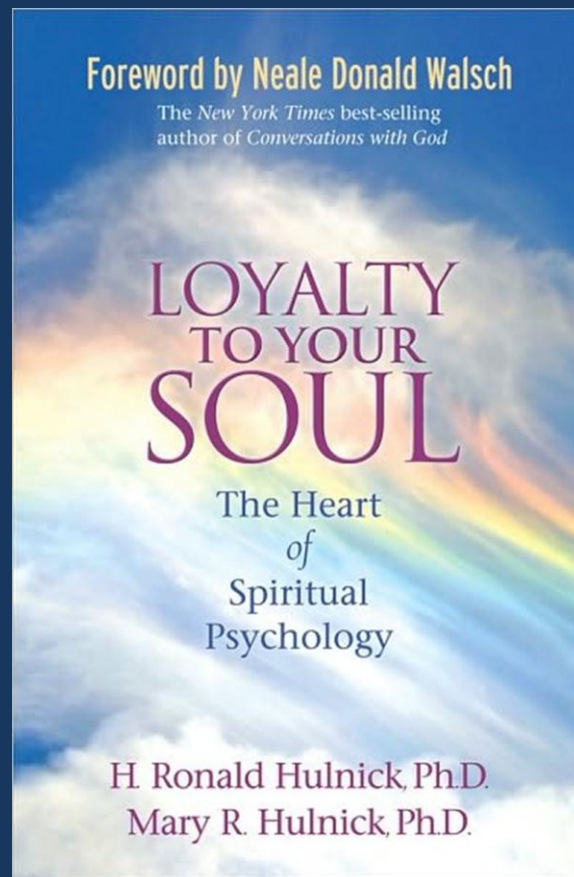


Book
Review

Loyalty to Your Soul

The Heart of Spiritual Psychology

By H. Ronald Hulnick, Ph.D. and Mary R. Hulnick, Ph.D.



A Critical Analysis

By David Christopher Lane, Ph.D.
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Ron Hulnick refers to USM (University of Santa Monica) within MSIA circles (Movement of Spiritual Inner Awareness) as “the Traveler’s School.”

—*Life 102: What to Do When Your Guru Sues You* by ex-devotee Peter McWilliams

The authors of *Loyalty to Your Soul: The Heart of Spiritual Psychology*, H. Ronald Hulnick and Mary R. Hulnick have been associated with John-Roger Hinkins for over three decades. Part of their dedication in the frontispiece of the book is to J.R., wherein they write “and to John-Roger, who turned my Self around and helped me find direction and inspiration in my life” —Ron and “and to John-Roger whose exampleship [sic] has informed my life” —Mary.

Since both authors readily admit their allegiance to John-Roger Hinkins and his teachings, much of their “spiritual psychology” is inspired directly by J.R. This is without a doubt the most troubling thing about the book and it begins on page 1.

In doing a review of their 215 page tome (with blank pages from 216 onwards with a header entitled “Notes,” apparently designed for engaged readers to make jottings to themselves), I thought it might be useful to highlight certain sections which underlined the theme of their narrative and which also piqued my skepticism as I kept reading.

First, in the Preface to the book, Ron and Mary explain why they moved from a mainstream academic life to joining J.R.’s fledgling school, Koh-E-Nor. They recollect,

“We were married in January 1978, which unexpectedly resulted in our leaving the university [Note: they never identify the school in the book; *Wikipedia*, May 23, 2011, claims that they were at New Mexico State University]. I was being groomed to be the chair of the department, and it

was simply not possible for a chair to have a spouse as a faculty member in the same department.”

As an academic myself, and having taught in several colleges and universities in my career I was a bit surprised to learn about Hulnicks’ dilemma since I know of several instances of where the chairperson of a department also had a spouse within the department. Right off the top of my head I can think of three examples which contravene Hulnicks’ claim. Patricia Churchland, the eminent founder of Neurophilosophy and Professor of Philosophy at UCSD, was Chair of her department for several years, even though her husband Paul Churchland was a member of the same. A few buildings down from the Philosophy department at UCSD, my old professor, the late Bennett Berger was Chair of the Sociology department even though his wife was also a professor in the same department. Additionally, my own wife, Dr. Andrea Diem-Lane and I are tenured professors in the same Philosophy department at Mt. San Antonio College. She was asked on several occasions by our Dean to run for Chairperson, but nobody ever mentioned that she couldn’t because I was her husband in the same department.

