

# Institute of Noetic Sciences

Fall 1986

Volume 14:2



## *Altruism: Self and Other*

The work of the Institute of Noetic Sciences is inspired by the belief that each of us harbors the potential to be and to do far more than we ordinarily experience or demonstrate. This concept of "human potential" is sometimes romanticized, sometimes ridiculed. However, if we avoid both temptations, the desire to actualize this untapped potential can be seen to be both an inner urge and a social imperative.

What blocks a more complete understanding and development of our innate potential? How can our most socially constructive potential—our capacity for love, cooperation, service—be more fully developed or awakened?

Forty years ago a little-recognized researcher at Harvard University, Pitirim Sorokin, was asking similar questions.

Founder of the Harvard University Research Center on Creative Altruism, Sorokin defined "creative altruism" as *the innate capacity for unselfish service to others motivated by love*. His research was largely ignored at the time, but today his findings yield useful insights as we reexamine the nature of creative altruism and ask how it might be fostered for the benefit of the individual as well as society.

Determined to learn more about creative altruism as a socially constructive character trait, Sorokin studied the life experiences of a number of "saints and good neighbors", attempting to identify patterns in the ways altruism developed

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# Institute of Noetic Sciences

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## In Memoriam: Alan Jay Lerner

On the morning of June 14, 1986, Alan Jay Lerner, the musical lyricist of a generation and a director of the Institute of Noetic Sciences since 1983, succumbed to cancer and departed in peace. Alan's interest in things noetic was probably not widely realized. Yet it was there: a belief in miraculous healing (the return to life of Sir Sagamore) and a deeper knowledge sometimes available to us through mystical sources (such as Merlin), both in *Camelot*. An interest in the possibility of reincarnation (*On a Clear Day You Can See Forever*). The possibility of transcending the restraints of time (*Brigadoon*) and of extraordinary personal growth or transformation (*My Fair Lady* and *Gigi*). It was timely and fitting that only last December he received a Kennedy Center award for distinguished contributions to the performing arts. This culminated a career where his recognition had been bestowed nightly by the audiences who would go home singing "I Could Have Danced All Night", or "If Ever I Should Leave You", or any of several dozen other hits that have entered the mainstream of the world's modern musical tradition. His book on the history of musical comedy will be published later this year.

Alan is survived by three daughters and one son. His lovely wife Liz Robertson is a musical comedy star. Indeed, they met when she interpreted the role of Liza Doolittle in the successful London revival of *My Fair Lady* a decade ago. We offer Liz and Alan's entire family our heartfelt sympathy. They, and we, have lost a sensitive, creative, loving spirit who was in many ways unique. We miss him.

On behalf of the Board of Directors,  
Paul N. Temple

The Institute of Noetic Sciences was founded in 1973 to support research and education on human consciousness. A tax-exempt, non-profit public foundation, the Institute's purposes are to broaden knowledge of the nature and potentials of mind and consciousness, and to apply that knowledge to the enhancement of the quality of life on the planet.

For membership information see pages 28-31.

