



April 2006

Personal Spirituality

by John Van Auken

Irrational Exuberation – *The Upside!*

by Judi Doumas Henry, Ph.D.

Irrational Exuberance, a best seller by economist Robert Schiller, predicts that excesses in the stock market will destabilize the economy and totally disrupt our lives. In borrowing his title, I've added "the upside" because, in more important areas of our lives, this is what we want to do. We want to destabilize and disrupt ideas and attitudes that aren't working for us, aren't helping us to be happy and joyful, and replace them with ideas and approaches that do. We want to dramatically alter our lives for the better. But where's the magic wand, and how do we wave it?

Fortunately, the Cayce readings detail what we need to do. And we need to do so ASAP because it's our God-given responsibility to be happy! This might seem radical at first, especially for those raised to eye with suspicion anything that sounds, well, nice – nice for us, that is; nice, we were taught, is for other people.

Yet the readings reveal that whatever we feel, we emanate into the invisible pool of energy in which we all live, like fish in a cosmic ocean. Here's an example: the readings say that Jesus' life is the pattern for humanity, a blueprint, or how-to manual, for attaining universal God-consciousness. So his teaching "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all souls unto me" applies as well to us, to our doing the same for each other. In other words, to the degree that we lift our consciousness out of fear, anger, or any negative state, to that degree

we contribute this pattern of overcoming to the etheric atmosphere we're all living in and affected by.

If, for example, you managed to give up smoking, excess drinking, or some such, you made it easier for others to do likewise: you've been a trailblazer, leaving traces of your helpful pattern on the ethers for others to follow. Consciousness doesn't end in our bodies but radiates into the atmosphere we all psychically inhale. What will our contribution be? How beautiful it is that *we* get to decide!

It's also clarifying to understand that not every thought or emotion we have is necessarily our own, originating within us. Knowing this can help us to separate what is us from what's not and help us to avoid getting swept into the negativity around us. The readings suggest we become conscious of this interplay by sensitizing ourselves through little psychic exercises. They directed one person to go to a prison, get quiet, and simply absorb the atmosphere to see how he felt. Then he was to go to a church and repeat the exercise, then return to the prison. "You will feel it," the readings promised. And so it is with us. Aware of it or not, we're being affected by outer force fields as well as generating our own. So, especially in these trying times and times to come, it's helpful to realize the dynamics involved in these interchanges. More, it's inspiring to know that we

can serve on energetic levels by striving to remain centered, by being joyous, or on a lesser octave, happy.

Loving Others

We know that part of being happy involves love – whether it's love of a mate, family, or friends. But love or charity begins, as we know, at home. So let's keep that in mind as we consider loving others. In *The Art of Loving*, acclaimed philosopher and psychologist Eric Fromm asserts that real love is an art form. We tend, though, to take love for granted, not to think it takes thought and effort. Fromm's approach is more spiritual. He maintains that just as artists attend to all the subtleties of their work, love requires the same from us. This goes beyond attending to others; it's being exquisitely attentive and sensitive to them so we can *truly* love them. This is a far cry from love in the usual sense, in which our own desires and agendas get in the mix. This is love in the truest sense of perfectly attuning to others, to their hopes and fears, their talents and dreams, so we can support them in whatever they're trying to become and to do. What a noble and inspiring ideal. And how very much most of us aspire to be this sort of walk-on-water person.

But here's the tricky part. Just about every spiritual path advises us to love God with all our hearts and our neighbor as ourselves. It's "tricky" because few of us notice that we're not told to

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love our neighbor as we love God, but as we love ourselves. Yet we wouldn't want to be loved the way many people love themselves because, in fact, they don't love themselves much at all. They're constantly criticizing and beating up on themselves and generally being harder on themselves than they are on others. So what does "love thy neighbor as thyself" mean? How *are* we to love ourselves so we can love others the same way?

Loving Oneself

Think back to Fromm. Clearly, it has to do with being understanding and accepting of those little quirks and maladaptive behaviors we seem stuck with. After all, that's the way we would like to love (and be loved by) others. And the weird (from *wyrd*, meaning fate or destiny) part of it is, as we begin to accept and embrace ourselves, warts and all, a lot of those warts drop like barnacles off a ship in fresh water.

To love others as we love ourselves and do it right, we need a crash course in self-love. The readings speak of the importance of valuing ourselves as an equal part of the whole, that this is our heritage and true identity. It's helpful, then, to look at how we spend our time, for time is life. We spiritual seekers are pretty adept at using it to look out for others but not so adept at doing the same for ourselves, at including ourselves on the list of those we look out for. Yet this is part of honoring the God within.