I raise this issue since the Hulnicks’ explanation for why they departed from the university (on the basis that a husband and wife couldn’t be in the same department, if one had assumed Chair) at best needs more background information to be convincing and at worst rings hollow. Something seems missing in their explanation. Eventually, after a year off from work, they met with John-Roger and formalized their association with J.R.’s school, with the first class graduating with eleven students in 1982. In the 1990s the name was switched from Koh-E-Nor to the University of Santa Monica. While the school has been granted “Institutional Approval”

it still lacks full educational accreditation according to outside sources.

The Hulnicks take their nightly dreams seriously and in the Preface indicate that the very basis of their present book commenced because of a vivid dream Ron had, “in which John-Roger handed him a book with the word *Loyalties* written on the cover. The implication was clear. When we spoke with John-Roger, he simply stated, “That wasn’t a dream.”

The thesis of their entire book is nicely summarized by them in the paragraph that follows, “It contains many of the principles and some of the practices currently offered in the two year Master’s degree Program in Spiritual Psychology at the University of Santa Monica, where I serve as Chief Academic Officer and Ron is President.”

Essentially, the Hulnicks and by extension USM (or, should that order be reversed?), want to bring “spirituality” (or soul) back into psychology, focusing on spiritual principles which they believe underline an evolutionary basis of both life and understanding.

Now, much of their book has a series of nice platitudes that for the most part make for uplifting reading. In sum, they are trying to liberate individuals from a merely egoic viewpoint where one tends to see things only as “happening to me” versus taking responsibility for one’s reactions which occur, they argue, always within one’s self, regardless of uncontrollable outward events. On the surface, much of this terrain has been covered before by a host of New Age thinkers ranging from Deepak Chopra to John Bradshaw to Marilyn Ferguson and, to a lesser extent, Ken Wilber. The model they present is how one can move from a physical ego to a mental ego to an emotional ego to finally an “authentic” self, where unconditional love and acceptance reigns supreme. Much of this



philosophy, of course, is in alignment with John-Roger spiritual teachings as displayed in his religious group, The Movement for Spiritual Inner Awareness (MSIA).

It is one of the great ironies of the book that the Hulnicks' speak repeatedly about transcending ego based actions when their own spiritual teacher has demonstrated nothing of the sort. They write about "not judging" as if making such judgments were a hindrance to a truly liberated life. For instance, the Hulnicks' write, "You never did anything wrong but that you judged it as wrong."

While I can appreciate that on one level this might seem liberating, especially if one is racked by unnecessary guilt, but such a relativistic escape clause can also lead to excusing all sorts of reprehensible behavior. Indeed, there is dangerous duplicity with this New Age double-speak that too often boomerangs back upon the naïve believer who doesn't realize that making wise judgments in life is precisely how one avoids future pitfalls.

Peter McWilliams recounts a telling episode about the Hulnicks and how they responded when their dog bit Peter (drawing blood) at a dinner party at their house. It is both a funny and a revealing story:

"I had met Ron and Mary while they were still in New Mexico in 1979. They heard that I wrote books, they wanted to write books, so they invited me to dinner so they could talk about writing books. The Hulnicks had a big black pet-sort of a cross between a German shepherd, a black panther, and Jeffrey Dahmer. During dinner, the beast came up and bit me. I mean *really bit* me. Blood is dripping from my hand onto the glass-topped table. I am in pain. I have just been bitten by an animal of unknown origin, species, and cosmic influence. The Hulnicks cannot stop laughing. I show them: look, I am *really* bleeding. They laugh even harder. I say, I think I better get

to a hospital. They think this is hilarious. They do absolutely nothing for me. They begin petting the beast and feeding it food from the table. I thought: 'Perhaps I am in a Stephen King novel--*PhiDo: The Flesh-Eating Mystery Animal of Higher Education*.' The dog started looking at me as though I were a Gainesburger. I knew what a can of Alpo felt like. I tried not to look afraid which no doubt is what those white mice try to do when they're placed in a cage of boa constrictors. I wrapped the napkin tightly around my hand, made some quick excuses, and got the hell out of there. As I drove away, I could hear Ron, Mary, and the beast laughing across the desert night. The next time I saw the Hulnicks was in Los Angeles about two years later. We said hello. I asked, 'How is the dog?' They said, 'It died.' I said, 'Good.' That effectively ended any hope for even a moderately cordial relationship between myself and Drs."

