or understanding came once the paintings were created.

I have begun to increase my trust in the process and the path. After I completed the painting dealing with surrender, the next step in my artistic evolution was *Leap of Faith*. In *Leap of Faith* the turbulent water is flowing over rocks; it looks very dangerous but the woman in the painting is making a leap of faith.

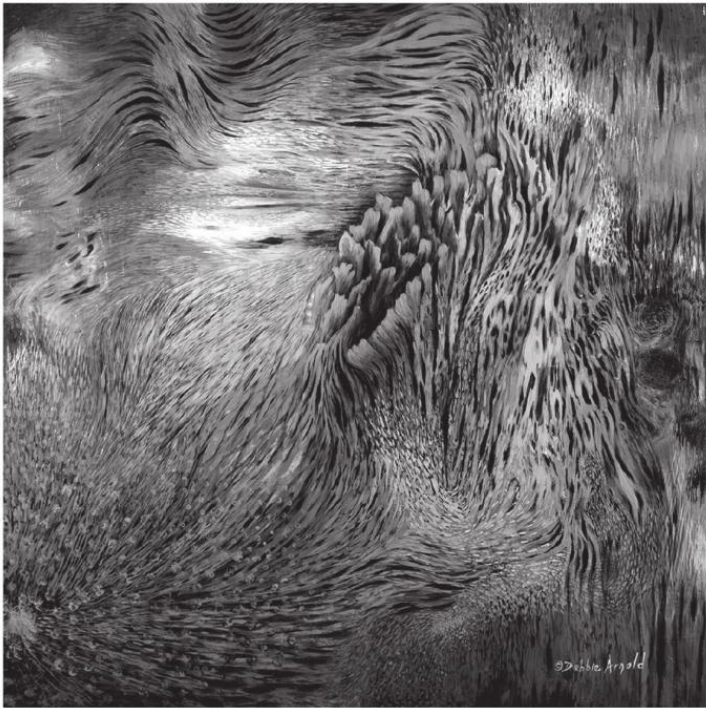
The woman featured in the painting is preparing to let go, and that was the *Leap of Faith* taking place within myself. I was prepared to follow wherever my creative process would take me. In August 2008 I created *Celestial Bodies*, which I considered to be significant. The reason that I believe it was significant is because it reflects the inner energy beginning to rise within me. The time of just surrendering and letting go was past, and the inner vibration of consciousness was rising; I felt a growth of consciousness, and that is what this painting represents to me, an expanded growth of consciousness. Most of the paintings after the creation of *Celestial Bodies* have been about the growth of consciousness. In 2008, my paintings became completely intuitive. I began with collage, or sometimes an old palette, and would smear it on a new canvas, completely in an unformed way. It did not seem to matter how I started. I would start



Leap of Faith®

with a random composition, with whatever color was available. I created an underpainting, and when I looked at the canvas, I would become attracted to something, a line, a color, or whatever. Many times it was very subtle. Then I took it one step at a time. It was like walking down a path in the woods at night, and you can only see the next step you are taking; that is how many of my intuitive paintings were created. With several of them, I started realizing what was happening during the creative process. I began to photograph the process, and when anyone looks at the photographs, he or she can see the development unfolding—you can see how one step leads to the next. This is how most of the intuitive paintings in the gallery were created because they emerged with no preconceived notion. I completed a painting entitled *Transformation*, which was full of symbolism. Before *Transformation*, I believed that my perception during the creative process was not fully in my control. After *Transformation* a shift in my consciousness put the ball completely in my court. I realized I was leading

myself. I came to understand that what I had perceived as an abstract guiding force was an experience of connecting with Divine Intelligence or the inner stillness of pure consciousness. At first, it felt as if something had been taken away from me. The process of my continued artistic evolution and expansion of consciousness found expression in two stages of *Eruption of Water*.



Eruption of Water®

I photographed the beginning stage of evolution of *Eruption of Water*, and a second image represented the finished product. *Eruption of Water* was a strange piece. It was like two paintings trying to exist on the same canvas, and I could not reconcile them with each other for about six months. The left side was a peaceful image of a sunset and a waterfall, and the right side was an explosion of energy. It felt like new energy was pouring into the planet but could not be absorbed. When the time was finally right I completed the work very quickly. The images that reflected the beginning of my non-representational period were very gentle and beautiful. I felt like new or more refined energy was coalescing into matter. I had a new state of awareness, in which the veil was lifting. The abstract art that I am creating at this time is new to me, and

the creation process is easier, lighter, more fun, and with much less attachment. The art reflects the evolution of my consciousness.

GE: Human beings should appreciate that each one of us can open a door to ourselves through an innocent shift in our attention. Art helps us not to become trapped by our intellectualism, or the inner cacophony caused by our own thoughts.

Debbie: Brilliant thoughts are fun, like a pretty dress; they are window dressing for the ego and can fool us. The delicate intuitions, the inner voices of silence are the ones that whisper to us like children. We need to change the channel we have been listening to. As we change the channel, we expand our consciousness, and thereby change everything about our life. During the process of my life, I have realized that I have been growing and enlarging my sense of self—it has not been an easy process. There is a process of rest and activity as in all of nature. Rest has been important to my development. Stillness in my mind transcends the intrusions and demands of living. There needs to be lightness, a creative play matched to balance the challenges of life. Intuitive thought is experienced during the creative process of discovery. Instinctive thought often comes with strong emotions that propel us into action. The deeper inner intuitive voice is without emotion, more subtle and gentle in comprehending the stillness. We turn to pure energy beyond thought as a flower turns to the light seeking natural nourishment. We sense the answers, and the habit of the experience is facilitated by methods that effortlessly allow us to transcend the boundaries of duality.

GE: Life is full of miraculous moments—we call them miracles because we do not understand the mechanics of nature. For example, we see the transformation of a butterfly, or the human functioning of the body, and it all appears miraculous, but it is natural law unfolding. You described transcending the boundaries of duality and contributing to society. I concur because we create from the invisible center of our consciousness making visible our ideas, and manifesting our compassion in the process. Compassion is love lifted into light. Love resonates beyond the emotions from the inner stillness of pure consciousness. Empathy modifies our vibration to touch humanity, and love raises the vibration of the person touched by kindness.

Debbie: As an artist, I recognize I can play and contribute to the visual history of civilization. Each generation builds upon the last. Even in the middle

of so much negativity in the world, highlighted through the media, the positive is dominant. I heard a beautiful expression: divine intelligence and natural law will not take us where the grace of God will not protect us. In these difficult economic times people have become afraid. However, pressures can force us to turn within for answers and rely on our inner strength. My artistic process and TM have been an instrument of transcending; the experience and habit of transcending have perpetuated the cultivation of consciousness and the refinement of perception. My voice expressed through art enriches my life, expands the inner silence, and awakens an innocence previously lost.

I am trying to do more documentation of my process. I wish I had started earlier, but as I stated, the intuitive paintings originally felt like a fluke to me. I think I was rejecting the process because my ego thought it was impossible. I am finding that there are a lot of “impossible” things that I am doing. You asked me if I thought I was transcending while I painted. The answer is yes, during the co-creative work in which “I” am involved in the decision making. I would say that I paint in a transcendental state part of the time. I lose track of time. I am in a joyful state for the most part; I am calm and centered. However, when I am doing the intuitive painting, it is more like being pregnant. I sense that the painting is there, but I have to be extremely patient and let it evolve naturally. I work on these paintings for several months, working on them only when I feel the impulse to take the next step. It is more like a dialogue within me. “You want me to do what?” “That looks stupid,” “I could do that far better than this” and the answer I receive is: “Just do it.” That is why I said that my main job is to get out of my own way and listen to the deep inner prompts. I have grown to love the process; it is like giving birth, but you don’t know until the end what you have created. The child is part of you, but he or she is not your property or possession; the child came through you, but has an individual identity and independent existence. When I look back, I see that I was learning lessons about myself in the process of creating my art. I have done several pieces over the years that were premonitions of important events in my life. Sometimes it takes years to see what a painting is saying to me. I also know that if I were less skilled, and did not have the experience of years of painting, I could not do this.

GE: As an experienced and accomplished artist, what is your message to other artists and the public regarding creativity?

Debbie: Creativity is simply allowing the greater consciousness to flow through. It is being in a place of non-resistance, and allowing the joy and the passion of life to flow through. All life is an expression of the greater consciousness; it is life flowing through in a different way. Creativity is the way for the artist to connect on a very deep level of trust and allowing surrender. From my experience that is where the deepest level of creativity comes from; it requires trusting the process, by removing the ego, judgments, and comparisons. I knew this experience as a child, and it has evolved to a level of understanding where I realize it is a way of life. A true transcendental experience can be integrated within a person's consciousness, and become a permanent feature of daily life. Life is not something that happens to you; it is a flowing toward home. My art has helped me to be like a flower that opens, grows, and strives to move in the direction of the light, which nourishes life. My journey is taking me into a deeper and deeper place allowing me to live in a three-dimensional world with an expanded consciousness. That is what art and transcending through TM does for me, and that is also where mankind is headed. Humanity needs to bring that expanded consciousness into a three-dimensional world.

Debbie's creative process affirms her artistic and personal desire to spontaneously create art as a natural flow from her experience of Transcendental Consciousness. Debbie shared that she had many moments of non-attachment and witnessing herself in activity, which can be a symptom of a higher state of consciousness. These experiences have been expressed by artists, poets, and philosophers throughout human history. Her experience represents the universal nature and existence of the ineffable inner stillness that is shared by all of humanity. TM provides a systematic method to enliven Self-awareness, and science offers empirical credibility regarding the repeatability of the experience. Debbie also mentioned the importance of rest and activity in her life. TM provides a unique restful alertness through the experience of transcending to finer levels of mental activity. The activity of the creative process is a complement to the inward process of transcending and can be an instrument for developing Cosmic Consciousness, a state of consciousness in which non-changing Self-awareness is not lost or overshadowed by the world of the senses. The development of Self-knowledge in the context of art can result from the

interacting balance between experiencing the inner silence of pure consciousness through TM, and the activity experienced in the creative process.

In the process of creating her art, Debbie cultivated a refined attention and innocently had moments of transcending. Additionally, her experience with TM created a natural memory in the nervous system of settling to quieter levels of mental activity. She became comfortable and familiar during her creative process, which has expressed itself in her paintings and tells the tale of a *Celestial Gardener*.

My conversation with Debbie enlivened my memories of the writings of Herman Hesse, in particular his discussions of the internal struggles faced by human beings between their inner life of self-referral, and the outer world as experienced through the senses. Just as the paintings of Debbie were self-portraits, the literary work of Herman Hesse reflected his inner evolution and understanding of life. In Hesse's literary work *Narcissus and Goldmund* he symbolically explores the journey of the active life versus the contemplative life. Hesse tells the story of the human journey to gain self-knowledge and explores the process of inner awakening. Hesse's spiritual journey was beautifully expressed in his book *Siddhartha* (1951) that presented the journey of two friends traveling their individual paths. The book highlights the power of experience and intellectual understanding. In *Siddhartha* there is the enlightened ferryman Vasudeva, who helps seekers cross the stream of life, achieve Self-knowledge, and become stream winners. Hesse immersed himself in studying the sacred teachings of the East in search of Transcendental Consciousness and enlightenment.

In contemporary society certified teachers of TM, similar to Vasudeva in *Siddhartha*, employ the tools of ancient Vedic wisdom along with modern technology to help seekers to cross the stream and transcend the duality within human consciousness. Debbie in her description of her artistic process is describing the same journey of inner awakening that everyone is seeking. The goal of enlightenment as expressed in *Siddhartha* is mirrored in the artistic aspirations of Debbie; they are fulfilled through the wisdom and legacy of Maharishi's knowledge and system for experiencing Transcendental Consciousness.

Chapter V

Philosophy: Love of Wisdom

Jonathan Shear, Ph.D.

Jonathan Shear is Affiliated Associate Professor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), where he has taught since 1987. He received his Ph.D. in Philosophy from the University of California at Berkeley, where he was a Woodrow Wilson Fellow. He also was a Fulbright Scholar in the Philosophy of Science at the London School of Economics. Since the early 1960s his work has focused on the use of meditation practices and related scientific research to expand our knowledge of human consciousness. He has published and lectured widely in North America, Europe and Asia, and was the founding Managing Editor of The Journal of Consciousness Studies.

George Ellis (GE): I could not think of a more appropriate person than you to speak about philosophy. In the first section of the book I wanted to deal with the humanities, and philosophy is a cornerstone. What happened in your life that put you in the direction of seeking deeper knowledge, such as tai chi and meditation?

Jonathan Shear (Jon): To tell the truth, in the beginning I was not interested in anything spiritual. Then in college I began studying under a deep philosopher, Herbert Marcuse. Marcuse argued that a great percentage of the problems modern society faced resulted from its superficiality, and the fact that we had forgotten all of the deep levels of inner awareness where Being, bliss, and the deepest values of the heart are located. I read his work, and he made sense to me. In the summer of 1961 I experimented with some methods that produced altered states of consciousness. The experiences caused me to reflect that if this is evocable in someone as unaesthetic as me, it must be in everyone. I started to write about these experiences.

Soon afterward a friend took me to a lecture being given by Alan Watts at Brandeis University, where my friend and I were students. The talk was very interesting. At the end of the lecture I went to the back of the hall and threw

out the manuscript I was working on. Four of the manuscript's six metaphors turned out to be traditional Eastern metaphors about consciousness, and it was obvious to me that what I had been writing about was not a new topic, but had been studied extensively by Eastern traditions for millennia. Writing anything further on my own now seemed to be a waste of time. What I needed instead was further study, and I decided to look deeply into the subject as soon as I graduated. This led me to the study of Zen and Judo, a Zen art, the next year when I was Fulbright Scholar in the Philosophy of Science in London. Later, of course, I started TM.

GE: What led you to start the TM technique?

Jon: I practiced Zen an hour a day for five years, along with my Judo practice. During this time I also became aware of Maharishi's teaching. Then, while I was working on my doctorate at the University of California at Berkeley, a close friend of mine asked me about Maharishi's meditation, and I told him I thought it seemed authentic. My friend went to an introductory lecture, which was given by Maharishi himself; he started TM, and I could see immediate changes within a day or two. I learned myself at the next available course, in February 1968. I was not impressed the first day, but after two days I was very impressed, and within two weeks I was totally convinced that this was a very profound technique. When Maharishi came to the United States to give a course that summer in Squaw Valley, California, I took time off from my work at Berkeley. It was obvious to me that Maharishi had brought something that was very real, not just words. Instead of being simply good-sounding talk, the stuff of most philosophers, what Maharishi brought was real experience. With his technique the average person could easily settle deep inside to that level of pure consciousness.

I was one of those lucky people who happened to get good results from Zen. I knew how to concentrate. I had already had plenty of practice with extreme inner concentration while working towards my degree in pure mathematics. Nevertheless, I would only experience transcending once every two or three months after years of practicing with Zen. However, most people have a lot of difficulty concentrating like that. Zen teachers would say maybe one percent of the population might experience deep transcending, even after years of hard work. So I was really surprised when after only two or three days of practicing TM I found myself as deep as I had ever gotten, which was very

infrequent with Zen. It is clear that TM allows the majority of people to begin to have these types of experiences in just a few days. It's effortless and immediate. The contrast with Zen couldn't be greater.

GE: To step back for a moment, what is your family background? It seems you had excellent academic capability and became a scholar studying at eminent institutions throughout the world.