Each soul is unique, the readings say. So think about what helps you feel love for yourself, feel good about yourself. Finish the sentence "I love myself when . . ." a few times. Many of you will list things based on what you feel you *should* do. These directives often come from childhood authority figures still alive inside you, wagging their long index fingers with answers such as "I love myself when I get up early, even on the weekends. Or "I love myself when I exercise every day," or "I love myself when I use my free time to catch up on chores." But, think about it. Is that how you nurture others when *they* need it, by being their drill sergeant? These sorts of responses may be true, but often it's due to those good child/bad

child tapes. Perhaps you feel good about setting that alarm, but maybe you'd feel downright ecstatic if you let yourself luxuriate and sleep in. Who knows? Maybe you'd feel like *royalty* if you had breakfast in bed occasionally. Experiences such as these seemingly insignificant ones can remind us of our God-given worth, of who we really are that so easily gets misplaced in the thick of things.

Decades ago Harmon Bro, who'd had his own readings from Cayce, remarked that there's nothing like the sound of the chains of other people's ideals clanking to the floor as we shake them off our shoulders, realizing they never were ours in the first place. Harmon was highlighting the readings' message that each soul is unique and that we should get to know ours. A good place to start is by paying attention to mood shifts. Emotions are our built-in barometers; short-term ones mirror passing moods and long-term ones how we feel overall. Simply observing and being willing to be guided by them is an important aspect of loving self and has the bonus of helping to activate our intuition, our highest soul faculty.

The readings counsel us to live by our ideals but caution, "This does not mean becoming a good-goody! Be able to look everyone in the face and tell them to go to hell. For one who contributes only to their own welfare soon finds little to work for, but one who contributes only to the welfare of others . . . has lost the appreciation of Self." Another reading counsels, "A kindness sometimes consists in denying- as well as granting those activities in associations with others." (5322-1)

Sometimes, then, wisdom decrees our saying "No." But what do the readings mean suggesting that we be able to tell people off? When we do "so live" — that is, by our ideals — we have no desire to do so; we're too happy doing what we want and need to do. It is at this point, when we're living actively, by our own Light, rather than reactively, at the mercy of others, that their opinions become largely irrelevant. Paradoxically, it's only then that we can and do love them more — and to hell with their opinions!

Happiness

The readings say that happiness is nothing more or less than a state of mind — regardless of circumstances: "Happiness is not something apart from self, but the condition with which you approach what's to be done." (5563-1) Again, "Thus you may find in your mental and spiritual

self, you can make yourself just as happy or just as miserable as you like. How miserable do you want to be?" (2995-3). Many such readings affirm that we create our own happiness. Perception is everything; we can and do choose to see the world the way we want to.

Happiness comes from our relationship to God. Indeed, this is where true joy comes in. Think about this reading: "Let this be thy watchword: "MERCY, God — NOT sacrifice! For God has no joy in sacrifice; He has no joy in suffering, He has no joy in disease and sorrow." (1440-2) (Some readings use the masculine pronoun for God, honoring the mindset of the seeker; others speak of God as intelligent force or energy.)

God has suffered some negative press over the millenia. Often God is portrayed as a being subject to bad moods who must be placated, flattered, and sung to because he likes us to suffer until he calls us Home — often by tsunamis, hurricanes, and other calamities; acts of God, as they say. From the readings' perspective, this is wrong. (It's insulting too. Imagine how we'd react if people fawned over *us*, flattering us for fear we'd murder or torture them if they didn't.) No, the readings are explicit on the nature of God: "Remember, God is God of love, for He IS love! God is God of joy, for He IS joy! a God of happiness, for God IS happiness! [So] bring into your experience joy, gladness." This is to say, bring into your experience God.

We see, then, the importance of examining our concept of God, of whom or what we assume we're dealing with. The readings imply there might be some backpedaling for those of us who were suckled on ideas circulated by God's "worshippers." The readings are adamant: God is love and God is joy, "the joy of loving." (2123) And they are equally explicit about our true nature, who we really are as part of that love and joy, even counseling us to "meet disturbing factors with as much joyousness as if they were bringing pleasure" [!], promising that our doing so "will alter. . . much. For what is, is a result of our thinking." (610-1) They even say, "If problems are taken as an expectancy for the unusual and what is to be creative and hopeful and helpful, life becomes the creative song of a joyous worker." (1968-5) Talk about the wisdom of God appearing as foolishness to us!