When the Hulnicks' spiritual guru was exposed in an extensive two part feature in the *Los Angeles Times*, what was J.R.'s response? Instead of owning up to his many transgressions he deployed a bizarre subterfuge where he claimed to a live audience that "Roger" (the person responsible, but not admitting anything) had died and that only his pure self remained and that "the past was past." In addition, shortly before the *Los Angeles Times* story broke on August 14, 1988, John-Roger passed the keys of the Mystical Traveler over to John Morton, allegedly a one-time lover of J.R.'s and a close member of his personal staff. As Peter McWilliams recalls:

"Passing the keys to John Morton only a month before gave John-Roger one of his favorite defenses: evasive semantics. By passing the 'keys' to John Morton, John-Roger could answer, 'No,' to straightforward but perhaps embarrassing questions such as, 'Are you the Mystical Traveler?' . . . It seemed as though John-Roger was denying he was *ever* the Traveler. It also allowed John-Roger to brush aside any questions of MSIA's past

shady dealings with the comment, 'John Morton is in charge of MSIA; talk to him.'"

Indeed, John-Roger has had a long habit of avoiding taking responsibility for his actions. I remember confronting J.R. back in 1983 on the telephone over a laundry list of ethical transgressions. Not only did he deny that he ever did anything wrong, but he proceeded to terrorize those disciples of his that had defected.

It makes one wonder how the Hulnicks can with a straight face write an entire book about spiritual integrity when the very founder of their University has systematically avoided being held accountable for any of his actions, including such criminal activities as robbing a researcher's home and making death threats against defectors, as extensively detailed in the mid-1980s publication, *The Criminal Activities of John-Roger Hinkins*.

Or, do we tolerate such transgressions under New Age platitudes such as "don't engage in judging"? Isn't there something morally bankrupt in an ideology that allows the founder and spiritual guide of a University to avoid critical scrutiny by indulging in a form of semantic dodge ball?

The Hulnicks' message in *Loyalty to Your Soul* is about taking responsibility for one's life and actions, even under the most trying of circumstances. They write, "Within the spiritual context, you'd assume that you're responsible for everything in your life. However, you usually don't know the spiritual reason why your Soul would choose an experience such as cancer. What you do know is that all of life serves a spiritual purpose, and since illness is part of life, cancer must serve one, too."

Yet, curiously, they don't write extensively about taking responsibility for the harm one's actions can do to others, regardless of the right or wrong

intentions behind them. They seem to be morally tone deaf when it comes to analyzing their own guru whose actions have caused deep and continuing turmoil in a number of his disaffected students.

Moreover, the very idea that our souls actually choose each and every event in our lives can at many turns legitimize unconscionable acts of depravity. Is it merely coincidental that such a theology permeates the University of Santa Monica when its very founder has indulged in all sorts of abusive interactions with those closest to him and those who would criticize him in public?

Furthermore, do the Hulnicks really believe that John-Roger, the founder and moral guide to USM, knows everything at all times? Because that is precisely what John-Roger has printed about himself. The 1979 edition of the *MSIA Handbook for Ministers of Light* states that “**John-Roger Can See All**. Remember, however, you might frighten a person in the beginning if you tell him John-Roger has the ability to know everything we’re thinking and doing at all times. Though the person may not believe this at first, once he does start realizing it might true, he’s apt to feel frightened.”

Where is the accountability for such grandiose claims? As Carl Sagan often quipped (reformatting Laplace’s earlier declaration): “Extraordinary claims demand extraordinary proof.”

The Hulnicks, obviously following J.R.’s lead in this regard, make so many over-the-top claims in *Loyalty to Your Soul* that it becomes fairly obvious that much of what they write is more a religious theology (with a large number of untested claims) than a genuinely scientific primer on psychology.