Jon: Yes, my family background created a solid ground for this. My father was the first person in America who showed and proved that chemicals and environmental pollutants could cause cancer. He headed up research on chemotherapy for the National Institutes of Health for decades. When he passed away, newspapers called him "the father of chemotherapy." My background valued intelligence. Conversations at the dinner table regularly included guests who were international scientists. I was born in Washington, DC and raised in Bethesda, Maryland. My father had moved there to help set up the National Institutes of Health.

GE: In regard to philosophy, many people believe it does not have practical relevance to their life because it seems that it is just arguments about justified belief and knowledge. How do you address the superficiality in philosophical discourse being taught in most universities?

Jon: It is not the philosophers' fault. Western civilization made a big change as it emerged from the plagues into the modern world in the beginning of the 17th century. The ancient knowledge was lost, the medieval "age of faith" was shattered, and modern science seeking to be based on knowledge, rather than faith, evolved. Science relies on the two things that usually appear most certain, namely logic, which includes mathematics, and direct experience; it is also very democratic because anyone following the appropriate methodology should be able to obtain the same results. The deep inner life that was at the heart of wisdom in the ancient world was not accessible systematically, and most people couldn't find it no matter how hard they looked. Hence, many of the influential ancient discussions regarding the self and wisdom now just seemed to be mere speculation-based opinions rather than reliable *knowledge*.

So modern philosophers from Descartes, Hume, and Kant onward began to focus on the fundamental question of what knowledge really is. Knowledge, of course, is a function of consciousness. So understanding knowledge requires understanding consciousness. Without knowledge of how to explore the inner

domain systematically, philosophers have had to rely on speculation, words, and arguments to address its fundamental problems.

What is needed is a way to investigate inner life systematically, and this is part of why I found Maharishi's approach so exciting—it seemed to offer us just the sort of systematic, culture-independent approach to investigating consciousness that modern science and philosophy need. Modern philosophy does very good work in logic and epistemology, but on the whole, as you noted, it often seems to be an unanchored web of words. So what is necessary is to turn inside systematically. Knowledge, the topic of epistemology, is a special kind of relationship between the knower and the known—so if you do not know what the knower is, it is hopeless to try and figure out what knowledge is.

GE: Jon, this is an important point because I was in a doctoral program in organizational leadership and they offered a course in epistemology. The first two weeks of the course the students were disturbed because they were reading what appeared to be nonsense. The business students assumed that philosophy had minimal value for their profession because most of the texts' authors were just playing with words. We also were studying the Greeks in philosophy, and I know you have written and published extensively on Plato. Therefore, I am curious regarding your opinion on whether Socrates was a real historical figure, or was he just an invention of Plato?

Jon: People argue about it, but I believe there is little doubt that Socrates existed. Most—but not all—of what we know about Socrates does come from Plato. Plato wrote his dialogues over a forty-year period after Socrates died. Plato remarked that the Socrates of his later dialogues should be understood as Socrates “made modern.” It appears that the Socrates of his earlier dialogues was intended to be an accurate portrayal. It is of particular interest that Plato described Socrates as a meditator, who employed well-known meditation techniques, including the use of an *epidos* or mantra. It appears Socrates had deep transcending experiences and special abilities similar to those described in Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*, and reported by people practicing the TM-Sidhi program as taught by Maharishi.

The texts are very clear here, and obvious to any philosopher who has even a little experience of transcending and knowledge of the relevant techniques. Although, not having this kind of experience and knowledge most modern

philosophers ignore things like the facts in the *Republic*—Plato’s most widely read dialogue. Plato emphasizes repeatedly that the *main theme* of philosophy is to learn to redirect your attention and go inward to the source of thought, and insists that without doing this one will not have wisdom. Similarly clear but almost universally overlooked points can be found in other widely read dialogues such as the *Phaedo* and the *Symposium*.

GE: Can you find these aphorisms in the writings of Plato?

Jon: They stand out. I used to travel and give lectures and presentations to philosophy departments’ colloquia on this subject. At one colloquium held at Dartmouth College some thirty-five years ago, after my talk, the head of the department turned to his expert on Plato and asked him what he thought. The professor, a Greek scholar from Greece, replied: “He knows his texts.” He was familiar with all the texts I was explaining, but he had never thought about how to interpret them literally, as I was doing, because he had lacked the experience of transcending and knowledge of the relevant techniques. His reply opened the whole colloquium to a very lively, friendly, and satisfying discussion of Plato’s texts and their implications, ancient and modern.

GE: There is a debate in epistemology between *a priori* and *a posteriori* knowledge. How do you think scientific discoveries on Transcendental Consciousness synthesize all of these unnecessary debates between these philosophers?

Jon: Debates have a value in clarifying the issues and making theories clear. Science makes an effort to clarify theories and then goes about testing and defending them. Let me discuss *a priori* knowledge. What is *a priori* knowledge? *A priori* means “prior to experience,” so *a priori* knowledge refers to knowledge that is supposed to be built-in and brought *to* experience, in contrast to knowledge that is gained *from* it.

Plato believed in *a priori* knowledge, and many people in the modern world have argued against it, with very intelligent positions. Their general idea was that the mind is merely a “blank slate.” This was the dominant view in much of European and American philosophy fifty years ago. Two ways that science has challenged this thinking follow from the existence of computers and from work in neuroscience. First, by analogy with computers: computers have to have built-in “knowledge.” Unless there is a “read-only” memory, and there are hard-wired categories and operations, the computer cannot learn anything or compute at all. Logically, the case for the mind appears to be similar. Second,

with neurophysiology we are now uncovering innate neurological structures related to *a priori* knowledge. Such considerations now appear to make it clear that the mind has its own *a priori* knowledge.

GE: I was sitting with Maharishi, in a private meeting at Humboldt University, when a couple of educators brought up John Locke and his theory of the mind being a blank slate. Maharishi closed his eyes and sat in silence for a few seconds; he opened his eyes and stated that John Locke was speaking about pure consciousness. When you say that *a priori* knowledge is prior to experience, does that change when you transcend the duality of thought and the individual self is merged in the transcendental self? Is that not another type of experience?

Jon: Yes, but when philosophers say “prior to experience” they are referring to the idea that when a child is born he or she has a kind of knowledge “built in.” This built-in knowledge is not of particular things. It amounts to an automatic reflex to structure things in a certain way. Transcendental Consciousness, as Maharishi describes it, is the ground of all experience. Thus, even though it can be experienced in meditation, it would be *a priori* in the sense of existing prior to all the kinds of experiences philosophers ordinarily refer to. So it’s both prior to experience and *experienceable*.

Ordinary knowledge, as Maharishi’s tradition analyzes it, arises from the *interactions* of sensory and other inputs with pure consciousness. Pure consciousness seems to have nothing in it—no colors, sounds, taste, feelings, thoughts, and so forth, but it is full of potential, like a seed. Therefore, when pure consciousness interacts with sensory inputs it produces the conscious experiences. Just like a computer: you enter data, the data interacts with what is built into the computer, and you receive outputs in response—calculations, images on your screen, and so forth. Similarly, it is the interactions of consciousness with the world, through the senses and other built-in mental faculties that structure our knowledge.

GE: This is a beautiful description, your explanation is exquisite. When you look at this battle that went on among philosophers, your description appears to resolve this dilemma in philosophy between the two extremes of empiricism and rationalism.

Jon: It resolves part of it, but more is needed. The experience of Unity Consciousness, in which, according to Maharishi, you can experience the

mechanics of the interaction of consciousness and its inputs, rather than just the product of these mechanics, might well be able to address many of these further philosophical questions. This would be an empirically based approach. In modern Western philosophy, Kant and others who have argued for the existence of *a priori* knowledge by contrast have generally only argued on purely logical grounds. Thousands of years ago Plato took a more experiential approach.

GE: How does Plato differ from Kant?

Jon: There is no doubt that Plato emphasized the importance of direct meditation-related practices and experiences. We do not know whether he had such experiences himself. Nevertheless, his texts clearly described standard meditation practices, and experiences such as removing attention from the senses and the world, then from sensory-oriented thinking, and finally turning it away from all thinking whatsoever until one comes to experience the inner *source* of thought and experience. Plato calls this source “the Good,” describes it as intangible, beyond color and form, identified with existence itself, and associated with pure unbounded bliss. In many ways the practices Plato describes parallel aspects of the TM and the TM-Sidhi programs. However, there is one all-important difference: Plato makes it clear that the practices he describes are extremely difficult, and unlikely to produce the desired experiences even after decades of effort, while the techniques of the TM and TM-Sidhi programs are, as we know, virtually effortless and surprisingly effective. Plato even discussed Socrates having and teaching the employment of a method similar to TM’s use of a mantra as a vehicle for transcending.

GE: What do you mean about Socrates having a mantra?

Jon: This is in the dialogue *Charmides*. In the Middle Ages, I’m told, this was the first Platonic dialogue people usually studied, but now people seldom read it. In this dialogue Socrates is described as having received an *epidos* from the doctors at the court of the king of Thrace. The technical definition of *epidos* is “a word which when repeated is said to bring health to the body, wholeness to the mind, and fulfillment to the aspirant.” This is obviously equivalent to what we call a mantra. Plato describes Socrates as knowing how to teach people to use this *epidos* not only to help cure headaches, but to produce *sophrosyne*, the highest virtue of the Greeks, associated with temperance, wholeness of mind, self-knowledge, and wisdom.

GE: How do these practices relate to the question of *a priori* knowledge?

Jon: Plato believed that for every single idea we have, there exists a structure built into the nature of intelligence. That is what Plato's pure "Forms" are, *a priori* structures of intelligence. They are supposed to exist on a transcendental level, much deeper than any thought, even deeper than the deepest abstractions of mathematics and logic. According to Plato a person needs to "reverse" the direction of inner awareness, and leave all thinking behind to enter into the realm of these deep structures of intelligence. This is a standard description of meditation in traditions as diverse as Zen, Yoga, and Vedanta; it is one of the most important features of Plato's thought. His four-stage account of cognitive development described in the "Divided Line" of the *Republic* makes this very clear. The first three levels involve what we can call (1) picture-thinking, (2) common sense understanding, and (3) abstract thinking of the sorts used in physics, logic, and mathematics. These levels display striking parallels to those of Piaget and others in modern developmental psychology. Plato's fourth level, the level of Forms, goes quite beyond anything normally discussed in developmental psychology today. To reach this level one has to learn to turn one's inner awareness in an "opposite direction," taking it away from all thinking and redirecting it toward the source of thought. This, he says, is necessary to gain awareness of the Forms, the *a priori* transcendental structures supposed to underlie thought in general. Without knowledge of this fourth level, he says, we will never really be able to understand how thinking works—or indeed, what we really are. Plato's famous Allegory of the Cave is intended to illustrate this, and Plato emphasizes that real understanding is impossible without direct experience.

GE: How do you differentiate what Kant was talking about versus Plato?

Jon: Kant had none of these deeper experiences. He was only able to *reason* regarding the foundations of how we think and act. Reasoning about the pre-conditions of knowledge, he concluded, like Plato, that there has to be a built-in, structural basis in the mind. The mind needs to have built-in operations, like a computer, even to be able to think at all. Kant was sure we couldn't *experience* the transcendental ground of mind, and he was very disturbed about this fact.

GE: How do you deal with Hume and his skepticism trying to set aside the mind?

Jon: Two big steps. Hume was very scientific, and when he attempted to investigate the internal domain of the mind, he could not locate anything

intellectually like the pure self that Descartes talked about. Descartes, of course, also described specific meditation techniques that he used to come to his conclusions about self, but Hume could not discover the relevant experiences, no matter how hard he looked. I once gave a talk at a conference in the late 1970s that Maharishi chaired. After the talk Maharishi complimented Descartes, Hume and Kant for their genius—and added that it was not their fault that they did not have effective techniques to experience finer levels of consciousness systematically. In other words, the way to deal with skepticism is to expand access to the realm of internal experience in a systematic way.

GE: Is this why Descartes' only method was to try and create an argument and then refute it to prove "I think, therefore I am"?

Jon: Actually that was not Descartes' method. It is a common misinterpretation that arises when people do not have enough experience to take Descartes' texts literally. He himself was quite clear that his "I think, therefore I am" was *not* to be understood as an inference or product of an argument at all. It was (as he emphasized in letters published along with the *Meditations*) to be understood as a single, simple "intuition" gained by practicing the methods described in his *Meditations*. Two of these methods amount to meditation techniques widely practiced in Asia. One of them is a process in which a person attempts to ignore entirely both the senses and thoughts related to the senses. This is a very difficult practice, and Maharishi once remarked that a person would need to be highly evolved and no longer disturbed by passions to gain success with it. That is why most people obtain no results with these techniques; indeed it's not even healthy for most people to practice. We can also note that Descartes remarked he was at a stage of life where he was no longer bothered by his passions, so he appeared to fulfill the requirement for success with this technique. Descartes' "methodological doubt" also brings to mind the Zen technique of "raising the doubt sensation" as an all-encompassing feeling to help leave the intellect and verbal thinking behind and arrive at Transcendental Consciousness—another very difficult technique.

GE: Where did the doubt sensation method originate?

Jon: It was a standard Ch'an (Chinese Zen) technique, much recommended, for example, by the eminent master Hsu Yun a century ago. Regardless of the particulars of Descartes' methods, it's clear that he described himself as closing his eyes, sitting in contemplation, and becoming aware of himself as

consciousness, or “a conscious being,” as Anscombe and Geach translate it. In other words, as Anscombe and Geach point out, the accurate interpretation of “*cogito ergo sum*” is “I am *conscious*, therefore I am,” not “I *think*, therefore I am.” Descartes states explicitly in his “Replies to Objections” that this is *not* a syllogism reasoning from premises to conclusion, but a single simple “intuition” or inner experience that the mind “sees, feels, and handles.” Descartes’ experiential language could hardly be clearer. The *cogito* on his account was something experienced as indubitable self-awareness—the self aware of itself. Descartes then asserted he became aware of unbounded infinite consciousness as the context of his individual awareness in this same “simple” and “indubitable” way, and finding in this experience “the highest bliss” humanity is capable of. Descartes is very clear in his description of these standard meditative procedures and experiences, but it takes a person who knows something about them to recognize what Descartes is talking about, and interprets his philosophy properly, regardless of our final opinions about his arguments and conclusions.

GE: This analysis completely takes the studies beyond what is being presented in most universities. You have deep thinkers with inner knowledge, and then you have skeptics like Hume. I assume you believe that Hume just lacked the technique?

Jon: That’s right, if you look at the mind there are different layers we can experience as we transcend in meditation: the sensory level, the layer of thinking and words, a deeper more abstract pre-verbal layer, and a level beyond the individual self—pure consciousness. When we read different philosophers it becomes clear they had different levels of inner experience, and that a particular philosopher was familiar with this or that level and not others. It becomes clear why each philosopher would be likely to develop a particular kind of philosophy. Maharishi praised the genius and the detailed accuracy of the way each of these great philosophers described the particular levels of mind that were open to them. Instead of criticizing them, he suggested how much more they might have contributed if only they had had a technique to experience the full range of inner awareness.

GE: This brings us back to scientific research on higher states of consciousness that is being conducted on people who practice TM. How do you interpret what is taking place in that research, and its practical value in understanding philosophy?