The Archetypal Fool

One tarot card is devoted to this dilemma. The tarot depict stages in our soul's evolution. Notice the Fool (see illustration on p.3). Many



claim that he's just what he appears to be – inexperienced and ignorant, inattentive to the world around him and about to hurtle to his death. Others hold that he represents the soul's final stage, the profound wisdom of God that seems absurd to us. (Cf., First Corinthians counseling that “the wisdom of this world is Foolishness with God” and “the foolishness of God is wiser than men” 1:25, 3:10.) Observe the images: The sun – light, wisdom – illuminates everything. The rod on the Fool's shoulder represents the will, and the satchel, possession of the coin of the realm – all the soul needs on its journeys. Since dogs are domesticated animals, they imply our being in control of our animality. Its color, white, a symbol of purity, reinforces this, as does the white rose, the overcoming of lower desires. So, when the Fool treads where angels fear to go, as he's about to here, will he live or careen to his death? Is he a fool? Or the archetype of the Wise Fool? The readings quoted above seem like the same sort of madness. Who ever heard of finding joy in “disturbing factors and problems”? Who ever heard of letting go of



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all that to “awake to the joy in the earth even under trial, and manifest It in thy life, rather than sorrow. [That] this will need cultivating. But life itself is a cultivating of joy, of laughter, of those things that bring hope.” (647-1)

Yet it is this approach that allows joy, the awareness of being safe, free, and infinitely loved, to sift into our etheric and astral bodies and manifest in our lives. Joy emanates from the Spirit, the part of us that never left the “throne of the Maker,” our true being which, like God, is perfect love and joy. The closer we approximate this state, the more conscious we are of being in the Presence and the more joy we naturally experience and express.

How Do We Get There From Here?

The readings echo Psalms 100:4: “Enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise.” This is how the Israelites were to enter God's presence on the outer level, walking through the temple gates into the courtyard. On the inner level, this is an ancient esoteric teaching of how to meditate, to move in consciousness into full-blown experiences of the Presence within the temple of our bodies. Gates symbolize the entryway, the higher chakras. Gratitude helps lift our consciousness into the higher dimensions. Without it, most of us have trouble meditating deeply enough to experience God-realization. Either we experience the “monkey mind” phenomenon, the mind's jumping all over, or enjoy short naps instead.

So, the readings advise, “Be oft in prayer, joyous prayer.” We tend to reduce prayer to reciting our wish list. We sit down, wishing and hoping and praying for health, or wealth, or world peace and get up wondering if it “worked.” The better way, the readings suggest, is gratitude, praise. Why? The force or being we call God doesn't need to hear it, but we do. We need to focus on the inherent goodness of life from the simplest pleasures to the holiest, most transcendent experiences imaginable – beyond visions,

angels, and celestial music into realms surpassing even these states. The more we do so, the more we call them and the Source of them into our lives. This is joy at its most sublime.

In closing, let's consider the idea of luck. Many of us know someone who's incredibly lucky, who always seems to be in the right place at the right time, as if a bit of magic's at work behind the scenes. The readings define luck: “It's the application of what you know that brings about those experiences that some call ‘luck or chance.’” (416-02) And again, “For while [some] say that ‘bad luck’ had come to the body, we find that nothing happens by chance.” (3684-1) Consider these: “All days are lucky that are MADE lucky! Don't call it luck!” (2908-1) And, “For these will be found to be the ‘lucky’ days, or periods-- when there is a closer association with Creative Forces [God]. These then should not be just as a lucky period, or a lucky day, but a lucky lifestyle.” (1179-1) Finally, “Some people term it ‘Lady Luck,’ or ‘The body is born under a lucky star.’ [But] it's what the soul-mind is doing and has done ABOUT the source of redemption of the soul.” (440-5) So the Sublime moves through every dimension of life as joy, and as we align ourselves with It, we, too, begin to experience the exuberance of the soul in the eternal embrace of the Infinite Beloved. §

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Questions & Answers

Don't take this wrong, but you are too optimistic. The world is getting worse, not better. Sin and evil are growing. Stupidity is everywhere. Our leaders are worse than ever. Global warming and earth changes (predicted by Cayce himself) are already taking a toll on people everywhere. Please don't misunderstand me but: Where is God and this goodness you write about? It's looking mighty dark from where I sit. This said, I hope I'm wrong and you are right, but... I do worry that you give your readers too much hope, even false hope. Is this wise? -S.D., email

Sometimes I wonder about these very concerns. Actually, among my colleagues here at A.R.E., I'm considered too much of a promoter of earth changes and doom predictions. Some would like me to stay off of these topics altogether. It's refreshing to hear that I'm too optimistic.