For instance, the Hulnicks make such axiomatic claims as “The nature of God is Love,” “Physical-world reality exists for the purpose of spiritual evolution,” and “Since we are all part of God, our nature also is Love, and we have the opportunity to know our Loving nature experientially, here and now!” While no doubt one may wish to believe such niceties, the fact remains that such exclamations are religious in nature and indicate that the University of Santa Monica is more an extension of John-Roger’s ministry than anything else. As Peter McWilliams explains:

“All of John-Roger's organizations have one of two functions: getting devotees for John-Roger or getting money *from* the devotees. USM does both. Based on the theory that if you hang around McDonald’s long enough sooner or later you’re going to have to have some fast food, if you hang around USM long enough, sooner or later you’re going to join MSIA. Every staff person and most volunteers at USM are MSIA ministers and initiates. Ron Hulnick refers to USM within MSIA circles as ‘the Traveler’s School.’”

The unsuspecting student, not well versed in John-Roger’s own peculiar blend of New Age thinking (mixing varying parts of Eckankar, Sant Mat, Theosophy, Christianity, EST, Lifespring, and whatever else captures J.R.’s interest at the moment), may enroll at the University of Santa Monica thinking that it is a purely secular school that is trying to incorporate tried and tested spiritual principles into its curriculum. But that is not the case at all, since the University of Santa Monica is, in truth, a fulcrum for John-Roger’s idiosyncratic philosophy and, as such, serves as a potential vehicle for drawing new recruits into his own religious cult, MSIA.

In other words, if the University of Santa Monica (with the Hulnicks as Co-Directors of the Institution) was truthful in its advertising (and lived up to

the intentions of its founder) and in its ultimate aims, then it might more appropriately bill itself as *John-Roger U.*

Do incoming students at USM know that the founder of the school advertises himself as “the one who can see and know all”? Do incoming students at USM know that John-Roger founded the school to promote his own self-styled theology? Do incoming students know that the creator of their university terrorized disciples in his entourage? That he allegedly engaged in numerous criminal activities, including robbery and death threats?

More pointedly, what does it say about the Hulnicks as educators that they have never criticized their school’s founder and their personal spiritual teacher, John-Roger, for contradicting the integrity they so repeatedly advocate? John-Roger has demonstrated throughout his life that he lacks even the basic decency of a normal human being, much less the “soul” qualities that the Hulnicks advocate in their book.

Can a university built on the integrity of John-Roger Hinkins be trusted? Are students fully aware of what they are getting themselves into when they pay money to an organization which on closer inspection is a front for a cult theology? These and other questions are what incoming students need to answer before giving a dime to an institution that still lacks full educational accreditation.

In conclusion, perhaps the real lesson one can derive from the Hulnicks’ book, *Loyalty to Your Soul*, is to realize that even highly educated counselors can be easily charmed and duped by the wiles of a manipulative cult leader who wants your ultimate loyalty not to be to yourself but to him. Just think: how did the founder of the University of Santa Monica respond when criticized? Did he admit to any wrongdoing? Did he seek forgiveness

for past actions? Did he ever admit to do anything wrong? No. Instead John-Roger literally terrorized the lives of those who had shown the utmost loyalty to him. According to varying sources, he sued them. He robbed their homes. He threatened to kill them. One can only wonder aloud why anyone would want to attend a school founded by a man who once told his student, Peter McWilliams, who was dying from AIDS, that he would save him from death if he agreed to put John-Roger's name alongside his on future books. If one really wants to follow the moral injunctions of Hulnicks' book and be loyal to one's soul, it might be wise to read closely Peter McWilliams' book, *LIFE 102: What to Do When Your Guru Sues You*, which though no longer in print is still available in used editions from Amazon and other booksellers worldwide. Peter McWilliams unmasks the charade that is J.R. and in the process clearly explains why the University of Santa Monica should be better known as the University of Spiritual Manipulation.

POSTSCRIPT:

Peter McWilliams recalls how Ron Hulnick responded to him *after* he left the University of Santa Monica and defected from John-Roger's cult: "When Ron Hulnick first saw me pamphleting USM, he called me over in what seemed to be a conciliatory tone, and his first words were, "If you set foot on our property, we're calling the police and having you arrested."



Peter McWilliams on the University of Santa Monica

"In 1981, Koh-E-Nor University (John-Roger, founder and chancellor; Drs. Ron and Mary Hulnick, president and dean) was established. Koh-ENor means "mountain of light" or "mountain of wisdom" or "when you pile it this high and this deep, you get a mountain." The *instant* they were established, they started handing out honorary Ph.D.s. John-Roger got the first. He got an honorary doctorate in, I forget, but you can be sure that it was in anything he wanted. Russell Bishop got one. All the guys on staff got one. When John Morton got one, some people got suspicious about the university's academic standards: when accepting his honorary Ph.D. in (I think) nuclear physics, all John Morton could do was admire the woodgrain. ("They did a really good job finishing this. Not too shiny.")

