

Foreword

by John Friedlander

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Five times a year I teach and channel seminars in which students explore new information and develop new technical skills. As quickly as possible afterward, a friend mails a recording of the class to Richard so we can have the sheer delight of discovering how he uses the material in his own way: how the seminar information gets woven with other streams of material, and especially how it gets woven into Richard's own fearless stories and poetry.

Richard passionately engages spiritual streams and practices from ancient and modern sources, both Eastern and Western, and places them in dialogue with our culture as a whole and with his own life in particular. Something emerges that is rich and challenging, new and spontaneous, specific yet drawing from multifarious tributaries. I like to think of Richard's writing as the literary equivalent to jazz, especially to John Coltrane, who legendarily played on Miles Davis's seminal 1958 recording, "Kind of Blue," and later headed his own breakthrough group.

Coltrane's music took his own and society's joy and pain, addiction and anger, spiritual insight and vitality, and wove it all into a mystical paean to life. His album, "A Love Supreme," was pivotal in helping me break through my own atheism, pain, and alienation in 1969. Coltrane didn't merely transcend his earlier life of tension and pain; he brought the sacred into what was personal, partial, and everyday. As I am writing this introduction (this is cool), I see clairvoyantly—I've never seen this before, but Coltrane is one of Richard's guides. I've wondered how Coltrane's music might have developed had he not died at age forty. Richard's books aren't Coltrane's, but if you listen, you can hear Coltrane's horn.

Richard's mythopoetic textbooks, like Coltrane's music, are centered in the emotional, intellectual, and creative path of people engaging everyday life, even as they embrace life mystically in this and many other dimensions. Richard draws on the deep wisdom of nondual traditions (mostly Eastern), which for convenience he idiosyncratically consolidates under the label "Buddhism," and on the new vistas of the Western growth systems which, for convenience, again idiosyncratically, he consolidates under the label "theosophy"—with a small "t." He then comes up with something new, personal, and universal. His writing exhibits Richard's ever-growing compassion for himself and others—the rewards, perhaps, for a man who has practiced survival, spirituality, business, marriage and fatherhood, writing, and other passions throughout his sixty-seven years of fascinating and often painful life, and who is coming day by day to growing peace, understanding, kindness, and generosity.

The rest of this introduction will, I hope, frame and highlight much of what is culturally new in Richard's work. It contains controversial arguments, most of which you will find expanded and illuminated in Richard's poetic synthesis in Volumes Two and Three of *Dark Pool of Light*. If you, the reader, believe these arguments are wrong, please feel free to disagree with me at Psychicpsychology.org. I will try to blog on issues of general interest.

Stories

Humanity has benefitted from the illumination and support of great mystical systems, especially nondual systems, since at least the time of the Buddha. The nature of human consciousness is changing, however, as we move into the Aquarian Age, and nondual systems do not adapt to the multidimensionality of the coming era. Specifically, nondual systems have no way of valuing the everyday life of ordinary people in those people's own terms and for their own purposes. Nondual systems also circumvent the formation of particularly human dualistic stories, which fulfill a major part of humans' purpose in the Earth's spiritual ecosystem. Yes, especially in Zen and Tantric traditions, nondual practitioners open directly and non-conceptually to a joyful engagement with everything including everyday

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life. But very few people achieve nondual awareness. While many argue that any person can achieve nondual awareness in a single lifetime; that possibility presupposes that the person has an orientation toward a nondual path, something that's surpassingly rare. In the Piscean Age it has been vital that we have charismatic humans who have broken through to nondual awareness. The Aquarian Age will build on the accomplishments of the waning Piscean Age to include everyone in a new kind of consciousness.

Humans spent thousands of years developing *dual* consciousness from deep and mystical levels of human and earth consciousness, both for humans' own purposes and also to fill a spiritual ecological niche in the unfathomable consciousness that is our Earth. Our human neurological systems are intended to present us with a virtual world that is an illusion, a deeply meaningful illusion. They present us with a world in which we each seem distinct and separate from what is outside us (that is, "dual"), even though, in truth, everything is nondual and we are inseparably simultaneously individual and in union with All That Is. Through a long, multi-life training process exploring the illusion of duality, humans learn how to coordinate complex energies; how to make kind, generous, skillful, yet individually authentic choices; and maybe most of all, how to weave stores we identify with without losing ourselves in them. It is our stories that comprise our particular human contribution to the universe and fulfill humanity's spiritual ecological niche.