I am optimistic about our future, because we may be witnessing the *final* battle between light and dark. Not overlooking growing terrorism and the continued suffering in Africa, much positive change has been occurring quietly, often unnoticed.

At the risk of upsetting you with good news in the midst of so much dark news, I ask you to consider the following reports:

According to the Population Reference Bureau, during the Roman Empire, average life expectancy at birth was a brief 22 years. By the Middle Ages, it had risen to about 33 years and increased to 43 years by the middle of the 1800s. In the early 1900s, life expectancy in more developed countries ranged from 35 to 55. It has climbed to about 75 years today and continues to improve. It is expected to reach 87 for women and 81 for men by 2050. Even in less developed countries life expectancy has gradually climbed, rising to 64 years in 1995. Infant mortality has also declined.

Even more amazing was the United Nation's report released in October 2005, painting a surprising picture of war and peace in the 21st century. According to this report, armed conflicts have declined by more than 40 percent since 1992, and genocide and human rights abuses have plummeted around the world! "Over the past dozen years, the global security climate has changed in dramatic, positive, but largely unheralded ways," the report said. "Civil wars, genocides and international crises have all declined sharply." Professor Andrew Mack, who directed the three-year study, said there has been a shift away from the huge wars of the 1950s, '60s, and '70s, where million-strong armies faced each other with conventional weapons. "The average war today tends to be very small, low intensity conflict, fought with ill-trained troops, small arms and light weapons, often very brutal, with lots of civilians killed - but the absolute numbers of people being killed

are ... much, much smaller than they were before," he said. Armed conflicts have not only declined by more than 40 percent since 1992, but the deadliest conflicts with over 1,000 battle deaths dropped even more dramatically - by 80 percent. The number of international crises, often harbingers of war, fell by more than 70 percent between 1981 and 2001, the report said.

Nevertheless, too much evil and suffering remains and needs to be counter.

Using an example from biblical stories, the Cayce readings state that the prayers of 10 can save a nation; a few more can save the world. Another Cayce reading asked, "Why worry when you can pray?"

I'm optimistic, but I pray a lot!

Did Cayce ever talk about angels and their ability to help us, to guide us? I've been reading a lot about angels and many other sources teach that we should be using angels much more than we do. What is your view on angels? -A.Q., email

Yes he did. Here are three wonderful readings on angels and their role in our lives. My *italics* highlight an important but often overlooked statement by Cayce on the subject of angels in the answer to the question.

"Q: Is it through the guardian angel that God speaks to the individual?

"A: Then as the guardian influence or angel is ever before the face of the Father, through same may that influence ever speak - but only by the command of or attunement to that which is thy ideal. What then is thy ideal? In WHOM have ye believed, as well as in what have ye believed? Is that in which thou hast believed able to keep ever before thee that thou comittest unto Him? Yes - *through thy angel, through thy SELF that IS the angel* - does the self speak with thy Ideal!" (1646-1)

"The entity gained a great deal through the preparation of self to become a ministering angel even to the many. Activities of such a nature or character in the present become oft, then, those influences that will direct the entity - IF there is the opening of self to spiritual forces." (2034-1)

"The face of the self's OWN angel is ever before the Throne. Commune oft with Him." (1917-1)

Obviously, Cayce's readings support the popular concept that angels can and do help us. Note how Cayce adds that a part of us is an angel! Let us all strive to bring that part out each day. §

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*"This conference was outstanding,
a major contribution to those of us
on the path."*

-M.A. Fleetwood, Rehoboth, DE
*"Thank you for a conference well
done - my time and money were well
spent. I look forward to many, many
more workshops and conferences. I
met so many wonderful new lifelong
friends. Everything was perfect!"*

-J. Leski, Columbia, SC

*"Wonderful experience - felt joy and
sacredness. I've been a member for
years but this was my first confer-
ence. It was great - I'll be back!"*

-J. Mettes, Erie, PA

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Loved it!"*

-M. Chapman, Lockport, NY
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including myself, were transformed
from this conference."*

-L. Wegert, Chantilly, VA

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