Suddenly, *everybody* at Insight had a Ph.D. The typesetters for the Insight brochures ran out of the letters P, h, and D. Facilitators actually started calling each/other "doctor"-and they weren't kidding! Not surprisingly, Russell was the worst. If you didn't call him "Dr. Bishop," he didn't answer. As far as Dr. Bishop was concerned, from now on "Russell" was what leaves did in the wind. Koh-E-Nor University opened its doors promising B.A.s, M.A.s, and Ph.D.s to one and all. "By the time you're done with the courses, we'll have full accreditation, and accreditation will be retroactive," it promised. But some things never change: as of August 1994, thirteen years later, J-R's University *still* isn't accredited, and Ron and Mary *still* don't like me."

In 1988, all the John-Roger organizations began a process John-Roger called "genetic cleansing." It was yet another prophylactic measure to protect "his babies" from the forthcoming *Los Angeles Times* article. All the organizations were told to change their names. This way, if the *L.A. Times* reported that one of the organizations had done something wrong, it wouldn't exist anymore. Only MSIA and Insight survived the purge: they



had name-recognition and therefore there was money in them there names. Every other organization changed. The John-Roger Foundation and Integrity Institute became the Institute for Individual and World Peace; PRANA Theological Seminary became Peace Theological Seminary; Atman Travel became Esprit Travel; ACE became Educare; and Koh-E-Nor University became the University of Santa Monica.

It was purely a *random coincidence* that one of the more respected community colleges in the state of California is called Santa Monica College. Could some people possibly think that Santa Monica College *grew up* and became a university? No. Nobody could make *that* kind of mistake. *And if they did*, they would get a far better education at the University of Santa Monica than they would at Santa Monica College. In connection with this name change, the Baraka Center for Holistic Health and Research became the University of Santa Monica Center for Health. The University of Santa Monica has classes one weekend a month. A school year is nine weekends over a nine-month period. There is no *hope* that they will *ever* get full accreditation. Still, the promises continue. Even the use of the word *university* to describe an institution that offers only two or three classes per semester is beyond me. Here's how the *New American Heritage Dictionary* defines *university*: "An institution for higher learning with teaching and research facilities comprising a graduate school and professional schools that award master's degrees and doctorates and an undergraduate division that awards bachelor's degrees". The only degrees USM students get are the ones they came in with, and-other than answering the burning question: "How many years can we get away with charging money for degrees the students never get?" In 1994, USM made a splashy announcement when they were finally accredited by the Pacific Association of Schools and Colleges (PASC). Other institutes of higher learning accredited by PASC include acupuncture schools, massage schools, herbal schools, and other New Age learning centers. Now, if the Pacific Association of Schools and Colleges can only get accredited by the U.S.

Department of Education, USM can hand out *genuine* Ph.D.s!
USM announced that PASC's accreditation is imminent! How exciting!
John-Roger agrees to do a fundraising seminar! Seventy-five dollars per person! All money going to PASC's Accreditation Fund! It looks as though one of John-Roger's institutions will actually keep its word (thirteen years later, but, hey, what the heck?! Knowing that John-Roger's organizations don't always tell the full story of what's going on, I wrote to the U.S. Department of Education inquiring about the University of Santa Monica and the Pacific Association of Schools and Colleges. In a letter to me, Carl S. Person, chief of the Accrediting Agency of the Evaluation Branch of the Department of Education, wrote on July 25, 1994: The University of Santa Monica had contacted the Pacific Association of Schools and Colleges (PASC) concerning possible accreditation. At that time, PASC had been petitioning the Secretary of Education for listing as a nationally recognized accrediting agency. Since the regulations for recognizing accrediting agencies have recently changed, PASC withdrew its petition before any final decision was made.

The organization that accredited USM, then, doesn't even have an application *on file* to receive accreditation from the U.S. Department of Education. Meanwhile, on August 19, 1994, John-Roger still did a fundraising seminar. *Nowhere* in the advertisements promoting this fundraising event does it say that PASC is about as close to being accredited as, oh, my publishing company, Prelude Press. That John-Roger would continue with a fundraiser for what appears to be a lost cause is nothing new. He has raised money for one project after another, and when the project failed to materialize, there wasn't a *hint* of refunding any money. There was never even a letter saying where the money would go instead.