Jon: Many people are talking about consciousness now, but as Maharishi stated, anyone can *say* anything. Therefore, anyone who is a hard-headed independent thinker wants to know what is real and what is not. So research is fundamental; for example, people often challenge the validity of claims of having experiences of pure consciousness, assuming that they reflect little more than people's imagination and/or wishful thinking. This challenge is very reasonable, given the highly unusual nature of the experience. Even people who grant the general possibility of the experience often raise serious questions because they know how rare the experience is generally reported to be in most traditions. So they are often very skeptical about reports that the TM technique produces the experience so quickly and easily. Given their general knowledge, this skepticism is very reasonable. One value of empirical research is that it can provide very strong reason to take these reports of experiences of pure consciousness seriously.

GE: Can you elaborate on the empirical perspective?

Jon: Throughout history people have described physiological correlates of the experience. For example, metabolic rate is described as dramatically reduced, and breathing as very refined and even suspended entirely. Zen and the Taoist traditions sometimes simply use the phrase *ch'i-shi* (which means "the breath is suspended") to refer to the experience itself. We now know from research on TM practitioners that refinement of breath and suspension of perceivable respiration are correlates of reports of experiences of pure consciousness made by those practicing TM in laboratory settings. Research also shows that the oxygen and the carbon dioxide levels in the blood remain constant, making it clear that the suspension of respiration is a product of sharply decreased aerobic metabolism, rather than any attempts to control the breath. This kind of research provides strong evidence that the reports of pure consciousness made by TM practitioners and the reports in the literature of other traditions do, in fact, reflect the same psycho-physical state, although the fact is that the experience is gained so easily and so often with TM.

Research also shows that there is an increase both of alpha-1 power and pre-frontal alpha coherence as a person comes close to the experience of Transcendental Consciousness. The work to isolate such correlates is just beginning, but I think it is very important. When I was a Fulbright scholar in the Philosophy of Science so many years ago, I found that in culture after culture,

different traditions with different metaphysical belief systems described what appeared to be exactly the same experiences at the depths of inner awareness. This suggested to me that these experiences had to reflect something universal about human consciousness, rather than culture-dependent variables such as wishful thinking and metaphysical beliefs. It seemed very unlikely that all these different traditions with their different and often opposing metaphysics would come up with the same unique experiences simply by chance. The research on physiological correlates supports this observation. It also makes it harder for serious philosophers to dismiss the experiences out of hand.

GE: What do you mean by opposing metaphysics?

Jon: Metaphysical systems that make opposing claims about the nature of consciousness, the self, and the universe. These systems can interpret the experience of pure consciousness very differently, and take it to be of very different things. For example, one may interpret it simply as experience of one's individual nature; another may take it to be experience of God, and another of nature itself with no personality at all. It would not seem reasonable that such opposing systems would report the same experience, much less report it in conjunction with the same unusual physiology, unless there were something universal and belief-independent about the experience and associated physiology. Research now supports this observation; it indicates that far from being a creation of metaphysically inspired beliefs and expectations, the experience is the natural correlate of the physiological state. The capacity to go deep inside and have this experience is, in other words, natural, belief-independent, and built-in.

GE: The essence of what you have been describing is that regardless of station in life this experience is a fundamental property and birthright of humanity.

Jon: It is. It's everyone's inner nature, everyone has it, and it is described throughout the world, and experiencing it has all sorts of benefits. The analogy of a stereo may help explain this. If you turn the media (programs, etc.) off, and turn the volume of a well-functioning high-fidelity stereo up, you should hear no sound at all. If you hear static, the system is not high-fidelity. Pure consciousness is pure silence, the ground state of our inner awareness; when we experience it and tune ourselves to it we become more high-fidelity with everything we experience and do. Additionally, this experience is one of

pure satisfaction, pure comfort, ease, and bliss—feeling OK, “no problem.” The high fidelity awareness is what we are all looking for, even if, as Plato noted, we might not know it until we gain the experience.

In our modern world we often find that a child goes to the refrigerator, opens the door, sees that it is full of food, and nevertheless turns to his or her mother and says, “There’s nothing to eat.” The refrigerator is full of food. So what does this mean? It means that the child wants something to eat, but does not quite know what it is. Without knowing what he or she wants, the child is all too likely to continue eating without satisfaction. When we do not know what we truly desire—satisfaction itself—we tend to go through life stuffing ourselves with what we happen to find in front of us. This is the general condition in the modern world, going through life overstuffed with objects and possessions without ever satisfying our hunger for satisfaction. What is needed, of course, is knowledge of satisfaction itself.

GE: Let’s take another direction. If you look at the political debates, the entire approach is to throw mud on their opponent. The politicians will do almost anything or say anything to achieve power. It appears there is no ethical core. In this context how do you see philosophy having a practical value in society?

Jon: Philosophy—“love of wisdom,” literally—has always really been about how best to live. As Plato pointed out, if we do not know what we want, we wander around bumping into one another, often highly destructively. Until we experience what we are deep within, we remain ignorant of what true satisfaction is, and thus of what we want. An unsatisfied person is always in a sense hungry, and a person who is always hungry may be likely to do all sorts of things to satisfy his or her hunger. A person who is already satisfied will naturally be less likely to be prompted by selfish cravings to do harmful things. A well-fed person won’t be driven by hunger to steal food. We have two basic instincts: self-preservation and preservation of the species. To the extent that we feel satisfied internally, our natural impulses to act for the welfare of others become freer to express themselves. One’s “cup,” one’s happiness, naturally “runneth over,” so to speak. This happens automatically. I’m reminded of the man, Pat Corum, you taught to meditate at Folsom Prison long ago, who remarked that before learning TM the only time he felt powerful was when he had a gun in his hand. When Pat Corum realized this experience of inner bliss

was within him, his view of humanity changed. This inner satisfaction frees our natural reflex to care more deeply about others. This is the heart of ethics, both private and public, and it grows naturally as we grow in self-awareness.

GE: There is so much conflict between religions, even though they are all branches on the same tree. As a person who has dedicated himself to philosophy, exploring truth, and justified belief, what is your response to the situation?

Jon: This is due to ignorance. People usually gain their religious beliefs from other people who have no direct knowledge of the real depths of religious experience themselves. This has been the case throughout the world, generation after generation. So their understanding is often superficial and when they hear someone say something different from what they have been taught, they can easily take him to be an enemy of life's eternal truths. Highly evolved people of all religions of course recognize that there is a common core at the depth of all the world's religions, but you have to experience this to really know it. You need teachers, clergy, and preceptors of all the different religions to gain higher levels of consciousness, understand it, and pass it on to others.

GE: Have you had an experience of expanded consciousness that transformed your philosophy?

Jon: I would probably say, "informed and affected," rather than "transformed." One experience happened before I learned TM. I was practicing Zen techniques at the time. I had an experience of unboundedness, infinity, in meditation. I had been a serious mathematics student, and thought infinity only meant you can always add one, without ending—in other words that there is no real infinity. However after this expansion of consciousness I saw that this was wrong. I realized infinity can be experienced. I was trained as a scientist, and consequently when I had an experience that falsified my previous hypothesis, my response was to leave it behind, and move forward.

After learning TM I also had other important experiences. These included experiences of bliss. One type of bliss was of being bathed in rich, warm, utter satisfaction, permeated with a sense of "Ahh; this is what I really am!" Another was just of simple, quiet fulfillment, and another was an incomprehensibly thrilling, golden *ocean* of delight that seemed to display the essence of pure happiness. All of these experiences naturally had a significant effect on my sense of what life is really about, making it ever clearer that happiness

is something in itself, quite distinct from all the things we usually associate it with.

Not long after I had learned the TM-Sidhi program (an advanced TM technique) I had another experience worth mentioning. I was having a conversation with some distinguished individuals when I noticed that the space around us seemed to be alive in a certain sweet way. I had the thought that the *purpose* of life was to personally maintain and help everyone else have this experience of *life itself*. Before that I had never worried about the “purpose” of life. I just believed life was simply to live, but now it seemed clear that the purpose of life is for that delicate loving feeling, that soft tenderness deep within each of us, to be cultured everywhere. The insight was clarifying. I had never even wondered about the purpose of life, but it seemed to be obvious since that moment. I’ve been meditating for many years, so naturally there have been other experiences as well.

GE: Where did you first meet Maharishi?

Jon: I first met Maharishi at a course he led at Squaw Valley, California in 1968. It was a one-month course, but I was only there for two weeks. Throughout the course when Maharishi was lecturing, I remember putting in my notes again and again that this was the *real* Zen. This is exactly what I have been studying all these years. It also seemed obvious that Maharishi is one of these remarkable figures that come around only every few centuries. The experience I had the first time I went to the microphone to say something to Maharishi was really remarkable. When I reached the microphone, I begin by saying, “Maharishi,” and the next thing I knew, I was experiencing an enormous expansion of consciousness. I felt my consciousness filled the entire auditorium, bright, glowing, filled with life and empty of thought—a state I had been seeking to gain for years. I eventually spoke with Maharishi briefly, and when I turned to return to my seat I felt like I was floating, and everything was glowing. It took all of my Judo practice simply to put one foot in front of the other; it was very impressive. It was an overwhelming state of bliss.

GE: Do you have any idea of how these phenomena occur?

Jon: I have only the traditional explanation, which is that a fully enlightened teacher influences all the space that he is in. An ordinary, less coherent person is like an iron filing that becomes more coherent in the presence of a magnet. The internal magnetic domains line up coherently in one direction,

and hold that direction for a while, temporarily becoming a magnet itself. In this way ordinary individuals are said to become more coherent for a while in the presence of an enlightened teacher's unbounded coherence.

GE: How do you compare Eastern and Western philosophy and their approaches to knowledge?

Jon: They are very different both in what they take to be basic and in the methods they use. Western philosophy focuses on intellectual analysis of the world of the senses and the realm of thought. Eastern philosophy traditionally adds systematic meditation procedures and examination of levels of consciousness deeper than the realm of thought.

In the history of Western philosophy you will of course find some major thinkers who were clearly reflecting on the depths of consciousness and enlightenment as well as ordinary life. Plato describes Socrates as experiencing and reflecting on the crucial significance of higher levels of consciousness. Parmenides was described similarly. The writings of leaders of Plato's academy for hundreds of years contain very clear descriptions of higher states of consciousness, and structures of awareness similar to those traditionally described in Yoga, Vedanta, and elsewhere in the East. However, that knowledge was generally lost in the West after the Barbarian invasions, and remained lost during the medieval age of faith, and the three plague-devastated centuries that followed. Then in the 1600s the modern West as we know it began, and it's only now beginning to really understand its own ancient roots. Thus, to return to the original question, modern Western society needs to regain—and to reevaluate from its own perspective—what it once had at its basis. Plato was very clear when he said we would never resolve the intellectual and social issues we have been struggling with for centuries without the deeper levels of experience. My own work over the last half century has been to suggest how modern Western philosophy can become powerfully transformed with even a little knowledge and experience of transcendence.

GE: You just mentioned “social issues.” Can you say something about your ideas on the social significance of experiences that TM produces?

Jon: It is really crucial, especially now. We live in a society, a world, where affluence is becoming the norm for a large part of the population on nearly every continent. When income rises, according to the World Health Organization, people become happier to the point where income becomes

comfortable. However, after that, significant mental problems, rather than happiness, are what typically appear to go up significantly. There is a reason for this. Put in the context of Maslow's "Hierarchy of Needs," we can see that people have different kinds of needs. The most basic are meeting physical needs, having enough food, safety, and so forth. Once these most basic needs are fulfilled, middle level needs, such as social acceptance, esteem, respect, love and so on, arise and become dominant. As these needs become fulfilled, higher, "self-actualization" needs come to the fore. With affluence this growth has taken place in advanced economies all over the world, and our higher, self-actualization needs have become more and more influential. Fulfilling these needs requires the kinds of experiences we have been talking about, and most people have no idea that these experiences even exist—much less how to gain them. Growing dissatisfaction and psychological problems in the midst of prosperity are a natural result. Young, well-educated people throughout the world report feeling lost, stuffing themselves with games, food, and useless things without achieving satisfaction.

This is a big problem, and it's growing. The only way it will be addressed is when we employ techniques for self-actualization by going deep within. People need to gain clear knowledge of the value of self-actualization, and establish research to determine precisely which techniques produce what results on what people. TM is the most conspicuously successful of these methods so far, and we need to find ways to produce this kind of growth or the human race is doomed to consume itself out of existence. We are like people in a new environment who do not know which new foods will be satisfying, and eat more than we need, and get fatter and fatter without satisfaction. We are eating up the environment in a useless way. The only solution is to find out who we are, and what we really need by going deep within. This is the crying need for the planet, the need in terms of ecology, politics, wars, and conflicts between states. It's a matter of education and transcending.

GE: What you have articulated requires a more educated generation. Can you provide your perception of the type of education that you participated in during the founding days of MIU? I believe you were one of the pioneering faculty members in developing MIU.

Jon: I helped Nat Goldhaber write the original letter to Maharishi suggesting the idea of the University, and headed up its Philosophy Department for

a dozen years. The early days at MIU were a priceless and peerless experience. In those days a byword among educators was “interdisciplinary education.” In the attempt to avoid the narrowness of overspecialization, universities would try to cross boundaries by mixing disciplines, for example mathematics and physics, but this eventually would simply generate another field, mathematical-physics, and so forth. No one seemed to be able to develop real interdisciplinary studies. Interdisciplinary studies at MIU took a very different approach. The idea was that every intelligible discipline has in common the fact that it is intelligible, and it fits the nature of our intelligence or consciousness. As Maharishi explained, “knowledge is structured in consciousness.” Maharishi reasoned, if you have a student body that is turning inside and experiencing finer levels of consciousness, this experience is placed in the context of specific understanding, and unfolds to produce knowledge in general. We formulated an educational system that illuminates the deeper levels of every field of study simultaneously. All fields of knowledge studied in this way would become relevant to the students’ own experience of whom and what they really are.

As it turned out, the experiment succeeded remarkably well. The research that the ETS (Educational Testing Service, the College Board people) conducted on the students at MIU, for example, was just amazing. The median College Board scores of incoming freshmen over the five-year period the tests were conducted were 55th percentile. By the time they were graduating and evaluated by the ETS their scores were in the 78th to 80th percentile nationwide. The entire university went up nearly 25% in its national standing over a five-year period. MIU was created as a model for other universities to follow, and it was ignored. Imagine today if our entire university system had incorporated MIU’s programs, what the standing of U.S. education in the world today would be! MIU was an astonishing place to be and teach. So many young people enjoying direct growth of consciousness!

GE: You are teaching at VCU now, and it must be extraordinary for your students because of your depth of knowledge, even without your students learning to meditate. Each one of your students must leave your courses shaking their head, and full of questions.

Jon: They do shake their heads, and some also learn to meditate.

GE: Can you say something about your work after your days at MIU?

Jon: I've continued to work on the basic ideas from that time, refining and applying them in different ways. I've also been doing some work on categorizing different types of meditation, and trying to bring together researchers from different traditions to evaluate objectively what really produces what effects. TM at present appears overwhelmingly to be the most efficient for developing pure consciousness, but other procedures also produce useful results. So we really do need collaborative research, conducted by people associated with all sorts of traditions, to determine which procedures produce what results on what populations over what time frames. Such collaborative research, I think, is needed to directly address suspicions of bias that are often raised in the field of meditation-related research. It could have enormous practical results, making it clear to everyone what meditation practices are credible in terms of the benefits to the individual and society based on scientific research. It could also have very important theoretical results. For example, extensive cross-tradition research showing, as Maharishi indicated it should, that correlations between reports of pure consciousness and physiological correlates remained the same regardless of differences of belief, metaphysical context, and meditation practice. Science can provide much stronger evidence regarding the universality and validity of the experience.