Fall 1986

## Newsletter

Volume 14:2

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Printer: Skillful Means

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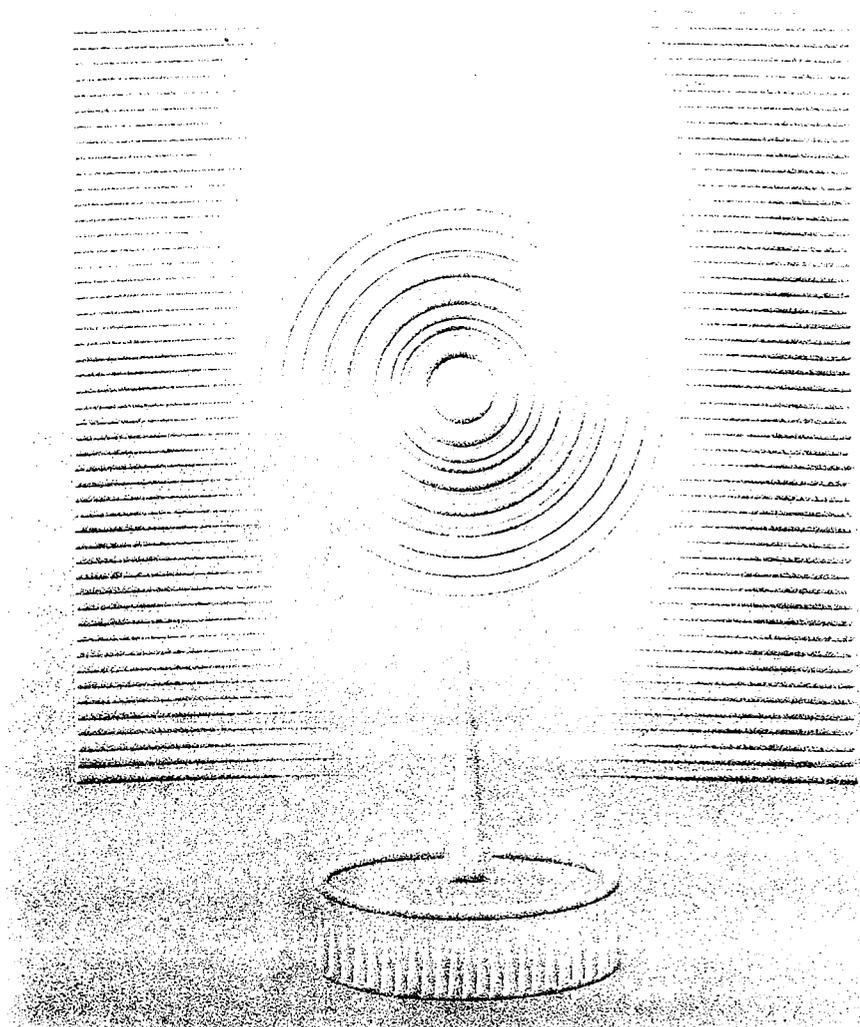
# Waking Up

by Charles T. Tart

*Note: Institute of Noetic Sciences Board Member Henry Rolfs has long recognized the importance of the work of G. I. Gurdjieff (1877-1949). Rolfs saw a need for a book on this work, comprehensible to the educated lay reader. He commissioned psychologist Charles T. Tart, student of Gurdjieff's work, to write such a book through a grant from the Institute of Noetic Sciences. We are proud to announce the availability in December of Tart's book, Waking Up, published as part of the Institute of Noetic Sciences Book Series.*

*Waking Up draws heavily on Tart's own understanding of the work of Gurdjieff, whose teachings have become very popular in recent years. It is quite different from the usual "Gurdjieff said..." book, however. Waking Up is an original formulation by an internationally known scientist, integrating Gurdjieff's ideas with modern growth psychology, research on altered states of consciousness and transpersonal psychology.*

*The book is in three major sections. "Possibilities" examines the idea of enlightenment and the part played by altered states. What we could be is so far beyond our usual state, though, that Section 2, "Problems", goes into detailed examination of why we live in a state of illusion. Section 3, "Practices", describes specific methods of self-observation and self-remembering that can lead to waking up into higher states of consciousness. These practices are intended for use in everyday life. The advantages of working within a spiritual growth group are discussed, as well as the dangers inherent in such groups and teachers. The book ends with a chapter on intelligently selecting a spiritual path as a personal experiment and includes a "Spiritual Commitment Contract" designed to maximize the learning opportunities and minimize the risks of spiritual work.*



## *The Fourth Way as a System of Spiritual Growth*

Gurdjieff's ideas contain so many useful psychological understandings and techniques that it is possible to study them on a purely psychological level. That is, you can profit from them without any interest in or acceptance of "spiritual" ideas—ideas that we are more than our physical bodies.

In some ways this is fine. So much nonsense has been promulgated in the name of the spiritual that our culture's aversion to it has many healthy aspects. At the same time I am convinced that there are vital spiritual realities, and if we do not come to terms with them and spiritually evolve we and our civilization will die.

Intelligence, discrimination, and personal experience are what is needed, not blind belief or blind disbelief.

I focus on Gurdjieff's teachings as a psychology in this book because that is how I best understand them. I do not want to give you the impression that is

all there is to Gurdjieff, though. His psychological ideas were imbedded in a very elaborate and sophisticated spiritual system. In common with many great spiritual systems, it is a worldview that sees the entire universe as an integrated, meaningful, and alive manifestation of the Absolute. Humankind has a place and a function in this alive, evolving universe. Our function interlocks with those beings higher on the scale of the universe, beings who would be considered "non-physical" or spiritual in ordinary terms. That humankind has fallen into the insanity of consensus trance and lost touch with our true possibilities and functions is a tragedy. The Fourth Way is not just a way of optimizing programming in your organic biocomputer: it is a system of spiritual growth, eventually going beyond organic, physical life as we know it, so humans can regain their true function and happiness.

