The Sufi Path of Self-knowledge
Lecture Two

Knowledge and Being
Just as fog is dispelled by the strength of the sun and is dispelled no other way, preconception is cleared by the strength of realization. There’s no other way of clearing preconceptions. Experience them as baseless dreams. Experience them as ephemeral bubbles. Experience them as insubstantial rainbows. Experience them as indivisible space.

—Milarepa, Drinking the Mountain Stream: Songs of Tibet’s Beloved Saint
Who or what can guarantee that concept and reality are exactly the same thing?

Concept is one thing and reality is another.

There is a tendency to overestimate our own concepts. It is almost impossible for reality to equal concept. Nevertheless, the mind, hypnotized by its very own concepts, always presumes that concept and reality are the same.

Any psychological process that is correctly structured using precise logic is opposed by a different one, strongly developed with similar or superior logic. Then what?

Two severely disciplined minds confined by ironclad intellectual structures argue with one another. They debate, in dispute over this or that fact of reality. Each believes its own concept to be exact and the other to be false. Which is right? Who can honestly guarantee either case? Which one shows that concept and reality are the same?

Unquestionably, each mind is a world of its own. In each and every one of us lies a kind of pretentious, dictatorial dogmatism that wants to make us believe in the absolute equality of concept and reality.

—Samael Aun Weor, *The Great Rebellion*
Nobody can deny the fact that there are different social levels. There are churchgoing people, people in brothels, farmers, businessmen, etc.

In a like manner, there are different Levels of Being. Whatever we are internally, munificent or mean, generous or miserly, violent or peaceful, chaste or lustful, attracts the various circumstances of life.

–Samael Aun Weor, Treatise of Revolutionary Psychology
Preceded by mind are phenomena, 
Led by mind, formed by mind. 
If with mind polluted one speaks or acts, 
Then pain follows, 
as a wheel follows the draft ox’s foot. 
Preceded by mind are phenomena, 
Led by mind, formed by mind. 
If with mind pure one speaks or acts, 
Then ease follows, 
As an ever-present shadow. 
—Dhammapada
Knowledge and comprehension are different. Knowledge is of the mind. Comprehension is of the heart.

– Samael Aun Weor, Treatise of Revolutionary Psychology
Knowledge is obligatory only in so far as is requisite for acting rightly. God condemns those who learn useless knowledge (Kor. ii, 96), and the Prophet said: “I take refuge with Thee from knowledge that profiteth naught.” Much may be done by means of a little knowledge, and knowledge should not be separated from action. The Prophet said: “The devotee without divinity is like a donkey turning a mill,” because the donkey goes round and round over its own tracks and never makes any advance. —Al-Hujwiri, Revelation of the Mystery (Kashf al-Mahjub)
Being and knowing must be balanced to establish a sudden blaze of comprehension within our psyche.

When knowing is greater than being, it causes all kinds of intellectual confusion.

If being is greater than knowing, it can produce cases as serious as that of a stupid saint.

– Samael Aun Weor, *The Great Rebellion*
Some regard knowledge as superior to action, while others put action first, but both parties are wrong. Unless action is combined with knowledge, it is not deserving of recompense. Prayer, for instance, is not really prayer, unless performed with knowledge of the principles of purification and those which concern the *qibla*, and with knowledge of the nature of intention. Learning and committing to memory are acts for which a man is rewarded in the next world; if he gained knowledge without action and acquisition on his part, he would get no reward. Hence two classes of men fall into error: firstly, those who claim knowledge for the sake of public reputation but are unable to practice it, and in reality have not attained it; and secondly, those who pretend that practice suffices and knowledge is unnecessary.

—Al-Hujwiri, *Revelation of the Mystery* (*Kashf al-Mahjub*)
Knowledge is of two kinds: Divine and Human. The latter is worthless in comparison with the former, because God’s knowledge is an attribute of Himself, subsisting in Him, whose attributes are infinite; whereas our knowledge is an attribute of ourselves, subsisting in us, whose attributes are finite. Knowledge has been defined as “comprehension and investigation of the object known,” but the best definition of it is this: “A quality whereby the ignorant are made wise.” God’s knowledge is that by which He knows all things existent and non-existent: He does not share it with Man: it is not capable of division nor separable from Himself. The proof of it lies in the disposition of His actions (tartib-i fi‘lash), since action demands knowledge in the agent as an indispensable condition. The Divine knowledge penetrates what is hidden and comprehends what is manifest. It behooves the seeker to contemplate God in every act, knowing that God sees him and all that he does.

—Al-Hujwiri, Revelation of the Mystery (Kashf al-Mahjub)
The best act of worship is watchfulness of the moments. That is, that the servant not look beyond his limit, not contemplate anything other than his Lord, and not associate with anything other than his present moment.

—Al-Waṣiti, Al-Risalah: Treatise of Sufism by Al-Qushayri
One has to change the process of reasoning for the quality of discernment. Discernment is the direct perception of the truth without the process of reasoning.

Discernment is comprehension without the need of reasoning. We must change the process of reasoning for the beauty of comprehension.

The mind must be completely transformed into an infant; it must be converted into a child full of beauty.

—Samael Aun Weor, *Tarot and Kabbalah*
Wherever the delusion of your selfhood appears – there’s hell. Wherever “you” aren’t – that’s heaven.

–Abū Saʿīd in Ibn Munawwar: Asrār at-tawḥīd, ed. Shafīʿī-Kadkanī, 299
In general, it is to the measure of one’s alienation from one’s own ego that one attains direct knowledge of one’s Lord. I heard Abu Ali al-Daqqaq say, “One of the tokens of the gnosis of God is the achievement of deep awe and reverence for God. If someone’s realization increases, his awe increases… Gnosis requires stillness of heart, just as learning requires outward quiet. If someone’s gnosis increases, his tranquility increases.”

—Al-Risalah: Principles of Sufism by Al-Qushayri
There is no finding the Truth save after the extinction of the ordinary human condition, because when the power of reality manifests, the perception of material things cannot endure. This is the meaning of the saying of Abu-I-Husayn al-Nuri, “For twenty years I have been finding and losing—when I have found my Lord, I have lost my heart, and when I have found my heart, I have lost my Lord.” It is also the meaning of the saying of Junayd, “The knowledge of Unity is contrary to its existence, and its existence is contrary to the knowledge of it.”

—Al-Risalah: Principles of Sufism by Al-Qushayri
The man of Being possesses both sober balance (sahw), and obliteration of self (mahw). His state of sobriety (sahw) is his continuing existence (baqa) in the Real. His state of obliteration (mahw) is his annihilation (fana) in the Real. These two states always come upon him in succession. When sobriety in the Real overcomes him, he acts and speaks in Truth. The Prophet reported from God Most High, [relating a non-Quranic divine utterance or hadith qudsi], “...so with Me he hears and with Me he sees.”—Al-Risalah: Treatise of Sufism by Al-Qushayri