GE: People are at different levels of human development and have different types of attachments and biases. This includes fundamentalists attached to the literal interpretation of their traditional texts, resulting in a fearful sector of the population who resist change.

Jon: Maharishi made it clear that the best way to help such individuals is to demonstrate that you have no intention of threatening them. For example, I observed how Maharishi would handle fearful individuals who would come into a lecture with the intention of disrupting things. He would always treat them with great respect; he would never, for example, simply say the word "Jesus" by itself; he would say "the lord Jesus," and there would be an enormous energy of love and compassion emanating from him. Maharishi would only encourage all their love for their tradition, and their attacks would be completely diffused.

GE: In the context of your profession, what is your perception of Maharishi?

Jon: Maharishi has given us previously unheard of insight on the effortlessness of transcending and knowledge of the experience of pure consciousness unavailable for thousands of years in the West, and in all of modern philosophy. He made clear that a person needs to explore the mind systematically from the surface to the depth. He wanted the results of these explorations to be examined empirically, using the belief-independent methods of modern science. He encouraged the use of direct inner exploration combined with scientific protocols to inform major philosophical issues. He provided a path to make plausible the existence and implications of transcendental experiences, and to move major philosophical theses from the realm of mere argument to that of scientific investigation.

He provided a practical technique for producing new experiential data capable of corroborating and/or falsifying such theses directly, which is an enormous contribution.

GE: What thoughts would you like to share with the readers who are seeking knowledge and techniques to enrich their lives and society?

Jon: I would encourage people to sit down and turn within. Enjoy TM because it is effortless and effective; do it for a little while and you will be surprised. TM is very quick. Within two to three days the average person really begins to settle down. Deeper levels of awareness open up, and satisfaction increases. That's all that one can say. Satisfaction increases, life gets better. Different states of consciousness open up on their own.

GE: You have had glimpses of this inner awakening. It is as if a veil is pulled back and all of a sudden you gain an insight into our capacity.

Jon: That is beautifully put. Yes, and we see our potential. I recall an analogy from Maharishi. He described an overcast day with heavy clouds. Then the clouds part and you see the sun stream through. Even if the clouds go back together you know the sun is still there; as a result your attitude and your feelings change. I have had a special experience of expansion of consciousness, unbounded awareness that has remained with me for decades—not flashy, but subtly satisfying.

Although I recognize that there are much more profound levels beyond it, I found that cravings for growth somehow eased and no longer put pressure on my life. Growth is wonderful, but attachment to it somehow melted. Something relaxed deep inside.

GE: That is beautiful because it is right; it does unfold over a lifetime. The process you describe above seems so simple, and people ask, how can this process work?

Jon: It works because it is so simple. It is like pushing a child on a swing—when you get into the swing of it, the child goes faster effortlessly. It seems as if you are doing nothing. This is also a principle of many internal martial arts; when it works it seems as if you are doing nothing. This seeming like you are doing nothing is a hallmark of an optimum technique—it works gracefully when you are moving with the nature of the system. One should expect the most efficient technique to be as close to effortless as possible. Even with the grindingly intense concentration of some Zen techniques, masters may tell students to concentrate harder, but at the same time tell them that when they get it, it will be natural. Maharishi made it effortless from the beginning. It is simply a matter of a higher level of knowledge of how to practice, an astonishingly systematic way of teaching the technique, and thorough training of teachers, so people can practice it so efficiently.

GE: Everyone who learns the TM technique interprets it from his or her own reference point, how they are living and seeing the world. The gift of enlightenment happens innocently. It is a gift resulting from the purification of the nervous system.

Jon: It is a gift of our nature—and whatever created us. What we usually think we are is some surface personality. As a child, a teenager, and a young adult, one is likely to spend a lot of time and effort trying to determine who one wants to be; we fantasize about different personalities, picking up and putting down this one and that, and eventually putting one on and wearing it, perhaps for the rest of one's life. Even mature adults may do this. All of these personalities however are not what one really is. What one really is exists deep within. *That* level of inner awareness is what is busy creating and trying on all these personalities in the first place. The gift you describe comes from deeper than one's personality. Whether this source is nature, one's true self, or God is a difficult question to answer; nevertheless, the important thing is to get the process right, and let it unfold.

GE: The title of the book is *A Symphony of Silence*. People like you and others in the book have experienced that inner stillness, and have gained an enlightened vision from it. This book was written out of love and compassion

for humanity. What would you communicate to the reader regarding your journey?

Jon: It is very easy to settle down, find yourself, and be yourself. Very easy, and it just relaxes one's life, it empowers life. It allows a person to become more intimate with life itself. It is so simple that almost anything I can say is just too much. Just try it.

Part II

Consciousness, Religion, and Spirituality

Chapter VI

Demanding Love

Father Gabriel Mejía

He is called the “Saint of Colombia.” Thirty years ago, he opened a single home to feed and shelter impoverished and orphaned children who roamed the cocaine-ridden streets of Medellín, many of whom had fallen prey to prostitution and drug addiction. Now he has sixty centers serving over 5,000 homeless children throughout Colombia and elsewhere in South America.

*This beautiful, loving man is Father Gabriel Mejía, a Catholic priest. While traveling the world to raise both the awareness and the resources needed to expand his ministry to children, he was introduced to Transcendental Meditation. As he tells us in the interview that follows, he immediately sensed the implications it had for restoring abused children to the innocence and joy robbed from their childhood. His work, including bringing the TM program to the children at his centers, has recently been the subject of a TV documentary entitled Saving the Disposable Ones. Fr. Gabriel has also recently published a book, *The Therapy of Love*, that describes his work at the centers.*

The following interview, translated from the Spanish, is essentially an unstructured conversation between Fr. Gabriel and George and Dominique Ellis, Cynthia Johnson, and Art Anderson. Gustavo Martínez served as translator for the participants not fluent in Spanish.

“TM helped me to find that space of inner silence and to experience the infinite stillness in my being. It revealed to me a field of unexpected happiness and internal harmony. . . . For me as a priest, transcendental consciousness is an innocent way to wordless prayer that opens a tender conversation with God. This experience of divine inner silence enlivens compassion, and it strengthens our spirituality and facilitates our search for a deeper connection with God, with society, and with all creation. It has helped me deepen my faith, and my religious beliefs have been enriched by it.”

—Fr. Gabriel Mejía

Question (Q): Please begin by telling us how you became a Catholic priest.

Father Gabriel Mejía (Fr. Gabriel): I was born to a practicing Catholic family on May 13, 1943. My family was a blazing forge of faith, truly a bonfire. My father was a loving and good man, an honest worker who cared for his family. My mother was an exacting, yet deeply loving and compassionate woman, full of mercy. She knew how to bring up her children with demanding love. My house was a home for all, always open. Later my mother adopted two girls. It was in this home during my childhood that I learned to love.

I was a rather spirited, restless child, but also intelligent and creative. At thirteen I decided to join the minor seminary of the Claretian Missionaries. They are an order of Catholic priests and brothers. My father told me somewhat sternly: “You are a child. You have to learn to wait.” My mother very wisely said: “Go to the seminary because you will get a good education. If it is not for you, come home.”

Q: Why did you choose the Claretians?

Fr. Gabriel: I grew up in a parish run by the Claretian Missionaries and attended a Catholic elementary school. Three things impressed me about the Claretians: their missionary character; their devotion to the Mother of God; and their great openness. Their discipline caught my attention, too. It really was a Spartan training.

The journey to the priesthood was long, and it separated me from my family. I was young and felt great nostalgia for what I left behind. We were always told that every choice involves leaving something, and I had left something very important to follow Jesus of Nazareth. You never get over missing your mother.

Q: What was seminary life like?

Fr. Gabriel: Unforgettable! An amazing time. It consisted of many years of discernment devoted to daily prayer, silence, spiritual reading, sports, and even the practice of scouting. This period of my life permanently imprinted on me the spirit of leadership and entrepreneurship, as well as enthusiasm and dedication to what I do.

Those long years of training gave me a full assurance of my vocation as a Claretian priest. I was always one among many others. I felt committed to what I was doing, and followed day-by-day the typical routine of the pre-conciliar Church seminary. For relaxation, I enjoyed reading and listening to classical

music. I found that everything in my training that related to uplifting the human condition had special appeal to me.

Q: You spoke of the “pre-conciliar Church.” What does that mean?

Fr. Gabriel: “Pre-conciliar” refers to the Catholic Church prior to the Second Vatican Council, which is known as “Vatican II” and occurred from 1962 through 1965 under the leadership of Pope John XXIII, followed by Pope Paul VI. Bishops from around the world came to the Vatican to consider changes in the Church to meet the emerging conditions of the modern world. It was a very exciting and refreshing time that sparked debates, tensions, and even defections that greatly affected the church. Many important changes were made that were codified and promulgated in official Vatican II documents.

Vatican II, which ushered in a new springtime for the Church, greatly impacted religious communities such as mine. Before then, preparation for the priesthood was done only in seminaries, but now it became more open, favoring a college community that encourages dialogue and friendships with people outside the religious community.

Vatican II had unprecedented ramifications and inspired new perspectives and courses of action in many priests. I was ordained a priest on March 19, 1972, in Medellín, Colombia, and it was by then definitely a new era for the Church in Latin America.

Q: Where did you personally fit into this changing milieu of the Catholic Church?

Fr. Gabriel: In 1968, the Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM) had been held in Medellín to consider the reforms of Vatican II from the Latin American perspective and to develop methods to implement them. The documents of Vatican II were doctrinal; Medellín’s were pastoral. As a result of CELAM, liberation theology emerged. “The preferential option for the poor”—which is the Catholic teaching that focuses on the poor and strives to find a fair and charitable balance between the good of the whole society and the good of its poorest, weakest, and most marginalized members—was made explicit and gave an institutional character for pastoral work. Christian “base communities” were then organized in Latin America to work with the poor and oppressed.

My ordination to the priesthood took place in the full post-conciliar era. It was a time of fighting against the subjugation and exclusion of the poor in

the continent. It was a fight for the right to a truly human life. In this pastoral atmosphere, I was greatly inspired by the movement led by Bishop Helder Câmara of Brazil who, along with a group of many bishops of CELAM, championed liberation and denounced poverty and exploitation.

My first pastoral assignment, in which I was filled with energy and enthusiasm, was devoted to working with marginalized young people, those who were excluded from, and often victims of, society and who had lost the horizon of their life. I spent many years doing this work.

Q: Has Vatican II continued to inspire changes over the past fifty years?

Fr. Gabriel: Vatican II was received enthusiastically by the world and unleashed great energy, which seemed to come miraculously from nowhere, to modernize the Church without compromising its fundamental teachings. It surprised both insiders and outsiders, and it was the most important religious event of the twentieth century.

I have lived most of my life in this post-conciliar era, and there seems to have been a gradual stepping back, a kind of involution by which some of the advances of Vatican II were slowly being eroded. It was felt in some quarters that the spirit and renewing proposals that defined Vatican II were fading, and the surprising progress that Vatican II had made was, at least for some, turning into disappointment as the Church seemed to be returning to the paradigms of the past. This could have frustrated openness, dialogue, and collaboration at a time when we are all called to continue facing with humility the challenges of ecumenism, of interfaith dialogue, and of a social and prophetic commitment against inequality, injustice, poverty, hunger, and the exploitation of children and others.

But now the Church is once more experiencing new life and a renewed desire to rethink and recreate. We are again living in a time of profound change that promotes and requires better interfaith communication, expanded dialogue, and a fuller embracing of the Gospel of love. In reclaiming her heart, her tenderness, and her compassion, the Church must resist excessive intervention and the urge to overly manage. By continuing to seek equality and justice for all while reasserting her foundational values of love, mercy, and forgiveness, the Church will become more open, grow spiritually, and thereby advance a more Gospel-centered life. This is certainly in the spirit of Vatican II.

Q: In 1989 Cardinal Ratzinger, who later became Pope Benedict XVI, signed off on a letter that was issued to the bishops of the Catholic Church entitled “Some Aspects of Christian Meditation.” In it, Transcendental Meditation is listed in the first endnote as one of the Eastern meditation practices that some Christians, who find themselves “... subjected to the driving pace of a technologically advanced society ...” turn to in order to find “... a path to interior peace and psychic balance.” Later in the letter, it is noted that these practices, in the correct context, could constitute “...a suitable means of helping the person who prays to come before God with an interior peace, even in the midst of external pressures.” The Church clearly has been aware of TM and its potential usefulness in Catholic prayer life for at least twenty-five years. How did you, as a Catholic priest, personally become acquainted with TM?

Fr. Gabriel: In 1988 I went to a center of Ayurvedic medicine in Lancaster, Massachusetts, where I was introduced to the teachings of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. I was especially inspired by something I had been told that Maharishi said: “Life is bliss, and suffering abides in weakness.” All that I learned at Lancaster greatly impressed me, and there I had the opportunity to start my daily practice of Transcendental Meditation, which I continue till this day.

Meditation has given me an enlightened view of life. Every human being seeks happiness. We’re all looking for the purpose of our lives. TM helped me to find that space of inner silence and to experience the infinite stillness in my being. It revealed to me a field of unexpected happiness and internal harmony. I learned that there is inner beauty in me.

That inner transcendental space enlivens the majestic reality of human life, and it helps resolve all the uncertainty surrounding us. For me as a priest, transcendental consciousness is an innocent way to wordless prayer that opens a tender conversation with God. This experience of divine inner silence enlivens compassion, and it strengthens our spirituality and facilitates our search for a deeper connection with God, with society, and with all creation. It has helped me deepen my faith, and my religious beliefs have been enriched by it.

Q: It is beautiful to hear you say that TM has deepened and enriched your faith. What do you feel is the central teaching of Christ on which your faith is based?

Fr. Gabriel: Definitely love! Jesus fought against the powers of evil. The thirst of Jesus is a thirst for loving people as they are, with their poverty and

their shortcomings, with their masks and defense mechanisms, and also with all their beauty. Jesus of Nazareth wants every one of us, no matter how small or big we are, to live fully and be filled with joy. He invites us to an enlightened life, to get out of the darkness into the light. He wants to release the deeper instincts hidden within us so that we can become truly compassionate people—the heralds and creators of peace.

Jesus of Nazareth is God's Son, sent to teach us the path of universal love, truth, justice, and peace. He came to proclaim the good news, especially for the poor, the young, the weak, and the oppressed of our world. He was surprisingly free, humble, and a man who loved people. He asks us not to flee from suffering and conflict in our oppressive and poor world, but to take our place with Him building communities and centers of love in which to flood the world with hope.

Q: When Jesus taught us to love and do good toward others, it was not only for their sake but perhaps, just as importantly, for our own spiritual development. Do you think that's so?

Fr. Gabriel: Yes, there is certainly a deep relationship between altruism and spiritual development. To work consistently for the good of others in a selfless way necessarily entails much personal commitment to, as well as satisfaction from, the good of others. This dedication and sense of fulfillment is of a spiritual nature. It is born in our heart.

The heart, in its biblical sense, is the living core of the person. More precisely, the heart is the very person as a whole but viewed from within, from his or her deepest inner reality. This living core of the person, this thread, this primary fabric, is affection—the ability and need to love and be loved.