Mad Man Taking Great  
Pleasure in Restrictions  
Dictated By His Own Habits



Richard Stine

... continued from page 3

### Essence versus False Personality

The study of personality is one of the major areas of specialization in modern psychology—I specialized in it in my graduate training—and a fascinating subject for almost everyone. Do I have a good personality or a bad one? Should I take a course on improving my personality?

By personality we usually mean an enduring and persisting set of attitudes, traits, motivations, beliefs, and response patterns that characterize an individual and distinguish him or her from others. We value, defend, and cling to our personality, even when it has characteristics that cause suffering.

Modern psychology has recognized that for some people the overall structure of their personality is just so pathological that they would be better off if it could somehow be destroyed and replaced with a "normal" personality. By and large, though, psychologists do not question the desirability of personality per se.

The great spiritual traditions, on

the other hand, have frequently condemned personality. Each of us is (or could be) something far more basic and important than we are. To the extent that personality consumes our vital energy and/or actively interferes with the discovery, development, and manifestation of our deeper self, personality is an enemy of real growth.

Gurdjieff expressed this traditional dichotomy as the conflict between *essence* and *false personality*.

*Essence is what is uniquely you. You were born as a unique combination of physical, biological, mental, emotional, and spiritual traits and potentials. Most of this is only potential at birth, and may never manifest unless the right circumstances are created by your world, or by you yourself later in life.* Some of these potentials are highly desirable in a universal sense, "the essential delight of the blood", the capacity for love.

Others may be troublesome if they develop, such as an inability to delay

Our discussion of the human condition centers around a basic but seldom accepted or understood idea: We are "asleep", compared to what we could be. We are caught in illusions while thinking we are perceiving reality.

This book is about **waking up** in order to create the foundation for an inner peace as well as a greater effectiveness in the world. It is about the psychological and cultural processes that create inner conflict, delusion, unnecessary suffering, and hostility in us, that unnecessarily divide us from others—the processes that deepen our sleep. Few of us may be in a position to have a decisive influence on world peace, but cultivation of our own inner resources can create peacefulness and effectiveness in action in ourselves and the people we come in contact with, and this can spread. As we attack those near us less and care for them more, we start to have effects on the kinds of political processes that need enemies for hidden psychological reasons. It is my hope that furthering the creation of inner peace in people will contribute to outer peace.

gratification in favor of some later goal or too quick a temper.

Your parents and your culture begin shaping your development from the moment of birth. Certain manifestations of your essence are rewarded, some are simply neglected, some are denied and punished. This enculturation process is exceptionally powerful because its agents are so capable and knowledgeable and you are so helpless and ignorant by comparison. It is powerful because your physical and emotional well being are at stake, and because you have an inherent social instinct, a desire to belong, to be "normal".

With each surrender of an aspect of our essential self, energy is taken from essence and channeled into supporting our developing personality. The original meaning of "persona"—a mask used by actors—is apropos here. Slowly we create a more and more comprehensive mask that is a socially approved presentation of ourselves,

something that will get us acceptance and approval, something that makes us "normal", like everybody else. As we identify more and more completely with the mask, with personality, forget that we are *acting* a role and *become* the role, more and more of our natural energy goes into personality, and essence withers.

We can sublimate some aspects of our essential nature that are not allowed direct expression to partially salvage them. A few may persist because our culture happens to value them. For many aspects of our essence, their energy is either lost altogether or sublimated into false personality.

Gradually, with noise and fog, the traffic of consensus trance has smothered the flowering of the vital spirit.