People who have permanent nondual awareness have transformed their neurological systems so that they no longer perceive reality as dual. Clairvoyantly, one can observe that these people have shattered some Etheric filters that previously organized their neurological system to present the virtual-reality illusion of duality. While no system I know of talks about or directly works to shatter these Etheric filters, in developing awareness of the intrinsic nondual nature of reality, one must reorganize his/her neurological system and in so doing, must shatter these filters. The filters are not merely cognitive or philosophical, they structure the neurological system to generate the illusion of duality. Instead of shattering the filters, my guides say the bulk of the human race will continue to develop these filters through the coming decades and centuries. The filters, in their enhanced form, will eventually be used to generate the coming group consciousness of the Aquarian Age.

Earlier, we needed those saints who cultivated nondual awareness. They were vital because, to further make our human stories seem real, the much larger consciousnesses that had naturally interacted with all humans in earlier eras—and who obviously do not display dual consciousness—withdrew from waking contact with humans. As a result of this isolation, humans experienced themselves as the top of a chain of consciousness and separate from the natural love and support that is inseparable from all consciousness. In the Piscean Age, this natural support was known only through great mystics. The great saints of the past and present have personified this spiritual knowledge to the mass of humans who were otherwise busy exploring duality.

Clairvoyantly, you can see the concrete effect of the neurological changes generated by those permanently realizing their nondual nature. Their thought becomes direct and non-conceptual. The part of our brain that identifies with our experience as occurring in a separate self and which then generates stories about our separate selves is simply bypassed neurologically. Of course those with nondual awareness can tell stories about their individual experience, but they do so only by using a different part of their brain which does not add the Astral-energy complexities and resonances that the part of the brain which identifies as a separate self does. These Astral complexities are the palpable richness that humans add to our stories and to the Earth.

It is true that for most of us the story-making is a deeply ambivalent process. When we hold onto our stories rigidly, we become unskillful and unhappy. When our stories are engaged skillfully, flexibly, and playfully, with kindness, generosity, and authenticity, they bring happiness and meaning that is new both to us and to the universe as a whole. Richard, and for that matter, Coltrane, show us how to own our stories, and to tell them with both passion and compassion.

Interdependent Origination, Impermanence, and Multi-personhood

There's a kind of valuing of personal dual experience that I don't think was possible until Jane Roberts, the first modern channel. Jane channeled a being that she called Seth, and his teachings opened a new, multi-directional world

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that counter-intuitively opened a direct cherishing of all consciousnesses in their own terms, for their own purposes, with a subjective eternity. The Seth channelings galvanized hundreds of thousands in the seventies with Seth's message that we create our own reality according to our conscious beliefs. I even moved to Ithaca, New York, to study directly with Jane and Seth; and today there's nothing I do, feel, or think that is not penetrated through and through with their information, kindness, generosity, and aliveness. Over the decades, however, I've come to understand and appreciate their teachings differently than I and my friends did at the time.

Then, I (and everyone I knew) felt that Seth had handed us the key to making tension disappear from our lives. We thought that since we create our own reality according to our beliefs, we would just work on our beliefs, get what we want and thus, through the satisfaction of our desires, find fulfillment. Now, four decades after encountering Seth, I see Seth as teaching a much more realistic and much deeper message.

Seth's teachings, in subtle ways, refocused ancient wisdom toward a multi-perspectival, multi-dimensional awareness that is not mere unity, not the nondual awareness that has been cultivated until now, but something that he began to refer to in the later books as "multi-personhood." One way of understanding multi-personhood is in terms of, yet is an inversion of, two of Buddhism's profound recognitions that are usually referred to as "interdependent origination" (or "interdependence") and "impermanence." Buddhists teach that there are no objective independent essences. Every phenomenon arises interdependently. They also teach that all phenomena change and shift, calling this fact impermanence. Buddhists use their understanding of interdependent origination and impermanence to deconstruct our sense of an objective independent self and thus to facilitate the attainment of nondual awareness.

Seth doesn't actually use the terms interdependence and impermanence. However, through the years Seth spoke to and pointed to a new way of embracing impermanence and interdependence. As do the Buddhists, Seth teaches that no self has objective independent existence. All phenomena arise in mutual dependence in and upon everything else, that is, interdependently; but for Seth, there are infinite numbers and kinds of consciousness with subjective and necessarily fuzzy boundaries, which he

calls gestalts. Much as Wittgenstein came to notice, words have no fixed meaning or use but arise in practice as people use language. so the human individual has no fixed meaning or identity but emerges and grows out of a conversation between and among numerous gestalts such as his/her Atman or original spark, his/her soul as that concept is understood in Theosophy and Alice Bailey (the soul), with plants, animals, Mother Earth, the Sun, and most of all, with other humans. Each and all of these gestalts take part in and give rise to each of us. All of these constituent gestalts themselves arise interdependently, but each gestalt—you, the Earth, your soul, and so on—interdependent though it is, is nevertheless sacred and meaningful in its own terms and for its own self; though always and also for others, and always in conversation with everything that is.