The heart is the root of the personality. It is the living source of thinking, caring, and loving, the deepest source of life, the orderly center of existence. It is the axis around which everything the person is, as well as what the person does, revolves. The heart is the place where God dwells, where God moves, where He acts on us and through us.

We can say that the heart is innerness, the place of conversion, of faith in God's merciful love. It is where we experience communion, intimacy with God, active meekness of the spirit, compassionate concern for others, friendliness, the vital impulse of life, and the very source of our energy.

We hear it said, “I love you with all my heart,” meaning from the depths of my being, from the place where God is. In our centers we tell our children, “To greet is to give health.” When a person greets and sends a loving thought to another, it is profoundly healing precisely because it comes from his or her heart. We also tell our children that to embrace someone is to place him or her on the heart’s ember because the heart is ablaze with love.

Altruism, as an expression of love emanating from deep within the heart, throws us into full force and exerts on us a richness that makes us live our spirituality in a dynamic way. Altruism and spirituality complement and energize each other. Here the experience of transcendence is the compelling call to innerness, to live “inside” in the face of the constant danger of living outside of ourselves, on the surface, in the externality, lost in the things of this world. In this way Transcendental Meditation is a paramount means to help us to a profound silence, an inner unification, a solitude that is not isolation but self-possession, and a consciousness of our inescapable communion with all others. It helps us become contemplatives in action, bringing the kingdom of heaven to all.

Q: Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven is within. What do you think he meant?

Fr. Gabriel: Are we in the kingdom or is the kingdom in us? Jesus came to proclaim the kingdom. He said it is already here among us. The Jewish people were expecting the coming of a kingdom. Some hoped that the kingdom of Israel would be restored externally, perhaps by violence. Even the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, the humble, the weak, the oppressed, and all who had no voice, looked forward to the Messiah who would reestablish the kingdom because they felt excluded.

But Jesus came to announce something entirely new, hard to understand, not an external or earthly kingdom, but a kingdom visible only to the eyes of the heart and of faith, small as a mustard seed. This kingdom is not for the great and mighty, but for those who are like children, who have the simplicity, trust, and openness of children. It is for the poor, the weak, the humble and small. This kingdom is like a new world, a field of love, and to enter it a conversion is necessary. In this kingdom the poor, the powerless, and the children have the place of honor. It is they who are at the center.

In the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, Jesus tells us that this kingdom is like a treasure hidden in a field. It is a treasure that provides inner freedom, peace, and joy unimaginable—something new, so completely new that it is worth leaving everything in order to get it. This kingdom is a gift of the Father to those who want it, who thirst for Him. It is a gift we should pray for like little children with a great desire. It is a kingdom without boundaries because it is not a territory but a way of life.

In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said that the kingdom belongs to the poor, to those who have a poor person's heart, who in the midst of insecurity and even persecution retain their confidence. It belongs to the meek, the non-violent, the unfearful. It belongs to the merciful, the compassionate.

This kingdom is a place of love, in which we are freed from the prison that locks us into ourselves. The kingdom of God is present here and now in the hearts of the suffering, of the poor, of the humble ones marginalized and excluded, and of all those who at heart have become like little children.

This kingdom is found in the most unexpected settings, places of suffering and pain, in prisons, rehabilitation centers, hospitals, and in those who are rejected, those who are naked and crucified today. The kingdom of God, which is now hidden in regions of rejection and despair, will one day be revealed in all its fullness.

Q: All religions are, or should be, committed to bringing the kingdom of God to all His children. But too often they are in conflict because of different systems of belief. Do you see TM as a means of promoting greater harmony among divergent dogmas?

Fr. Gabriel: The day that all religions come together is the day we will have world peace. The meaning and purpose of religion is to reunite with God. There is only one God, so He must be the same for all religions. The TM technique opens an unexpected path of inner peace to a believer of any religion. It refines life and helps us recover lost innocence. It makes us children at heart. "Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." TM provides a new birth of innocence, peace, and love.

We live in a pluralistic world where we must all work humbly and realistically to protect the rights of everyone who may think and believe differently from us. We come from a past where things were otherwise, but we have been

changing and becoming less dogmatic and exclusive and, instead, trying to understand one another.

Through practicing TM we feel a growing fairness in life, and a freedom to live without exclusive fundamentalism—be it ideological, political, or religious. We respect the right of each of us to live, both privately and publicly, according to his or her own beliefs. As a Catholic, a Protestant, a Muslim, a Jew, a Hindu, a Buddhist, a member of an indigenous religion, an atheist, we all have the right to religious freedom, which precludes people and governments from forcing their religious beliefs on us or taking from us that which is ours.

Q: As you know, TM is not a religious practice. It has no system of beliefs, and yet it can be used to enhance the spiritual life of any person practicing any religion or no religion.

Fr. Gabriel: Yes, I have found TM to be an effortless method for experiencing the infinite reservoir of love and the full creative potential of life that lies deep within each of us. TM is a universal technique that can be practiced in any religion. It works irrespective of what you believe or don't believe, and it doesn't require any specific lifestyle or belief system.

We know that meditation, in one form or another, appears in the great religions of the world to support and promote perfection of life in a way that brings about physical, psychological, and social benefits. Anxiety disappears, relationships improve, and a permanent state of inner peace arises, which Maharishi calls cosmic consciousness.

There are many paths toward self-realization and divine knowledge. The spiritual masters of all times have been unanimous in declaring that, through meditation, it is possible to clear the doors of perception, experience deep inner silence, and purify one's consciousness so that direct knowledge of God can be realized. The lives of TM practitioners around the world demonstrate this experience of spiritual growth into higher consciousness. And, by changing oneself, one helps to change the world.

Q: We hear about Christian saints who experienced this deep inner silence you speak of, so I take it that the experience of transcendental consciousness, as we know it in TM, is not new to the Church.

Fr. Gabriel: Oh, no. There are many examples of it in Church history. I particularly like the way St. John of the Cross, a Carmelite priest of the

sixteenth century, explains in his poetry this profound experience of transcendental consciousness:

I entered into unknowing,
and there I remained unknowing,
transcending all knowledge.
I entered into unknowing,
yet when I saw myself there,
without knowing where I was,
I understood great things;
I will not say what I felt,
for I remained in unknowing,
transcending all knowledge.
I was so overwhelmed,
so absorbed and withdrawn,
that my senses were left
deprived of all their sensing,
and my spirit was given
an understanding while not understanding,
transcending all knowledge.

Q: Did you ever experience moments of transcendence in your life prior to starting TM?

Fr. Gabriel: In the wonderful process of each of our lives, there is a bright moment at which we discover the true essence of our being, the real reason we are here. From that moment on, we never doubt that we came from something much bigger than ourselves, and this experience expands the inner goodness and love that lies within each of us.

From my childhood I experienced very deep spiritual moments that surely were preparing me for my religious career in life. I studied in the school of the Marist Brothers, great teachers and educators, who formed us spiritually in devotion to the Mother of God and particularly devotion to the Holy Eucharist.

I remember well that as a twelve-year-old I felt the urge to visit the Blessed Sacrament, always exposed in the church of the Franciscan Fathers located only a hundred meters from my school. I did it almost every day and spent

moments of transcendence and much stillness. As most children usually are, I was very open to the spiritual.

My experiences in the Holy Eucharist and my participation in daily Mass prepared me for my entrance into the seminary at age fourteen. There I learned the acts of piety and classical meditation of the Catholic Church, based on the reading of texts from Scripture or from the life or writings of the saints. The readings inspired in us seminarians a fervor for God, whose immense wisdom and love opened our hearts and minds to spiritual growth. And, of course, we spent long stretches of quiet time and transcendent prayer in which we experienced deep inner stillness and expansion of consciousness.

Q: Since learning TM, how has it helped you to better understand and cultivate this sense of inner stillness and expansion of consciousness?

Fr. Gabriel: The training for religious life is intended not only to learn and instill positive values, but it also helps to uproot whatever may hinder a person's commitment and dedication. In the seminary, an aspirant learns non-attachment, which helps to resolve the problems and worries of life. The long and careful training I received in the seminary left with me a deep spiritual imprint that prepared me for further experiences of transcendence. And, so, I found my subsequent practice of TM to be easily understood and assimilated. It is a complement to our prayer life because prayer lifts our hearts to God, and meditation prepares and purifies our hearts so that God may enter. And TM is easy for anyone to do, even our children at our centers.

In these past 25 years of continuous daily meditation, I have seen great changes in my life. I have found that TM helps me organize my life and fosters and further develops in me the spirit of non-attachment that was begun in my seminary years. By eliminating stress and allowing me to enter transcendent states of consciousness, TM has brought me a profound and unalterable peace that nothing can remove. I am calmer, more intuitive, more focused, more loving, and, of special delight to me, I feel a great and inexpressible joy in my life. My experience with TM clarified for me many things in life that might otherwise have been confusing and illusory.

Q: Do you feel that TM can do the same—resolve confusion and expose illusion—for others?

Fr. Gabriel: We are all perplexed with many things in life, but I think we have three huge illusions that confuse us. First, we believe that we are a body

and not a soul, as if the body is itself the instrument of life, which therefore ends with the death of the body.

Second, we believe that pleasure gives meaning to life. But life is meant, as Maharishi says, for the expansion of happiness, and pleasure and happiness are not the same. More pleasure does not bring with it more happiness but leads instead to greater dependence on that which generates the pleasure. We must be careful to consecrate any pleasure to life, but never life to pleasure.

Third, we believe we need personal power to get on in life. But what is it that we really need to live and grow and prosper? It is love, because love is the force, the true power for renewal of life. In love, everything is alive like a river that replenishes itself. And in love, we realize that we are more than the body and that happiness is more than passing pleasure.

TM brings the practitioner into a fuller experience of that delicate, innermost love that, as you say, exposes illusion and resolves confusion.

Q: You mentioned a moment ago that, while in the seminary, you learned classical meditation based on reading texts of Scripture. Has your practice of TM awakened in you a deeper appreciation of Scripture?

Fr. Gabriel: During these 25 years the practice of TM has positively helped me in spiritual discernment and openness of heart. The word of God in sacred Scripture has always inspired me deeply. Even as a child, I had meaningful contact with the word of God. At the age of seven I entered the scout movement, where spiritual values are strongly instilled. Playing is a wonderful way to learn. Around campfires we talked about biblical texts, putting us in touch with God's word.

As we grow spiritually, scripture opens up to us with newer and fuller meaning. The word of God responds to special and crucial moments of life. The texts of the New Testament, particularly the Gospels, show us the indescribable novelty of God who became man. It's something you innocently accept but do not understand as a child, then later you think about it and begin to grasp it. I cannot separate speaking of God from speaking of Jesus Christ. He told us who God is, and in him we come to find and know God.

Some people, however, never find God, or are not looking for Him, or do not even know they are able to find Him because they assume He must be remote, abstract, esoteric, and found only in religious rituals. But if they knew

Jesus they would know God. In Jesus, who is as much human as he is divine, we find God in a direct, tangible way. Jesus is our connection with God. Where and why anyone got the idea that Jesus is less human than divine I do not know. He is as fully human as He is fully divine. He is a human being in whom we can touch and know God and find the transcendent in our own humanity. What a great grace it is for me to know, love, and follow Jesus.

Q: You were, of course, steeped in the study of theology during your seminary years, which I would think is primarily an intellectual endeavor. How have you been able in your life as a Claretian priest to transform that knowledge into something more experiential, more spiritual?

Fr. Gabriel: There is a border between theology and philosophy, between faith and reason, religion and culture, between life and its dramas and hopes. To be religious and to be spiritual are not always the same. We need to identify spirituality with depth. No person can live without spirituality. It is fundamental to all people, to all nations. We all have our spiritual history, made of the way we live and die.

But today there is a profound lack of spirituality. The crisis the world now suffers is not economic, but a crisis of values. The solution to the crisis is to return to spirituality, which brings with it an openness to the true values of life and love. When we are spiritual, we are sensitive to what is beyond us and attentive to human pain. This is where we transform intellectual knowledge into a functioning spirituality. It opens us to unlimited horizons of meaning and hope. It provides us antennas for what is given freely, for love, for the other. For me as a Christian, I adhere to a creed, and to the symbols and rites of that creed. But spirituality goes beyond creed. It is more infused, yet more vague. As Goethe said, "If you want infinity, you run after the finite in all directions."

The complexity of all this is, of course, that one can be a believer in religion without truly being religious in the spiritual sense. There are ministers of the altar without much sensitivity to what is spiritual. They know their theology. They believe everything, but also everything slips past them. This occurs in all religions. The experience of transcendental consciousness in TM streamlines the way back to spirituality because it returns us to a direct experience of the transcendent, and we can then engage the world in a more productive and altruistic way.

Q: How has TM helped you bring the good news of Jesus' love into the lives of those you work with as a Claretian priest, particularly the disadvantaged and oppressed?

Fr. Gabriel: We call our centers "Claret Homes," after the founder of our Order, St. Anthony Claret. Thirty years ago when we opened our first center, we heard the hopeless cry of many people who had lost their sense of life. After that, four more centers were opened with a capacity to serve three-hundred people, many of whom were drug addicts and outcasts. It has grown from there. I could see that these men and women were poor and little. To them the message of Jesus was indeed "good news."

The oppressed and marginalized are the small and great teachers in my life. I have learned from them what communion—to be in "union with"—means. And they have taught me a lot about who Jesus is, what His message is, and how to open my heart to Him like a child. They have made me realize in a special way the vulnerability and the meaning of the flesh, and thereby the meaning of the words "God became flesh," descending to the fragility and susceptibility of humanity in the person of Jesus.

I have lived these past thirty years in an authentic experience of communion—a union with the rhythm of love within the hearts of the victims and of the healers alike. Here, in this intimate communal relationship, I have grown in love and compassion. For me, children, youth, men and women, everyone communicates love. It was in their acts of love, in their embraces of the soul, even in their furtive glances, that I learned what communion is.

I realized that human beings are designed for wholeness and that life can be transformed from suffering and illness back into wholeness. That's why I brought Transcendental Meditation to the centers. I was looking for what was best for our children and, once I learned TM, I did not hesitate to implement it in every center.

The first group began in 1989. Teaching Transcendental Meditation was like turning on the light in a dark room. We practiced this simple and easy technique to help eliminate stress, restore balance, and eradicate suffering in life. Slowly but surely, meditating together in the simplicity and profound wisdom of everyday life, we were able to express the message of Jesus of Nazareth in the love and compassion shared by all.

Q: The focus of your work is primarily on children. What is the reason for this?

Fr. Gabriel: Children! What a blessing they are! What joy! What richness! A child is infinite possibility. A child is God's smile to the world. Jesus of Nazareth tells us about children, "Blessed are those who are like children, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." He also admonishes us, "Unless you become like little children you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven."

The eyes of a child are always bright and illuminated. To these you can look without fear, but always with respect. A child has no malice or revenge or resentment. From a child one does not have to seek forgiveness because a child's heart is programmed to forgive and forget without being asked.

A child sees everyone in life as a winner, and there are no villains. A child is elemental and simple, a human being that has not been tainted or defiled. Because of the child's transparency, radiance, and clarity, he or she is most like God. A child lives the moment intensely and does not care about the past or the future. Every child is born bringing peace to the world.



Father Gabriel Mejía and children at Claret Home

Ever since my own childhood I was inclined to work with youth. I was a youth catechist; I founded various scout groups; and, at the beginning of

my priesthood, I worked as the director of the Claretian's community youth ministry center.