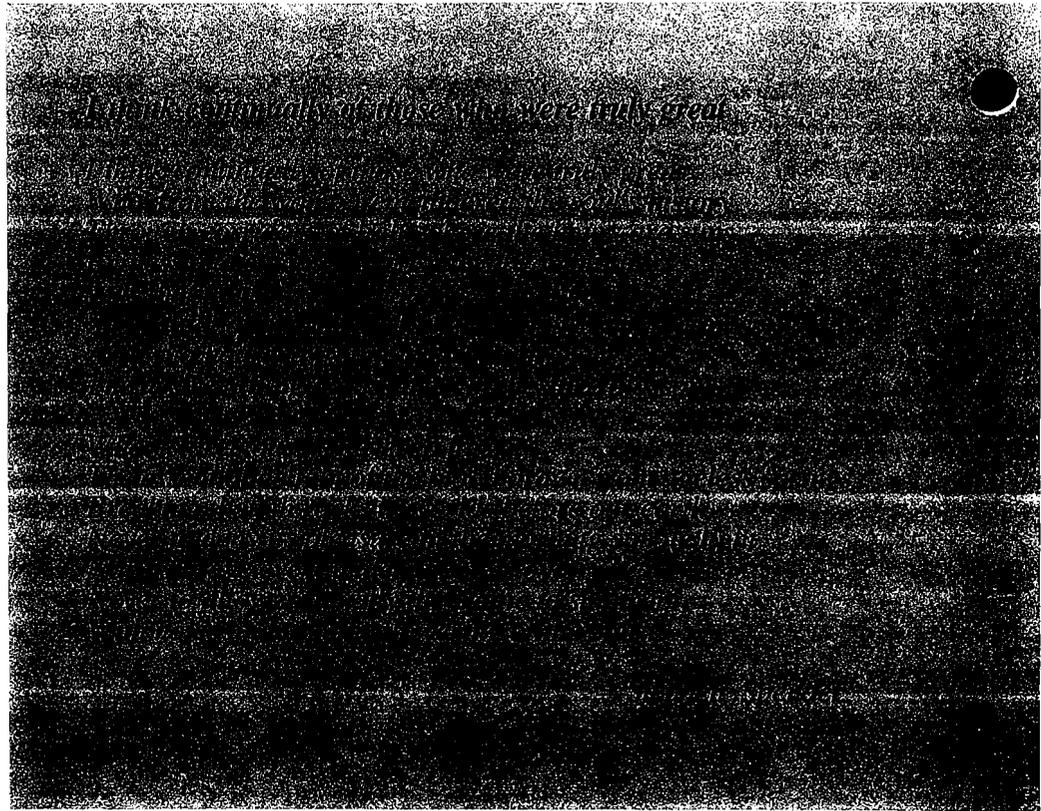
This denial can destroy our lives, for essence is the vital part of us, the truly living spark. It is the light that was found in meadow, grove, and stream, the earth and every common sight. As false personality eventually uses up almost all of our vital energy, the light fades, and life is a mechanical, automated set of habits.

### **False Personality Must Die**

We are our false personalities, and yet . . . There is at least some essence still alive, still reachable. If there weren't, you probably would not be trying to grow. There is hope of real change.

To really change, false personality must die. But not in a harsh, punitive way, not by way of superego attacks—they are part of false personality too. The death of false personality should be a transformation process, a recycling process, a skilled process based on the knowledge gained through extensive self-observation.

If you could just suddenly be your essence, it would be a great relief for a while, but eventually quite tiring. Essence stopped growing in early childhood, and it's difficult to live an adult life as a child. Gurdjieff reportedly demonstrated this by temporarily returning a person to essence, using a combination of unknown drugs and hypnosis (P. D. Ouspensky, *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragment of an Unknown Teaching*; Harcourt, Brace and World, 1949).



In my study of marijuana intoxication I found one of the most common effects to be that of feeling more childlike and open, an obvious component of the drug's appeal. For permanent results, though, we need to rediscover essence and then nourish it, parent it, love and cherish essence, as a more enlightened parent would have done.

Gradually essence can grow and begin to use the resources, knowledge, and power now automatically used by false personality. Instead of being the usual, say, 2% essence and 98% false personality, you can get a gradual shift toward more and more essence, more and more vitality and essential joy in life, and less and less false personality. This needs to be accompanied by the development of the higher kind of consciousness we are calling awakening. *Then false personality is "dead" as a dominant, automatized center of control, but all its skills and knowledge are available as a tool to be used from a higher level of consciousness.* We need the skills and knowledge now bound up in false personality for more vital goals

than maintaining consensus trance. Sometimes we also need these skills to correct characteristics of our essence that are negative in our present reality, even if they are truly ours. Such correction of essence must come from a more awakened state that has first revitalized essence, however, not from the mechanical and roughshod suppression and distortion of essence that occurs in enculturation.