I spent a school year at USM once. For nine excruciatingly dull weekends, I suffered through the boredom of the program the Hulnicks had created,



and, for a change of pace, the boredom of the Hulnicks themselves. Dear God, it was painful. Somewhere early on in the nine-month process, I came to believe that I was sexually addicted. With the full support and encouragement of the University of Santa Monica staff, volunteers, and students, I spent the next *eight months* without having so much as an orgasm. Through total abstinence, Ron and Mary said, my addictive patterns concerning sex were supposed to "come up." I think I am going to leave this paragraph now, because with that last sentence I am no longer safe here. Sometime around month eight, I saw an ad for a lecture by Dr. Albert Ellis. (The lecture was not connected to USM). I was thrilled. I, along with about eight hundred other Los Angelenos, filled a ballroom one Friday evening. Dr. Ellis spoke for awhile, which was a treat, and then he offered to demonstrate how swift and effective his technique of Rational-Emotive Therapy can be. He invited anyone courageous enough to sit in the chair next to him, explain his or her biggest problem, and Dr. Ellis would use Rational-Emotive Therapy to solve it. He was spectacular.

He knocked off problems left and right. You name it; he fixed it—and they seemed to me good fixes, too. In fifteen to twenty minutes each, the people were on their way with a new view of life. When it was my turn, I sat down and told Dr. Ellis—and assembled masses—that I was sexually addicted. "How do you *know* that you are sexually addicted?" Dr. Ellis asked. "Well, in the eight months since I've had an orgasm, what's come up is ...," I began. "You haven't had an orgasm in *eight months*?" You could see Dr. Ellis was a believer in Remy de Gourmont's philosophy: "Of all sexual aberrations, perhaps the most peculiar is chastity." "Yes," I said sheepishly. "Maybe it was only seven months and three weeks." "You're not sexually addicted!" proclaimed Dr. Ellis. "If you had a sexual addiction you couldn't *possibly* go eight months without an orgasm. The fact that you went eight months without an orgasm proves conclusively that you're *not* sexually addicted." Wow. I had spent eight months at USM looking for the *causes* of my sexual addiction, but no one thought to ask whether or not I was sexually addicted in the first place. In the pseudo-mezzo spiritual

atmosphere of USM, *any* sexual attraction seemed marginally perverse. Around USM, even sex within marriage seemed somehow, well, *distracting*.

Ron and Mary did not exactly celebrate the joys of the physical union in either discussion or demeanor: it was somehow difficult to imagine that they ever actually "did it." It was like trying to imagine your parents doing it when you first found out *all* parents did it. Thanks to USM's psychological (pathological?) hang-up concerning sex, I spent eight months looking for the cause of a problem I didn't have. Dr. Ellis was right; his logic impeccable. Once again--as in 1965-- was saved by the good doctor. All of John-Roger's organizations have one of two functions: getting devotees for John-Roger or getting money *from* the devotees. USM does both. Based on the theory that if you hang around McDonald's long enough sooner or later you're going to have to have some fast food, if you hang around USM long enough, sooner or later you're going to join MSIA. Every staff person and most volunteers at USM are MSIA ministers and initiates. Ron Hulnick refers to USM within MSIA circles as "the Traveler's School."

My Association with Peter McWilliams

I first became aware of Peter McWilliams when I saw him trying to prevent Craig Rivera (Geraldo's younger brother) from filming John-Roger Hinkins at a book signing. The clip was repeatedly shown on Geraldo Rivera's early 1990s nightly news television show, *Now It Can Be Told*, which devoted an entire episode on J.R. infamously entitled "The Cadillac of Cults." I also appeared on that show discussing how J.R. had ransacked my home and how J.R. had manipulated hundreds of his disciples with his false claims.

Later in the summer of 1994 I was quite surprised to receive an urgent phone call from Peter McWilliams asking me for my help. I was traveling through Austin, Texas, at the time and he wanted to meet me personally as



soon as possible. A week or so later we met in Del Mar, California (where I was then living) at *Il Fornaio*, an Italian restaurant.