Orphans, helpless and stranded, are especially dear to me, so my first option was to help and motivate them to get out of suffering. We have now been working diligently for thirty years in the defense of the dignity of all life. With Vatican II, and particularly with the Latin American Episcopal Assembly of Medellin in 1968, it was emphasized that the least among us are the priority in the eyes of God. After all, didn't Jesus become incarnate in poverty, emptying himself and identifying with the poor of the world? Orphaned children and the poor are among the most marginalized, and they are therefore among the preferred for evangelization.

Q: Orphaned children often have resentment and sadness because they have a feeling of abandonment. Has implementing the TM program helped them deal with these issues?

Fr. Gabriel: The first years of the child's life profoundly shape his or her future and history. Unfortunately, many of the children who come to our centers have been abandoned and abused either by their parents or because of war and armed conflict. Experiencing this brutality so early leaves a deep imprint of suffering in the child's life. Many of the children who come to us have much rage and pain. The ordeal of abuse and neglect is recorded in the nervous system of each of them. They feel lonely, without roots, and stranded, and this produces antipathy and sadness.

Throughout the past thirty years in our centers, I have seen a lot of resentfulness and anger in children and young people. They have endured much suffering and exclusion. They have not felt loved. This creates in them an indifference to others and a deep resentment that sometimes makes them violent. They are defensive because they feel that everyone is attacking and rejecting them. We have to accept their limits to heal their wounds. In the hearts of our children there is a lot of blame. I tell them that they cannot live with guilt or bitterness because those feelings will destroy them from within, and that they therefore have to forgive themselves and others and keep on forgiving to feel free.

God's purpose for everyone, especially children, is to be happy and reach fullness in life. Happiness is not a thing of the future. It is now or not at all. Anxiety prolongs misery. Happiness does not depend on outer success or

failure but comes from within and must be nourished from within. A child who has a deep and painful wound can only be healed with love. Love is the royal medicine for every disease and ailment. In our communities the essential therapy is love because love is the essence of life. For us, service and support to children is a matter of love. Only the one who loves can lower himself down to the level of these suffering children.

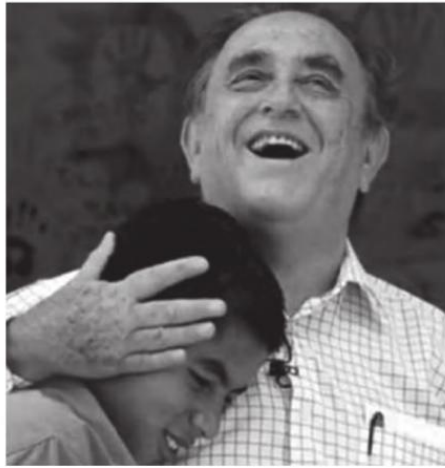
Transcendental Meditation is essential to the process because through it children are transformed naturally. I have watched this happening. By meditating they eliminate suffering, and the meditating community creates a collective consciousness of unity. Within these children there is much beauty, a deep beauty in their soul that shines forth. They have great resilience. Through the practice of TM, we find that children create their own sense of values, which helps to bring about an open, trusting, and peaceful community life for all.

Q: I imagine it was a big decision to introduce your children to Transcendental Meditation. How did you decide to do that?

Fr. Gabriel: Yes, a big decision, but a natural one, too. We were searching for something to bring our children out of their suffering, and we decided to establish these centers for them as therapeutic communities, which is essentially a self-help model relying on mutual assistance. Creating these communities was our first decision, which we based on the fact that everyone has the capacity to be born and reborn continually.

Community is the foundation of human society, and I believe that it provides the fastest way to unity, which is the goal of our journey. The communities we create for the children are much more than places for being and growing up together. Coming from isolation, our children integrate with others to enjoy and be transformed by love, which, as we already discussed, is the central teaching of Jesus. Gradually their inner wounds get healed as they come to feel the community as a place of mutual trust and love.

When I personally experienced the profound effectiveness of TM in my own life, I knew immediately it would be of great value to the many children who arrived at our communities filled with suffering. That's why I say it was a natural decision. Maharishi told us about life as bliss and that the purpose of life is the expansion of happiness. I believed it was possible to restore happiness to these children, and it was.



Father Gabriel and child at Claret Home

Transcendental Meditation plays an important role in the lives of these children. All of them are victims, and some are also victimizers. Some, in the throes of their own pain, have given pain to others. By learning TM, they turn their practice into a continuous act of reparation to society and to those they have hurt. The act of meditating restores and harmonizes life and its surroundings. The children are healed, and they help heal others. Conversion and repair go hand in hand.

Q: What do you mean by “conversion and repair”? I’m wondering if you are speaking about repentance as used in the Gospels. Jesus urged “repentance,” which is translated from the Greek term *metanoia*, meaning to go beyond the mind. How do you understand repentance?

Fr. Gabriel: I see it as a process of conversion, an inner movement, a radical change in which a person is able to receive blessings at the heart, despite his or her heart’s tortuous history. With conversion one becomes oneself. One has found God in the center of one’s most confusing, buried reality. The eyes and the heart change with conversion.

We all experience guilt because in some way we all have harmed others and have created wounds. Conversion involves repair. Sin is something that should be corrected, not punished. Love calls us to reconciliation and repair. It happens through forgiveness.

Forgiveness is unconditional, is free, and excludes haggling. “From now on you have no debt to me, I release you from it.” It’s all done!—and if

done deep in the heart with full determination, the heart will receive and keep the footprint of forgiveness. With forgiveness one renounces self-justification, the need to explain everything, to clarify everything, to understand it all. There comes a time when we must put aside all rationalization, all justification.

Q: Please continue about how your children responded to TM.

Fr. Gabriel: There is much to know about TM. I was heartened to hear of it being used as a defense strategy to create invincibility for all nations. Through the Maharishi Effect, even a small portion of the population practicing the TM program is able to generate coherence throughout society. This means that TM can be a powerful tool for international conflict resolution as well as for creating and maintaining a lasting world peace. I explained to our children that their meditation is profoundly influencing all aspects of society, and I told them that by meditating together and practicing the Maharishi Technology of the Unified Field, we are helping to increase not only our own harmony and coherence, but also that of the collective consciousness of the world. They liked that.

Q: And it's proven to be successful with your children?

Fr. Gabriel: For me a clear indicator of success in working with these children is not so much what they can learn in the community, but what they will be doing ten years later. The simplicity, innocence, and effectiveness of TM have produced tremendous results. Many of our children, who have been practicing meditation over the years, are now adults advanced in their university education or in their careers and professions with great success and joy.

Many children do not realize the intensity of the suffering they have experienced—all the rebellion, hatred, and fear that had been inflicted on them in childhood. The path to healing requires them to recognize those big emotions, their negative personal images, their unhealthy beliefs, and all the destructive cellular memories left in their wake. But recognition does not mean they have to act out against others or relive those hurtful emotions. Instead, TM inexorably dissolves them away. By eliminating their stress and affirming their spiritual integrity, it strengthens the children and progressively heals immense sadness, feelings of hatred, rebellion, fear, and envy that otherwise hide deep within them.

Q: What about their academic studies?

Fr. Gabriel: As I said, many of our children have excelled academically and gone on to receive a university education. When we introduced TM to them, I saw positively, in a Catholic school setting, a real transformation taking place in their lives that helped them to eliminate suffering, to dispel the darkness that encompassed them, and to find lasting happiness. Many of them came to us at eight years of age and are now eighteen or twenty. Their lives have been transformed, and they are successful and well-adjusted.

Today we have young people in college doing different studies who have gone through very difficult times in their lives and have managed to overcome them. Others have technical degrees and have achieved their rehabilitation and independent living, having found their personal autonomy and the realization of their life purpose. Almost all of them have had the daily practice of TM.

Q: Have you also seen changes in their spiritual lives?

Fr. Gabriel: Spirituality is a way of being and living, as individuals and as a community. It is built on values, such as honesty, compassion, justice, love, and solidarity. The community becomes a place of mutual love—love for every person as he or she is, so that all within the community can grow according to the plan of God and be strong in life.

The sense of community flourishes when our children begin to love each other and care about one another's healing and growth. Logically, community enlivens collaboration and then becomes a place of healing and growth. In the community, children express their limitations, fears, and selfishness as individuals. We discover their poverty and their weaknesses, their inabilities to understand others, their impediments, their disturbed sexual emotions, their frustrations, their jealousies, their hatred, and their desire to destroy.

Living together in community brings about the painful revelation of the limits, weaknesses, and darkness of each. This is where the experience of transcendental consciousness in TM helps immensely to give birth to a child's inner reality. Here, in their daily practice of TM, spirituality illuminates their lives, and they begin to overcome their suffering and open themselves onto an unexpected field of bliss. What an awakening for them!



Father Gabriel's student practicing the TM technique at Claret Home for children

Now they have a clearer vision of God, and therefore of themselves. They have been through a time of acceptance and forgiveness, of transcendence and spirituality. They are liberated from fear because they have felt God's mercy. Forgiveness now marks for them a new departure and a genuine restructuring of their lives. All these years have been for them a time of conversion, of heart appeasement, of repair to themselves and others, of reconciliation with their history. With the help of TM, they have managed to eliminate stress from their lives. Their experience of transcendental consciousness in TM has led them to understand who God is. It has been for them a time of marveling and astonishment.

Q: Your work brings to mind Jesus' penetrating admonition, "Whatsoever you do to the least of my brethren, that you do unto me." I know you are very modest, but I must say that you are truly a model of compassion, of seeing the presence of Jesus in each child you help. You said earlier that TM enlivens compassion and that you personally have grown in compassion by meditating. Would you explain that further?

Fr. Gabriel: What God has made is perfect. He has created us and set us on course to perfection. Compassion is part of that spiritual course. We are

each endowed with limitless spiritual potential. Teilhard de Chardin says it very beautifully: “We are spiritual beings, having a human experience.” We are beings of light, the image and likeness of God. Love draws us to compassion, and we are created for love.

The Gospels say that Jesus was moved with compassion. The word used in the Gospels for compassion is derived from the Greek word for spleen, to denote the physically visceral way that compassion can take hold of us. It is a very deep-rooted emotion that tremendously impacts the body.

Jesus was deeply touched in his body and in his affection by the suffering of others. In the Gospels he appears as a compassionate, kind, and benevolent man who takes pity even, and especially, for the leper who is excluded and spurned by all others. When the leper approaches, Jesus doesn’t run. He stays and heals him, body and soul. His heart bleeds before the poor, the rejected, the abandoned, and the trampled. He suffers with them in their sorrows, whatever their social class. He weeps with Mary and Martha at the death of their brother Lazarus. He feels compassion for those who are paralyzed by guilt and shame. He sees the fullness of divine value in everyone—the smallest, the poorest, the most abandoned.

Transcendental Meditation fosters this kind of compassion. It is not an intellectual practice, but experiential. As we refine our experience in TM, we reach higher states of consciousness that give us greater happiness and enable us to cultivate and awaken our noblest longings. We experience deep inner silence and immense inner strength that lead us to contemplation, sensitize us, and enliven our feelings of compassion. And, yes, I have personally experienced this.

Q: For you, compassion is clearly the driving force to reduce the suffering of humanity.

Fr. Gabriel: Reducing humanity’s suffering is one of our major challenges today. Compassion is the first step. Our Claret Homes emerged simply as a response to a great vacuum—specifically, society’s disregard for its most vulnerable and marginalized members, the drug addicts, the poor, and the abandoned. We fill that vacuum. This is part of what it means to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness as Jesus exhorts us to do. I think we can summarize it like this: God is, first and foremost, a mystery of compassion

towards his creatures, and the decisive factor of human history is to embrace, introduce, and develop this compassion among us.

Justice is born of compassion, which leads and drives everyone and everything towards a more dignified life. This is the meaning of embracing the kingdom of God—making visible to everyone the dignity of all people. There will be no lasting human progress if we don't approach everyone with the seriousness of God's compassion.

Today we should worry more about having a visceral compassion than about judging our brothers and sisters. And, so, our Claret Homes are sensible and committed places in which we tend to the moral, spiritual, and physical wounds of the people we encounter without judging them. Compassion makes us credible. And Transcendental Meditation brings us into a deep inner silence that makes us sensitive to the great shortcomings of our world while helping us develop the compassion we need to deal effectively with them.

Q: A Cenacle sister, who has learned TM, remarked that gaining this deep inner silence is an act of grace. How do you see TM helping a person toward greater surrender and innocence, as well as compassion, in a religious setting?

Fr. Gabriel: Grace is a gift of love. Being called to a religious vocation is undoubtedly a gift of God's love. It is an act of grace by which, despite our smallness, we are called to love. Everything we are and have is a gift, a grace, a blessing that comes from God.

In the religious life, such as the Cenacle sisters or the Claretian priests and brothers, we are joined to God in His fullness with renewed conviction, with confidence and hope, and with unwavering loyalty. The supreme example of love of Jesus of Nazareth invites us to put our eyes on Him and to follow Him. As St. Paul beautifully says in Second Corinthians, "The love of Christ impels us." You only love what you know, and in the religious life we learn to know Jesus—to know Him, and fall in love with Him, and follow Him.

By following Jesus and surrendering our wills to God's, we learn to be insistent, consistent, and persistent. "Drop by drop, the water breaks the stone." Our perseverance brings us to an understanding that everything moves for love and in love. St. John of the Cross says: "Love is the full and sole reason for existence"; and, "We exist only to love"; and, "For the purpose of love we were created." This experience of God's love is His gift.

The Cenacle Sisters are well acquainted with contemplative prayer, and they enjoy the deep experiences it brings. Their exquisite preparation for the religious life leads them in a very simple way to assimilate the TM technique. They understand that TM is not intellectual, but experiential. Their religious training and grand openness has taken them to what we call “prayer beyond thought and word,” and TM then helps deepen their experience of inner silence and the presence of God’s love in their lives. The experience of the Cenacle Sisters is the goal of all religions—to bring God’s children back to Him. It’s all about love.

Our religious life and our following of Jesus motivate us to embrace the inner experience of stillness and fullness. The silence of prayer and of meditation on sacred texts brings us great joy and nurtures us to become “contemplatives in action,” to do good works out of love. Spirituality, as a way of being and living, focuses us on experiencing our true values in life, and the TM technique provides a steady, reliable process by which we live more and more intensely those values by purifying our hearts and eliminating stress in our lives, and we thereby regain our innocence and are transformed into compassionate, happy, and, most importantly, loving beings.

Q: You speak often of the power of love. What is the relationship of love and higher states of consciousness, and how do you feel that TM promotes and enhances this experience?

Fr. Gabriel: Our essential nature is love. We all come from love, and yet we go through pain, fragmentation, and death, only to return again one day to love. The greatest awakening in life is love. Love heals and gives us certainty. Love makes us feel safe. Love removes doubts. Love takes away fear and brings us to God. Love enlightens us. Love is the journey of the spirit. Love is the single command of Jesus.

Only he who loves is faithful. Only he who loves can give his life for another. Only he who loves can lower himself to the level of the small. Only he who loves can serve. Only he who loves can teach. The greatest power in the universe is love. He who loves is compassionate, and compassion burns strong in his heart like a blazing ember.

If we feel small in the presence of God, we need only to surrender into the vastness of His love. This is not an intellectual act of the will, but an experiential movement of the spirit propelled by grace. This union with God can be

aided and inspired by the practice of the TM technique, which makes us more receptive in spirit and cultivates in us higher states of consciousness that lead ultimately to the realization of the fullness of love.