The idea that false personality must die is misleading when the superego takes it up and uses it as fuel for more mechanical attacks on you. Yet the metaphor of death is quite accurate in another way, for the magnitude of change possible (and required) for full awakening is indeed like a death and rebirth. As so many spiritual traditions have said in one fashion or another, "Except ye become as little children. . ."

The theme of this section has been harsh. We have forgotten the world's history through corridors of light, our lips are cold instead of touched with fire when we tell of the Spirit. But the light is part of our nature, and will not go away.



## Compassion

### Breadth of Self-Knowledge:

Compassion requires the development of several qualities. One is breadth of self-knowledge: if you don't experience, recognize, and understand a wide range of human experiences in yourself, it will be difficult to adequately recognize and understand them in others.

**Empathy:** A second requirement for the development of compassion is empathy. Empathy is a recognition of a feeling/thinking state in another, *plus* an ability to at least partially experience that same state in yourself. Thus empathy ties in with self-knowledge. To recognize that someone is "depressed", for example, could be done in a cold, intellectual way. You could learn that certain facial expressions, body postures, and styles of speaking usually mean that a person is "depressed". To also emotionally know what it is like to feel depressed from your own experience leads to the experience of empathy.

This does not necessarily mean that you must feel as depressed as the depressed person you are empathizing

with, but the basic emotional knowledge must be readily available to consciousness.

Modern psychology has thought of empathy as a late development function, but recent research is suggesting it begins to develop within the first few years of life. We could say it is an innate part of our essential nature. It may be partly related to bodily/instinctive intelligence also, such that mimicking others' postures and expressions helps us feel what they feel.

**Desire to Help Others:** A third requirement for compassion is the desire to help suffering beings find relief from their suffering. My own feeling is that this desire is natural, a part of our essence that is naturally aroused by the empathic perception of others' suffering. It is the defenses we have erected around ourselves, discussed below, that keep us from being aware of this desire to help others.

**Intelligence:** A fourth requirement for *effective* compassion stems from the fact that compassion should work in concert with intelligence. Compassion is not just an exaggerated empathy, where you feel another's negative emotions very strongly. If that was all there was to it, compassion would be a crippling emotion.

Effective compassion thus involves the application of intelligence (mental, emotional, body/instinctive, spiritual) to eliminate the *cause* of another's suffering, rather than just lessening the symptoms. This last aspect is important for efficacy of results.

### Some Obstacles to Compassion

To be compassionate is both natural and satisfying, yet it is all too rare a part of human behavior. Why? Let's look at some of the obstacles to compassion.

• *Childhood Rejections of Our Love:* We have all had experiences of loving someone and trying to give to him or her, but finding our love and generosity rejected. Such experiences embitter us greatly, especially when we are children. Consequently we are all emotionally scarred (and scared!) when it comes to acting openly from love and

generosity. Indeed, to avoid the pain of rejection of this tender, vital, loving part of ourselves we create active defenses to live behind.

### • *The Vulnerability of Openness:*

When you give from your essence you are open and vulnerable. You are being your deep self. When that giving is rejected, you feel rejected on a very deep level. Suppose as a child you loved your mother so much that you suddenly gave her your most prized possession, the dead frog you had been hiding in your bedroom drawer for a week. To you the frog is beautiful and you are wide open, functioning from pure love. To your mother the partly decayed frog is filthy and disgusting, and she yells at you: "Take that filthy thing out of the house this minute and throw it in the garbage! Then go wash your hands! You're a disgusting little boy!"

An experience like this can be devastating. From your current adult perspective you can understand why your mother acted like that and forgive it, but you weren't an adult when it happened, and you understood and learned quite different things as a child. You learned that acting spontaneously from love gets you into trouble. That you must be mistaken as to what you think love is, or you wouldn't get such a reaction from someone who, you believe, loved you. That you can't depend on your own judgment. That you are a disgusting little boy. That being spontaneously loving leads to rejection, pain and confusion.

Many of our childhood experiences are this dramatic, and there are many more that aren't, but make up in frequency what they lack in individual intensity. Is it any wonder that you wall off your essential self? That you lose touch with your essence and replace it with "safe" behaviors, habits, learned feelings? The "safety" of your defense is an illusion, of course, for any position that isolates you from knowing what is really happening in your world leads to actions that are flawed. And your life now has a constant undercurrent of anxiety from a new worry: suppose the defenses break down?