Peter explained that he had defected from MSIA and that he wanted to write a book exposing his former guru but in order to do so he needed my help. I explained that I was hesitant to put my neck out again, since the last time I wrote about J.R. I got death threats and got my home robbed. In addition, I wanted to make absolutely certain that Peter was going to put his name front and center on his critical analysis, since I had previously noted a tendency among certain MSIA defectors of running scared (out of fear of J.R.'s possible reprisals) when their names were going to be published as key sources.

I liked Peter almost immediately. He was very bright and exceptionally witty. He described in detail how manipulated he felt under J.R.'s tutelage. Although Peter listed John-Roger as a co-author to his very successful *Life 101* book series, he stressed to me that John-Roger hadn't actually written anything in his books. As Peter later explained,

"I put his name on books I wrote, including *Life 101*, *DO IT!*, and *You Can't Afford the Luxury of a Negative Thought...* I published and promoted the books myself and two of them appeared on the New York Times bestseller list. I gave John-Roger every spare penny the books generated—more than 1,000,00... I did all of this not from love, but fear: I thought if I didn't, I would die. I actually believed John-Roger's lies that he was keeping me alive."

I decided to give Peter McWilliams all the files, articles, tapes, and assorted papers I had on J.R., including some very personal items which clearly showed that the founder of MSIA was involved in criminal activities. I conversed with Peter several more times during that month on the phone, through slow and electronic mail, and personally.



He finished his magnum opus on John-Roger, *What To Do When Your Guru Sues You*, in record time. It still remains one of the most insightful and funny portraits of a cult leader ever written.

The book had an almost immediate impact, as the national press soon learned that Arianna Huffington was a long-time associate of J.R. and an ordained minister in the Movement, a point that she tried to vehemently deny on T.V. But Arianna's less than truthful responses about her J.R. connection turned out to have a devastating impact on her husband's senatorial campaign. Some analysts have argued that *Life 102* actually transformed the political outcome of the race, as Michael Huffington only lost the election by less than two percent of the vote to incumbent Diane Feinstein. Having his wife exposed on two fronts (denying her obvious association John-Roger and employing an illegal immigrant) just weeks before the general election cost Michael Huffington a number of key swing votes. Not long thereafter, Michael and Arianna were divorced and today Michael Huffington has declared that he is bisexual.

Life 102 was widely distributed throughout North America and was featured on a number of radio and television programs. Peter also did extensive interviews promoting the book. It caused a tremendous controversy in MSIA since it contained explosive allegations about J.R. and his nefarious activities with his closest disciples and those who have publicly criticized him.

Life 102 was readily available for several years after its initial publication in the Fall of 1994. However, J.R. waged an intense legal battle against Peter McWilliams in the ensuing years and this took a dramatic toll on Peter's health.

In late 1996 while I was living in London, England, on sabbatical, I received a shocking phone call from a friend of mine who informed me that Peter McWilliams had brokered a deal with J.R.'s organization to sell all of the

rights to *Life 102* over to MSIA in exchange for 2 million dollars cash. I was flabbergasted. I couldn't believe that Peter would cave in to J.R. after all the pain and turmoil he had been put through because of John-Roger's lies and deceit. But it was a done deal. The very object of Peter McWilliams' critique (J.R.) now owned the rights to the book that had so brilliantly exposed him as charlatan. J.R. and MSIA had all the copies of *Life 102* pulled and sent out letters requesting that any and all electronic versions of the book also be taken down from websites that hosted them.

I had made a deal with Peter very early on in our negotiations back in 1994 that if I was going to help him on his project that I would be given his permission to post the book, *Life 102*, on my website for free so that any interested seeker or scholar could have access to it.

What I hadn't ever imagined was that in the not so distant future Peter McWilliams would sell back his book to John-Roger. This put me in an awfully precarious position since my website was the last place on the internet that still displayed an unedited version of *Life 102*.

I was a sitting duck, since I refused to take the book down. I soon heard from MSIA's lawyer requesting that I take the book off my Neuralsurfer website immediately. I refused to do so and got legal representation to argue for my position.

What was MSIA's reaction to my perhaps naïve refusal to cow tow to their demands? They sued me. At that stage I was uncertain about what to do since I had already had a number of ugly legal skirmishes with another new religious movement, Eckankar, which I had written extensively about. I was gun shy since I already knew from past experiences that legal tussles usually turn out worse than expected. However, my lawyers were convinced that I had a strong case, especially since Peter McWilliams had written the following to me:



David-

Tada! Here it is in print form -- *Life 102*! Let me know if you need more. Thank you for all your help. I couldn't have done it without you. Yes, of course, put it on your web page, give copies to your class. Whatever you want - just don't sell it. Again, thanks I owe you several! Enjoy--Peter McWilliams, 9/94.