Q: Thank you very much for a truly inspiring and uplifting discussion.

Fr. Gabriel: You are welcome. I, too, am inspired and uplifted by our conversation, especially when talking about our children.

Chapter VII

Silence is the Universal Refuge

Rev. Roger Wm. Johnson, Ph.D. and Cynthia E. Johnson

Cynthia E. Johnson is a certified teacher of TM and blog contributor at www.tm-women.org. She has taught the TM program in Cambridge, MA, and Washington, DC. She has also taught in schools using Consciousness-Based education, including an inner-city school in the nation's capital. Cynthia received her Master of Theological Studies from Harvard Divinity School.

Cynthia's father, Dr. Roger William Johnson, was a retired Protestant minister. Roger received his Ph.D. from Harvard University's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. He served churches and taught in Massachusetts, Minnesota, Illinois, and New York. He grew up in the Midwest within the religiously conservative church of his Swedish parents and grandparents (Evangelical Covenant Church), and later transferred ordination credentials to the United Church of Christ to be open to progressive values. Roger characterized himself—and felt this applies to most people—as being conservative regarding preserving the best of human values, and liberal, willing to learn and change. His ministry was characterized by dedicated social activism and his life by profound spirituality.

Cynthia and her father discussed spirituality and Transcendental Consciousness. Their dialogue reflects a tender synchrony of love between a daughter and her father. It is a brilliant clarification of the value of TM and Transcendental Consciousness in the context of a progressive vision of Christianity.

Finding the Path

*Silence is the universal refuge, the sequel to all dull discourses
and all foolish acts, a balm to our every chagrin, as welcome
after satiety as after disappointment.*

— Henry David Thoreau

Cynthia: Dad, I want to talk with you about the value, beauty, and necessity of inner silence for transforming our lives. Some of my earliest memories of the experience of silence have to do with you. I remember one summer when I was four years old and you were the chaplain at a camp in New Hampshire.

The sanctuary was in a pine forest clearing. You spoke at the altar with pine trees and sky above you, and I sat on a wooden bench with a soft carpet of needles under my feet, breathing in the fresh scent of early morning stillness. I was in a state of wonder, soaking in the hushed holiness of the atmosphere.

It was during this time of your life, when you were a young father, that you had a couple of transforming experiences of a transcendent nature—what you refer to as peeks into the divine mystery. But before discussing those stories, let's talk about how the need for inner silence grew as time went on—in your life and in my life as well. You were juggling many things in your early adult life. You served churches full-time in the Boston area; you were starting a family; and then you began to take courses at Harvard that were offered free to ministers in the area. You then were encouraged by the faculty to do a full-time Ph.D. program, which you did. In addition to having three small children, you discovered you and Mom were expecting twins. How did you do all this?

Roger: I was so stimulated and exhilarated by everything I was doing! And I was disciplined with my time. I often began my day at around 3 a.m. when the twins would awaken. I would change their diapers, give them their bottles, and put them back to bed. Then I would go across the street to have coffee and a doughnut, sharing a bit of camaraderie with the deliverymen and policemen—the only other individuals awake at that time. Then I did some studying and work in the church. I used to study whenever I could, such as when stopped at red lights on my way to visiting parishioners.



Rev. Roger Johnson: pastor, doctoral student, father of five.
With family: wife Charlotte, Sally, Cynthia, Daniel, Brian, Scott

Cynthia: That is discipline! I know you finished your doctoral degree in almost record time—two and a half years.

Roger: It was necessary because I had a family, was a pastor, and a student. But I loved what I was doing, so that is what made it possible.

Cynthia: I remember visiting you in your study at our church, next door to where we lived in the parsonage. I enjoyed just being there, basking in the atmosphere of your study. Even though this was a middle-class/working-class urban area, there was a sense of sacred, scholarly stillness in the church and your study.

Roger: Yes, the whole Boston area had that mingled atmosphere of scholarlyness and sacredness.

Cynthia: I remember sitting on the steps of the church, built in the classic New England style with white pillars, brick walls, and a steeple. I could hear the most beautiful sound of choirs singing. Sometimes it would be from our own church, but other times, it was fainter, and sounded like angels to me.

Roger: Perhaps you heard a choir practicing at one of the other churches nearby.

Cynthia: I used to love to visit the Catholic church down the street with my best friends, who were part Irish and Italian. The church was dark, but illuminated with candles, and had a lovely spicy scent. I loved the feeling of quiet, mysterious holiness.

Roger: Yes, I remember you visiting there; in particular, when you went to light a candle for our bird that had died. How old were you then, maybe five?

Cynthia: I think so. Mom gave me a Velveeta cheese box, which was a perfect coffin for our parakeet Amy. Off I went in my Easter hat, white gloves and shorts, holding Amy to light a candle for her at the Catholic church. That kind of hands-on ritual was very helpful to me as a child to deal with death. As I reflect upon the situation now, I realize how supportive and comfortable you and Mom were with my visiting the Catholic church.

Roger: We lived in an area with many houses of worship, and your mom and I appreciated both the diversity and the common experience of spirituality.

Cynthia: Let's fast forward 10 years or so. The busy pace of your life continued.

Roger: There was a lot going on in my life and in the world in that next decade—from the early 1960s through the '70s. During that time we moved

to Minneapolis where I served a church and taught part-time at a seminary for a few years. Afterward, I was recruited to be the chaplain and professor of philosophy of religion at a small private college in Rockford, Illinois—my hometown. That was an intense time in America. I was involved in the civil rights and peace movements.

Cynthia: I recall when you were at Rockford College you supported conscientious objectors to the Vietnam War. I was around 13 at that time, and I was so proud of you for doing that.

Roger: Yes, but it got me into trouble with the president of the college, who was very conservative, and my contract was not renewed. After that I received several offers, including from a church in Scarsdale, New York, where we moved in 1970.

Cynthia: In Scarsdale, you continued your involvement in many avenues of social activism, such as antiwar, ecumenism, civil rights, public education, and prison work. Didn't you get arrested during this time for an antiwar protest?

Roger: Yes, I participated in an antiwar demonstration and was arrested in front of the White House on Veterans Day in 1972.

Cynthia: I love the story about your ride from the jail.

Roger: After spending the night in jail and posting bail, we were released, but there was no public transportation available in the area. So I, along with two other protestors—a college professor and a college freshman—spotted a bus several blocks away. We ran down the road and discovered it was a school bus filled with the football team of the United States Naval Academy! It was serendipity that they were going to the very parking lot where our car was, and they agreed to give us a ride. As we rode along, my colleagues and I conducted an ad-hoc seminar about the Vietnam War. These students were not familiar with the other side of the war situation, and they seemed to listen with interest and respect.

Cynthia: While you were deeply involved with the Church and your social activism, I was a busy student in the 9th and 10th grades, trying to follow, in some ways at least, in your footsteps. I was very conscientious academically—my goal was to go to Harvard. I was involved in volunteer projects such as the Head Start program for underprivileged children, projects to raise funds for the hungry, and so on. However, I was unhappy—full of anxiety, and with terrible insomnia. On the weekends, to blow off pressure, I did some wild

partying, which only exacerbated things. Both of us were getting burned out and not getting any help.

Roger: Yes. I was putting in 90-100 hours of work each week, and sometimes not sleeping well. As a parish minister, I saw myself as a helper. For a long time, I did not realize that before I could be an effective helper, I needed to be helped. I had grown up with the awareness that we should love God and our neighbors; anytime I thought about myself, I used to feel “Now I am being self-centered,” and felt guilty.

Cynthia: So you did not take care of yourself. You kept giving and giving and pushing on, not taking time to rejuvenate.

Roger: Right. It was Erich Fromm (1956)—the Jewish psychologist and philosopher—who got through to me about this. It was his writing that made me realize that self-love was necessary in order to “love thy neighbor as thyself.”

Cynthia: Right. How can you love others as yourself if you don’t love yourself properly, if you are filled with exhaustion, anxiety, and self-criticism? During that time of my life, I became seriously depressed. I could see that when I was unhappy, my ability to help others was ineffective.

Roger: Your well was dried up.

Cynthia: Exactly. You and Mom arranged for counseling, which was somewhat helpful, but barely scratched the surface.

Roger: What about your relationship to the Church and Christianity at that time?

Cynthia: At that time, I perceived Christianity as a body of ethics: principles for compassionate behavior, which were obviously correct. Moreover, I felt that I was trying to live in accord with them. However, I didn’t see anything that would alleviate my own suffering, and enrich the source of compassionate behavior, but I was seriously seeking. Around age 13, I had started seeking for something more—beyond the status quo. I knew there was much more potential for human joy and creativity than what I was currently experiencing and seeing around me. I attended lectures on yoga, and went into Manhattan once and participated in some strange program where you stared at each other and talked in gibberish! In 9th grade I started reading the existentialists—and could relate to the “nausea” described in a book of that name by Jean-Paul Sartre (1964), but that did not help me.

Roger: In 11th grade you began to attend the Scarsdale Alternative School.

Cynthia: Yes, the Alternative School had just started as part of the public high school in Scarsdale. That was, and is, such a great place. It fills a gap in education, nurturing the students by providing close mentoring relationships with teachers and leaders in the community, who taught classes or provided apprenticeships.

It was at that time I saw posters with a picture of Maharishi, announcing TM introductory lectures, but I thought TM was another Indian fad, and it did not attract me. I did not want to become involved in any kind of cult, and I thought it was like the McDonald's of meditation. However, one day a vibrant young woman with long red hair came to our school and gave an introductory lecture on TM. She was such an authentic, intelligent, warm, and interesting person. She had a lot of vitality and ease. When she described the principle of the technique, it felt right. You did not even have to believe in it; it was a straightforward procedure that allowed the mind and body to experience a fourth state of consciousness—restful alertness. I remembered those times in my life when I had felt very settled, yet quietly awake—times when I was in nature, or in a sacred space. I wanted more of that experience, for sure! Also, the scientific research on TM gave me more confidence in the validity of the technique.

Additionally, what impressed me as much as the research was that the TM teacher embodied the qualities that she was talking about. She had a refreshing openness. I will never forget our exchange that day. After the lecture, I bounded up to her, enthusiastically asking questions. Despite my 1970s teen persona with knee-high black suede platform boots, a bunch of scarves tied around my neck, and wild eye makeup, she said to me, I like you, you are so innocent! No one had said anything like that to me in ages.

So I learned TM. Nothing flashy, but I noticed I started feeling more stable inside. I was not as vulnerable to getting thrown around by whatever was going on in my life. I began to sleep better; the anxiety and depression steadily dissolved; the drinking and smoking gradually tapered off.

Roger: Yes, Mom and I noticed that you were feeling more secure and happy, much to our relief. From our perspective, these healthy changes were immensely significant.

Cynthia: Beyond the stress release, what was compelling to me was the possibility of enlightenment, or Cosmic Consciousness—where inner silence

and deep bliss would be unshakeable. And even more fascinating was something a friend told me a couple of months after I had learned TM. We were at a party, and while our friends carried on around us, he and I sat on the floor and he described to me higher states of consciousness. I found myself increasingly riveted as he told me about refined Cosmic Consciousness or God Consciousness, where perception and emotions become so refined that you have the most highly-developed appreciation of God's creation. My friend further explained that refined Cosmic Consciousness flowers into Unity Consciousness, where the infinite value of everything in creation is cognized, and is as intimate as one's Self. I wanted that experience!

Roger: Then you went to Cornell University for your freshman year, but midway through the year you wanted to go to Maharishi International University (MIU). At first Mom and I were skeptical and encouraged you to stay at Cornell, at least for a year. After that we thought you would check out MIU for a semester and return to Cornell.

Cynthia: I did finish my freshman year at Cornell. Although I enjoyed some of my classes and the beautiful campus, it was the usual college thing: studying bits and pieces of fragmented information, and the standard routine that burned us out. Every semester students would jump into the gorges that cut through campus—to end their lives, which was so sad. We used to say at exam time when we felt stressed, “I’m going to go gorge out.” Like most colleges, it was not a place for nourishing the instrument of knowledge—the nervous system.

The Soul of the Whole

We live in succession, in division, in parts, in particles. Meantime within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related . . .

— Ralph Waldo Emerson (1841)

Cynthia: I had heard about this new university where growth of consciousness was a fundamental part of the program, and where common patterns of natural law were explored within all disciplines, and within human consciousness. This sounded like an incredibly fascinating place, and so I went to MIU (now called MUM) after I finished that year at Cornell. After traveling from New York to the Midwest, through miles of farmland, we

drove onto campus on an autumn evening. The sun was setting and pouring golden light through the campus. I felt as if I were coming home after being in exile my whole life.

I loved life at MIU. The professors were passionate about their disciplines and were superb teachers. We would sit together over meals—teachers and students—and discuss consciousness, physics, music, biology, economics, art, literature, and so on. The regular routine at MIU is designed to cultivate the instrument of knowing—the quality of our consciousness and the body—by setting aside time for meditation and obtaining a good night’s sleep. The creativity of the students was off the charts, and we had so much fun together. As David Lynch (2006) says, we found we were far more creative without the usual college haze of exhaustion, drink, and drugs.

Roger: Now that you are a parent yourself, you can imagine how significant your transformation was to Mom and me. A few years earlier you had been unhappy to the point of serious depression—and now, you were healthy, enthusiastic, and happy. And another thing: it was during this time you began to show interest in Christianity.

Cynthia: I began to read the Bible, and it started to become meaningful to me. Verses like this: “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33, New King James Bible). “The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:20-21). Or a childhood favorite psalm, “. . . He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul” (Psalm 23:2-3, Revised Standard Version). I began to see and relate to the richness of profound spiritual truths in the Bible.

Roger: We began to talk more about my own interest and experience in deeper, spiritual values of Christianity. For example, I shared with you how at Harvard I had a friend and fellow student, Walter Pahnke, who had a degree in medicine and was now working on his theology degree. He particularly was interested in so-called mystical experiences. We were interested in the idea that the great spiritual teachers throughout time were speaking of the transformation of consciousness. Mystical experience was transformative for human consciousness, and needed as a foundation for life-enriching behavior.

Cynthia: So your interest in Christianity was not only as a system of ethics, as I had perceived in my teen years.

Roger: Absolutely. Compassionate behavior has its roots in something much deeper. Paul in Galatians (5:23) speaks of the *fruit of the Spirit*—love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Well, what was the nature of this Spirit, and how can it be experienced in order to give rise to these ideal behaviors? You and I began talking about things like this. I thought of the qualities I saw growing in you and others who practiced TM in the Pauline sense—fruit of the Spirit.

It was around this time that you became a teacher of TM, and you taught Mom and me to meditate. Because I was a clergyman, you taught it in the context of the Science of Creative Intelligence Course, which was a requirement at that time. (This is a 33-lesson videotaped course, taught by Maharishi, in the study of the source, course, and goal of principles of creative intelligence that govern the growth of the universe and human consciousness.)

Cynthia: What did you notice from your starting TM?