### • *Attempts at Invulnerability:*

You try to become invulnerable, so you won't hurt so much. Unfortunately you usually do too good a job of it, walling

off your natural love and compassion so well that your life becomes dry and stale. The many defense mechanisms, which Gurdjieff calls "buffers", come into play and our natural vitality is stolen and automatically channeled into the habitual perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and body movements of false personality. In adult life you may then want to be compassionate and loving, try to be that way, but you feel nothing. Worse yet, you are led astray down the subjective paths set up by false personality, experiencing the pathologically distorted versions of "love" you were conditioned to accept in childhood, so true compassion and love are absent. To note that this leads to sterile lives, with far too much useless, stupid suffering, is to put it mildly.

•*Avoiding the Pain of Incompetence:* There is another important reason for staying defended and closed down. As children, and as adults, we had experiences where we were compassionate, we felt another's suffering and tried to help, *and it didn't work.* Lacking skillful means, our efforts to help were to no avail, and all we did was suffer without accomplishing anything.

How easy to build up a feeling of "Don't notice, don't feel, then you won't get hurt", the all too prevalent modern theme of not getting involved.

### **Cultivation of Compassion**

Most Gurdjieff work does not encourage active development of love and compassion until after years of practice of more basic work. If love and compassion were cultivated at the beginning—so the theory goes—before you had much understanding of your own mind and feelings, it would probably result in the growth of more illusions that would further support false personality.

This reasoning makes perfect sense to me, both intellectually and from personal experience. The development of mindfulness, self-understanding, self-remembering [as discussed earlier in the book] are clearly necessary. Balanced development of all three major aspects of our being—body/intuition mind, intellectual mind, emotional mind—is also necessary. Yet I have always felt a lack of more direct development exercises for the heart in the basic Gurdjieff

work that I have been exposed to.

In 1984 I had the good fortune to attend two lectures by the venerable Sogyal Rinpoche, a leading teacher of Tibetan Buddhism in the West. The emphasis in Rinpoche's lectures was on mindfulness, not just as a special meditative practice but, more importantly, mindfulness in everyday life. The parallels with Gurdjieff's focus on self-observation and self-remembering were clear, but of even greater interest to me was his specific emphasis on the active development of compassion within the overall context of the cultivation of mindfulness. I do not fully understand the ideas he presented in terms of their comprehensive devel-

*Of great interest  
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opment in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, but I want to share my personal understanding of them, combined with my psychological knowledge of compassion, in the hope that they may be of value to others . . .

### ***Seeking the Light Within***

There are many paths available for seeking the light within. To start, you have to recognize that there is something precious within to be found, in spite of our culture's pressure to keep us externally oriented, looking for happiness by being a consumer of external goods. You have to continually struggle against the social current, of course: people who go within are dangerous and unpredictable, so society distrusts, discourages, and often punishes them.

The paths have led some people to happiness, some to disappointment, some to mild delusions, some to insanity. Some paths are powerful, some may once have been effective, but

no longer work, and some are dangerous. Some are merely fantasies about paths, some are dangerous neuroses disguised as paths. All genuine paths require courage: courage to buck the social tide, courage to see yourself as you really are, courage to take risks. Progress on any genuine path is a gift to us all, as well as a gain for yourself.

### ***Humor***

I have used the word "serious" several times now because deep desire for awakening is important to make it possible. Our culture has too strong an association between ideas of "serious", "spiritual", "gloomy", and "killjoy" though. We are looking for the light, and while we often must be serious, we must also be able to be light. Essential joy is not gloom, even though being more awake sometimes makes you aware of and empathic with real suffering. Take yourself and your goal seriously, but always cultivate the capacity to laugh at yourself and your goal, and enjoy that laughter. Gurdjieff was a master at using humor and acting in terribly bad taste in order to shock people out of being overly serious. Sometimes the best possible resolution to some "problem" in the structure of your false personality is to be able to see how funny it is. Humor is absolutely essential on any spiritual path!

*Adapted from Waking Up by Charles T. Tart; available in December from the Institute of Noetic Sciences ordering service for the members' price of \$15.25 (hardcover); © 1986, Institute of Noetic Sciences; reprinted by arrangement with Shambhala Publications, Inc., 314 Dartmouth Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02116.*

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*Tart publishes The Open Mind, available quarterly to members of the Institute of Noetic Sciences at a 25% discount. Please write the Institute for further information.*