Furthermore, and this may be an even more radical but easily overlooked aspect of Seth's material, each gestalt's subjectivity is eternal because of impermanence. Because of impermanence, all consciousnesses change constantly. That very change generates expansion in all directions. Each gestalt's subjectivity expands in all directions and is thus eternal (even though time itself is an illusion, an apparent contradiction not addressed in this foreword).

Because mystics have until now looked only in the one dimension of the physical Earth's time as humans know it today, eternal change was only observed to lead to the dissolution of all forms. But when you look in all directions, the subjectivity of every gestalt continues meaningfully and identifiably in innumerable directions, even though the forms themselves come and go. Specifically, each human's personal, individual subjectivity continues forever. Richard briefly addresses this fact in his books, and my co-author Gloria Hemsher and I discuss it at more length in Chapter 14 of our book, *Psychic Psychology: Energy Skills for Life and Relationships*. In that discussion, which is admittedly a little complex, we give an example of multi-personhood in the person of my friend Will, who died thirty-six years ago. We describe his current consciousness as it explores multiple levels and directions simultaneously.

Multi-personhood, a new concept, allows the cherishing of everyday dualistic experience in its own terms for its own purposes. Interdependence might earlier have pointed to multi-personhood had the mystics using that concept followed their consciousness in more directions. Certainly

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the Theosophists and Alice Bailey had an underlying awareness that might have led them to an understanding of multi-personhood. They knew that other “levels” of humans were themselves conscious and centered in their own “lives” in their own right. The soul was seen to have its own life and activities which were independent in significant ways from what the personality did, but Bailey and the Theosophists were locked into a linear time perspective which obscured the significance of the fact that one’s soul and other aspects of oneself are themselves a center of their own consciousness.

When one takes a more Sethian attitude, relishing the impermanence and interdependence of all phenomena, one gets a clue to a different kind of “always and already” than the nondual practitioners seek to realize. The nondual practitioner seeks to realize that he/she is, at a human level, always and already nondual. He/she sees that the duality presented earlier to his/her senses was always an illusion. However, the exploration of multi-personhood leaves intact the apparent duality your human consciousness, even as you become concretely aware of other aspects of yourself that always and already reside consciously in nondual awareness. Through recognizing your multi-personhood you open to the fact that you are always and already flourishing at multiple levels in your multi-personhood. Many of those multiple other levels are always and already aware of their nondual nature and enthusiastically send a part of themselves—that is, they send you—on a field trip to explore duality. Unconsciously while on that field trip called life, and eventually consciously after life (see Chapter 14 of *Psychic Psychology*), you already share in their nondual awareness, but you and they retain the richness of your apparent duality.

Your soul, your Atman, and other self-organizing consciousnesses are you and you are them in a different and meaningful sense than the fact that you are one with everything. As a center of their own consciousness, they are one with you in a way that is distinct from their oneness with everything. Your soul already knows itself nondually and multiply centered as: 1) itself, 2) as you, 3) as something much bigger than itself, 4) as consciousnesses moving in some sense sideways and in innumerable other directions. Your soul follows and individualizes simultaneously, in multiple directions, and is itself each of these other selves in its own distinct

way. Your soul recognizes itself as each of those selves. It recognizes itself in all these gestalts not from a single viewpoint outside these gestalts, and not merely centered in them in its unity with all things, but centered in each of these gestalts in new and resonating identities unique to its own multi-personhood gestalt.

This can be hard to track. Simultaneously, yet individually; separately, yet interdependently; your soul knows itself in innumerable directions, with numerous centers. As an analogy, imagine some super-human who can simultaneously listen to ten different kinds of music, watch several movies, go to five different parties, work many jobs, live in many centuries with different identities—and participate in all these activities while keeping each clearly and exquisitely separate. Yet simultaneously this super-human enjoys the resonances between and interdependence of them all; and he/she is centered uniquely in each of them, knowing itself newly and completely from each perspective. Not just your soul, but your Atman and numerous other consciousnesses are centers of your/their multi-personhood.

We can quite easily reach the level of our soul, of our Atman, and many other nondual consciousnesses in classes and in our own meditation. Contacting them is a rich and productive enhancement for engaging everyday life by familiarizing us with the underlying nondual awareness and support that is always and already there. However, contacting those higher consciousnesses will only bring permanent nondual awareness to us, the physical human, if that contact reorganizes our physical neurological system; and so, following my guides' advice, in our classes we are careful not to reorganize our neurological systems in a nondual way. But those consciousnesses we contact are permanently nondual in their own centered gestalts. Each human personality is always and already a vital part of this multi-personhood. What we humans uniquely contribute are our dualistic stories.