Roger: A few things: I felt more at peace with myself; I felt less anxious striving. I've been prone to feeling a lot of anxiety, but when I have been meditating regularly, it has given me a source of serenity that feels very good. Of course, if you are serene, there is a dimension of joy in that. Joy is not something apart from serenity—they are intermeshed. A line from one of my favorite hymns is “the silence of eternity interpreted by love.” I love that line. (He recites from memory): “Dear Lord and Father of mankind, forgive our feverish ways. Re-clothe us in our rightful mind; in purer lives, thy service find . . . O calm hills above! Where Jesus knelt to share with Thee, the silence of eternity, interpreted by love.” And this verse makes me think of TM: “Drop thy still dews of quietness, till all our strivings cease; take from our souls the strain and stress, and let our ordered lives confess the beauty of thy peace” (Whittier, 1996, p. 397).

Cynthia: That's so beautifully appropriate, Dad. So, after you started meditating, would you say you began to experience some of the “still dews of quietness” in your feverish life?

Roger: Yes, like you, it was gradual, but very significant. It helped me with some serious health problems at that time, related to depression, exhaustion,

and anxiety. As the anxiety drained away, I started feeling more whole and healthy.

Cynthia: It is interesting, how health, wholeness, and holiness are all related.

Roger: Right. When we feel anxious, we feel torn apart, scattered—the opposite of wholeness, holiness.

Cynthia: And then we are thrown around on the surface waves of life. Lack of integration can carry with it a deficiency of integrity.

Roger: That lack of integrity is contrary to our nature, and is what gets us into trouble. This discussion makes me think of the detainees I worked with in the 1970s, when I volunteered at a house of detention in the Bronx. I was impressed with the intelligence and goodness in the men I encountered. In the process of trying to find fulfillment, they had taken shortcuts and had made some bad choices.

Cynthia: Yes, it is a helpful perspective. I remember a story you told me once about some prisoners comparing you to a great historical figure.

Roger: That amazed me. I used to walk away sometimes from these meetings with these men, feeling more ministered unto, than ministering to them. They were so articulate, and had such good sensitivities. One day, two detainees I had been working with—two African-American men who had grown up on the streets of the Bronx—greeted me by saying: “We have figured out who you remind us of. We think you are a reincarnation of Henry David Thoreau!” I so was surprised! Not only by this great compliment but also by the fact that they were familiar with Thoreau and reincarnation.

Cynthia: Why do you think they said this about you?

Roger: There were certain issues we discussed that we all shared. We all valued silence, and had a profound appreciation of nature, and an open mind concerning spirituality.

Cynthia: Those are certainly qualities that I know you greatly respect.

Roger: And they did as well. But of course, it was so hard for them because they had no opportunity to be in the healing atmosphere of nature. They had no silence in their environment—harsh noise constantly amplified and echoed off the walls—it was horrendous. I think I would have gone crazy. That is why I really can see the value of TM for prisoners, giving them an opportunity to experience the silence within.

Cynthia: Even in that harsh, chaotic atmosphere the experience of inner silence softens their emotions. The stories these people have shared are extraordinary (Ellis, 1983). Don't you wish TM was available in every prison?

Roger: Yes. The silence that Thoreau (1985) called "the universal refuge . . . the balm to our every chagrin" (p. 318) could unfold within the prisoners.

Cynthia: Yes, and it seems that has been the case with the prison programs, and for everyone feeling locked away from peace. While we are speaking of Thoreau, I want to share a quote I found recently on a visit to Concord, Massachusetts. I had just walked through the beautiful old moss-covered Sleepy Hollow Cemetery to visit the gravesites of Thoreau, Emerson, and other Transcendentalists. I was so deeply moved. Then I walked over to a used bookstore, where there was a huge two-volume set of Thoreau's Journals. I opened the Journal and was quite amazed to read the following from his entry on July 16, 1851:

In youth. . . I can remember that I was all alive, and inhabited my body with inexpressible satisfaction, both its weariness and its refreshment were sweet to me. This earth was the most glorious musical instrument, and I was audience to its strains. To have such sweet impressions made on us, such ecstasies begotten of the breezes! I can remember how I was astonished. I said to myself—I said to others—"There comes into my mind such an indescribable, infinite, all-absorbing, divine, heavenly pleasure, a sense of elevation and expansion, and [I] have naught to do with it. I perceive that I am dealt with by superior powers." This is a pleasure, a joy, an existence, which I have not procured for myself. I speak as a witness on the stand, and tell what I have perceived . . . The maker of me was improving me. When I detected this interference, I was profoundly moved . . . (Torrey, 1906, pp. 306-7).

Roger: That is beautiful.

Cynthia: It reflects his highly developed sensitivity, and I am so moved by his awed acknowledgement: "The maker of me was improving me." Also, it is poignant that it took Thoreau a long time to discover others who had similar experiences. He further wrote on that same day:

I wondered if a mortal had ever known what I knew. I looked in books for some recognition of a kindred experience but strange to say, I found

none. Indeed, I was slow to discover that other men had this experience, for it had been possible to read books and to associate with men on other grounds (Torrey, 1906, p. 307).

He felt alone, and I could relate to that. This is partly why it was such a relief to attend MIU—where others valued this kind of experience, and where refinement of consciousness was central to the education.

Roger: I feel I can relate to what Thoreau is describing from an experience I had once. It also involved the sense of hearing.

Cynthia: I would love to hear about it!

Roger: When we lived in Boston in the early 1960s, Mom and I had received tickets to a concert by the Boston Symphony Orchestra at Symphony Hall, which had superb acoustics. I was familiar with these acoustics from my own experience there, several years earlier. When I was a student at Augustana College, our college choir had sung a concert in Symphony Hall—a thrilling experience. One of the pieces we sang was Randall Thompson's "The Peaceable Kingdom" (1936). I remember I had shivers up and down my spine, especially when we sang "and gladness of heart" several times in succession, starting with double pianissimo and gradually building louder and louder in a spine-tingling crescendo until Symphony Hall vibrated with our voices. So that college choir experience was in my awareness as we took our seats that evening, four rows from the front on the center aisle. There was a guest conductor, and I was immediately struck by similarities to my father—you remember he died when I was only 15—who had directed two very large church choirs. The conducting styles of my father and this conductor were similar—very smooth and flowing.

As I listened to the opening selection—Haydn's Oxford Symphony—I went from a state of being enthralled, to a state of ecstasy, to a state which made me think of St. Paul's description of being taken up to the second or third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2). Such joy I felt. Indescribable! In this state of ecstasy, I imagined my father in heaven singing and directing a huge choir. This was one of the three or four most vivid states of consciousness I have ever had over the years. It can be described only as mystical or transcendental. I told no one about it at the time because words paled in comparison to the experience.

Cynthia: How very beautiful! How did you feel afterwards?

Roger: I felt I was almost walking on air for about two to three weeks until it gradually subsided. I was living in the aftermath. It was not just an emotional experience; it was a different mode of being. From within this experience, the secular was transformed into the sacred, the ordinary into the extraordinary.

Cynthia: This refinement is an important aspect of what Maharishi taught concerning development of consciousness. After all the stresses and strains are released, our machinery of perception becomes increasingly more refined. There is a positive feedback cycle where we appreciate more, which means our hearts are more loving, and that in turn further refines, nourishes our perception, and so on. Your experience at Symphony Hall sounds like you gained a peek into a higher state of consciousness.

Roger: Yes, it is true—when the heart is fuller, we appreciate more. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. This experience makes me think of what Jesus referred to as the kingdom of heaven, which he said is within, about, among us (Luke 17:20-21). It is hard to put into words, and you cannot put boundaries on it—it is an experience of the unbounded. Living within boundaries is an everyday experience of being human, but to some, from time to time, is given the gift of transcendence. You do not control it.

Cynthia: That is the value of a practice—regular cultivation of the mind and body, and it is true: the development of consciousness is not based upon control. With TM, you take the proper initial condition, like diving. You let go, and nature takes over and allows you to dive deeply. It is this naturalness that makes TM effective. It makes use of our innate tendency to be drawn toward fields of greater charm, and more subtle layers of consciousness have more charm.

Roger: That describes my experience with meditating, and you are right about the value of regular practice for refinement of our awareness.

Cynthia: There was another journal entry by Thoreau that I wanted to share with you, where he again describes his very refined sense of hearing. This is from July 21, 1851:

There is always a kind of fine Aeolian harp music to be heard in the air. I hear now, as it were, the mellow sound of distant horns in the hollow mansions of the upper air . . . far away overhead, subsiding into my ear . . . what a harp this world is! . . . There is an immortal melody that may be

heard morning, noon, and night, by ears that can attend, and from time to time this man or that hears it, having ears that were made for music (Torrey, 1906, p. 330).

When I discovered this I was excited, because his words give a flavor of experiences I had as a very young child. For example, when I was about four or five, during an apparent dream, I saw and heard a choir of angels singing. The beauty of the sound and the experience of intense ecstasy were on an order of magnitude beyond anything—it was sheer glorious ecstasy. Like Thoreau, it took me many years before I encountered anyone, either in books or in person, who had such a similar experience. That's why I was so captivated when my friend at that party told me about refined Cosmic Consciousness, or God Consciousness, where one's appreciation of God's creation is highly developed. But unless you have had a glimpse of this experience, it can sound a bit unbelievable.

Roger: That experience planted a seed for you, didn't it? For your deep knowingness that there was something more to life than the mundane.

Cynthia: Yes, and that it was possible to dissolve suffering and experience joy in life.

Roger: Your angel-choir experience reminds me of the hymn *This is My Father's World*: "This is my Father's world, and through my listening ears, all nature sings and round me rings the music of the spheres . . ." (Babcock, 1996, p. 57). Whenever you visit, I love to have you sing the hymn *O Holy Angels Bright*:

O holy angels bright, who wait at God's right hand, or through the realms of light fly at your Lord's command . . . Sing thou the songs of love . . . Let all thy days, till life shall end, whate'er He send, be filled with praise . . . (Baxter, 1996, p. 760)

Science tells us there are innumerable contrapuntal sounds surrounding us—in the way of radio waves and the music they carry. In a similar way my intuition tells me that in the silent spaces there are a multitude of energy forces, which are full of wisdom and creativity, going on all the time. Creation is not just in the past; it is endless and infinite. Angels are a symbolism that points to this reality. You need a poet's sense to see the inklings or inclinations of these foci of energy—they could be called the hearts and minds of the entities around us, symbolized by the concept of angels. Angel

means a messenger. There are infinite possibilities of messages or messengers, including from the past, which are literally there in our brains, a kind of cosmic brain.

Cynthia: Wow, Dad! That is quite an interesting way of understanding the possibility of angels! You mentioned the cosmic brain. One phrase I have heard Maharishi use for the pure field of creative intelligence is the “cosmic computer.”

Roger: That is a fascinating term.

Cynthia: When we sing these hymns together now, I can appreciate that being exposed to such beautiful hymns did indeed help refine my perception as a young child. The music in the church, the images, and metaphors in the Bible stirred something deeply in me. As I said before, I loved the mysterious sacredness of the Catholic Church. Our own church had a different flavor of holiness. It was like liquid sunshine—joy and warmth flowing through my veins.

Roger: This is an experience not only in a church context. You can feel it hiking in the mountains or walking in the early morning or at sunset—feeling quiet, awake, and alive. Many of the psalms are songs of praise about God’s creation. “This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice, and be glad in it!” (Psalm 118:24).

Cynthia: Isaiah wrote: “For you shall go out in joy, and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands” (Isaiah 55:12).

Roger: I love that!

Cynthia: The sense of wonder and appreciation unfolds as softness and silence unfold within our consciousness. If we are full of fatigue and anxiety, it coarsens both our perception and our hearts. Our ability to love tends to suffer in spite of our good intentions.

Roger: I think of Rabbi Jesus’ teaching that you must be as a child to enter the kingdom of heaven. “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3). Thoreau described—and perhaps lamented—that it was in his childhood that he was most awake and aware. Jesus addresses this with the teaching to be as a child *now*. We have the potential, at all times in our lives, to become childlike in terms of appreciation, wonder, love, and trust.

Cynthia: The New Testament uses a very interesting word, *metanoia*, usually translated as “repent,” for how this transformation takes place. Can we explore

the meaning of *metanoia* in the context of discussing a theologian, Paul Tillich, who has had a profound influence upon you?

The Ground of Being

The name of infinite and inexhaustible depth and ground of our being is God . . . And if that word has not much meaning for you, translate it, and speak of the depths of your life, of the source of your being . . .

— Paul Tillich (1948)

Cynthia: I remember that when you learned TM and took SCI, you immediately saw parallels with Paul Tillich's theology. In your doctoral program in the early 1960s, you had taken one of Tillich's last seminars at Harvard.

Roger: Paul Tillich (1963) is considered one of the most influential Protestant theologians of the 20th century. He was one of only four faculty given the title of "University Professor" at Harvard at that time, which meant that his learning was considered deep and broad enough to be applicable to all of Harvard's schools: Divinity, Arts and Sciences, Medicine, Law, Education, and Business. I was privileged to have participated in one of his last seminars. The seminars were held in his apartment in Cambridge, so it was a comfortable setting, conducive to sharing.

Cynthia: I remember that for your doctoral dissertation, you read almost everything he had ever written, which was significant.

Roger: Yes, including all he had written in German!

Cynthia: What did you like about Tillich?

Roger: As a young man, I had an uneasy conscience about traditional Christianity. The traditional Biblical language left me puzzled. Tillich enabled me to recognize how realistic, practical, and relevant that inherited theology is. With Tillich I constantly experienced that "aha" feeling when I read his interpretation of Biblical language. He spoke in a language that was universal. Tillich defines God as *Being Itself*, the divine ground, source, and power of life. Fundamentally, Tillich said it is not doctrine or teachings that are the essence of religion and spirituality. Religious doctrine points to the Truth, which is a state of Being beyond any activity or thing. He viewed intellectual understanding as complementary to direct spiritual experience. Similarly, Maharishi

speaks of the transcendental field of Being, which we can only experience when we transcend mental activity.

Cynthia: Where we experience pure awareness, pure consciousness, as expressed in Philippians 4:7—“the peace that passes understanding.” I recently saw a couple of translations that interpreted this verse as the peace of God, which transcends all understanding (New International Version), or powers of thought.

Roger: That adds more clarity. I recently was rereading one of Tillich’s sermons called “What Is Truth?” from his book, *The New Being* (1955). Tillich writes that Jesus’ life was “a life which never lost the communion with the divine ground of all life, and . . . which never lost the union of love with all beings” (p.74).

Cynthia: That is a beautiful way of describing the life of Jesus.

Roger: Yes, and I remember from the SCI class how similar Tillich’s analysis was to Maharishi’s description of higher states of consciousness. As with the life of Jesus, love for all beings springs from communion with the ground of all life—what both Tillich and Maharishi call Being.

The universality of Tillich’s and Maharishi’s teachings concerning “love” greatly appealed to me as well. In one of Tillich’s sermons (1955), he quotes from 1 John 4:16: “God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.” Even so-called unbelievers can relate to this. The philosopher and mathematician Bertrand Russell (2000) said at the end of his life that he came to recognize that the greatest of all values was love. Not romantic love—*eros*; not even just brotherly or sisterly love—*philia*; but unconditional love—*agape*.

Cynthia: One practical teaching of Maharishi is that the ability to love fully is based on inner fullness, inner Being. That is something you and I both had to learn.

Roger: Psalm 23 expresses the restorative power of the Divine. “He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul . . . my cup overflows” (verses 2-3, 5).

Cynthia: When we are restored, compassion for others is natural; it overflows from communion with the Divine.

Roger: I agree. Returning to the point about Tillich defining the Divine as the “ground of Being”: he was criticized by some because when he defined God in this way, many people were turned off. They felt it sounded too abstract, but