It is not possible to perceive our own multi-personhood directly, in a human body, at this time. Our human multi-personhood will only become directly knowable in a human body as group consciousness emerges in the Aquarian Age. Over the coming decades and centuries neurological changes to the human body will emerge that will allow each of us to track simultaneously and separately our multi-personhood, and these changes will lead to group consciousness, but those neurological changes will require a critical

mass of prepared individuals. Even though we cannot now know our multi-personhood while embodied, each of our personalities, eventually, after further training after death, will know itself to be both nondual and a center of its multi-personhood, and will know itself simultaneously in multiple perspectives (see Chapter 14 of *Psychic Psychology*, cited above). Each of our personalities will bring a unique perspective to its multi-personhood born out of its unique earlier immersion in the human dualistic perspective—the immersion it experienced while in a human body.

Why discuss anything this complicated? Because this knowledge opens us to make it our primary business as human beings to engage our ordinary humanity in and for its own purposes. Why seek to abort this field trip called dual consciousness? Other parts of us already know themselves to be nondual and we, this human personality, not some subsequent reincarnation, will one day, after much further training after death, know that too. Then we, this personality, as well as other parts of our multi-personhood, will appreciate all we accomplished while on the dualistic field trip of being human.

Kindness, Generosity, and Authenticity

My Sethian guides advise that our principal purpose then as waking humans is to engage life with kindness, generosity, and authenticity. The first part of human purpose—kindness and generosity—aligns with the great nondual traditions. Kindness and generosity are profoundly adaptive. When a person is genuinely kind and generous, he/she will be happy personally and a contributor to all the universe. But one can be kind and generous by transcending the personal. For purposes of this discussion, a person may be “individual” while lacking those particular psychic energies that my guides distinguish by calling them personal. One engages the personal when one’s emotions vibrate in the “human home” for emotions, the Astral Plane. Those individuals with nondual awareness have emotions that vibrate in a higher plane, and while they can be wonderful and even at times a global treasure, they no longer add the particular unique human “thickening” of identity that humans have cultivated as a whole for thousands of years.

So from a Sethian perspective, something more than kindness and generosity is required to fully embrace one's humanity. That something extra we refer to as "authenticity." As my guides use the term, it means to engage your waking life using mostly your own Astral energy. "Your own" Astral energy is one of those important, though fuzzy, subjective concepts that set the stage for Seth's re-centering of the mystical journey not just into everyday life, but into everyday human life with its conceptual thought and proliferating stories, everyday human life in its own terms and for its own purposes.

As noted earlier, the Earth, our souls, our Atmans, and other gestalts chose to explore the creation of uniquely human stories and emotions through us, to explore them in millions of directions. This enormous spiritual project was set up over thousands of years by humans and other kinds of consciousness collaborating together. An automatic universal human process was established. For the last several thousand years, each human's physical body has interacted with the energy of the Astral Plane to set up what I and my co-author call a personal aura. The personal aura is just a part of the many energies that humans utilize. While we can usefully learn to explore energies outside the range of the personal aura, the personal aura is the core of our everyday life and relationships. It is where our stories get written.

Energy gets "initialed" or programmed in the personal aura so that it is identifiably that one person's personal energy throughout his/her reincarnational cycle. Humans, through exploring conversations between their own and other people's personal energy, engage in an exquisite and sometimes tense dance of creativity and boundary clarification. Because all the energies of the cosmos interdependently give rise to your personality and even your personal aura, it is impossible to entirely separate your energy from another's; yet with a little training, your personal energies are palpably distinct from that of other people in meaningful and creative ways.

So how does one generate kindness, generosity, and authenticity? There is a tension between kindness and generosity on the one hand and authenticity on the other. When you utilize your own energy you will have individual preferences, many of which will inevitably be thwarted in daily life. It is a challenging journey to treat an ever larger percentage of the

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people you encounter with kindness and generosity while you pursue your preferences as part of an overall conversation between you and the world. Inevitably tensions arise between your preferences and others', but it is only through embracing that creative tension rather than transcending it in a preferenceless transcendent love that a Sethian would say you can fulfill the purpose of the human race's development for the last several thousand years. By learning to track what is your energy and what is another's, something you can do consciously or unconsciously (in other words, even people who know nothing about this system can accomplish its goals), you learn good boundaries and how to coordinate your energy with others, cherishing your uniqueness and honoring others.

There are many ways to develop kindness, generosity, and authenticity. In Gloria's and my book, *Psychic Psychology*, we elaborate a full psychic system for tracking what is your energy, for exploring the psychic tensions and creativity of interpersonal interactions, and for using energy awareness to develop practical wisdom in everyday life. Numerous other systems exist, and even those I disagree with such as the nondual systems often generate outstanding degrees of kindness, generosity, and authenticity. Richard's stories, poetry, psychic exercises, and arguments help generate kindness, generosity, and authenticity. Richard's mythopoetic textbooks open my eyes and open my humanity.

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