Eventually Peter and I were deposed by lawyers on both sides. After Peter's deposition which my lawyers felt fully backed my position, MSIA attempted to settle the impending case with me out of court. They even offered me some modest compensation but under the stipulation that I had to agree to take *Life 102* off my website. My lawyers recommended that I refuse the offer and let the issue go to trial. I was hesitant to do so because I knew that I might end up losing the case, since Peter had legally transferred his rights to the book over to J.R. and MSIA.

The strength of my case rested on the fact that I only agreed to help Peter write his book if I was allowed permission to post the entire book on my newly created website, the Neuralsurfer. The case would make or break on the veracity of Peter's testimony, as he was my sole witness at the trial.

However, something totally unexpected happened just days before the case went to trial. Peter McWilliams was arrested by the Federal Government for growing marijuana illegally. Shortly after leaving John-Roger, Peter learned that he had AIDS and that the medicine he was prescribed to take was extremely difficult to swallow without him getting nauseous. To counteract the nausea and vomiting he discovered that smoking pot helped him to hold down his necessary medicines. He became a champion for medical marijuana since he knew how much it had helped him.

But the Federal Government didn't agree with Peter's outspoken advocacy and arrested him for illegally growing and distributing marijuana. Peter was put into jail and was not allowed to take his AIDS medicine for several days. This naturally caused him to become quite ill. On the day of the trial,

the judge was informed that our witness was in Federal custody and therefore couldn't appear as my expert witness. The judge, however, ordered that Peter McWilliams be taken from jail in shackles and brought into the courtroom to testify.

The moment I saw Peter shuffling into the courtroom with his haggard appearance I knew I had lost the case. The fact that Peter walked by me and my lawyer and winked in full view of the judge didn't help matters either.

Peter tried his best to convince the judge that I had a prior right to post the book on my website and that such a right preceded the agreement he had made with MSIA. But to no avail. The judge ruled against me and I was ordered to take the book off my website. Although Peter testified at the trial that he had indeed given me a prior license for posting *Life 102* on my website (As the judge admitted in her judgment "Despite his representation and warranty that he has not assigned or granted any license in *Life 102* for consideration, McWilliams testified at trial that he advised representatives of MSIA at the time of the settlement that he had previously granted a license for consideration to use *Life 102* to Lane.") the judge ruled that she didn't find such testimony credible, primarily because Peter and his lawyer had given conflicting statements in other contexts.

I was, to say the least, flabbergasted. Peter was also exceptionally distraught about the outcome, since he knew that by selling back his copyright to MSIA he had put me (once again?) in a vulnerable position to the very person who had allegedly threatened my wife's life, ransacked my home, and staged a smear campaign against me and my informants from exposing the underside of John-Roger and his operations. A few months later, *Skeptic Magazine* published a brief notice on the trial and commented on how they thought the outcome was unfair and unwarranted.



The following year (1999) on my birthday, April 29th, I got an unexpected phone call from Peter McWilliams. He was trying to broker a truce between me and MSIA (or more specifically, John-Roger Hinkins). He knew that I was thinking of writing a follow-up study on John-Roger (which I had tentatively entitled *Life 103: John-Roger against Me*). However, my own personal and professional life was such that I wanted to avoid any further litigation with the already litigiously minded cult. So, eventually, a deal was hammered out with the President of MSIA and me to mitigate the bad blood that had percolated for some fifteen years.

To partly accomplish that aim MSIA invited Dr. J. Gordon Melton, head of the Institute for the Study of American Religion (and an old friend of mine and a sympathetic scholar to emerging new religions like MSIA) to meet with me at the University of Santa Monica to go over some of my past history with MSIA and to partly bury the hatchet. If I remember correctly, the President of MSIA had the interview filmed for posterity's sake. However, instead of a reconciliation, my discussion with Dr. Melton increasingly focused on how I believed John-Roger robbed my home and how he had orchestrated a terror campaign out of a phony front organization called the Coalition for Civil and Spiritual Rights (CCSR). Right in the middle of the discussions, Dr. Melton and I realized that the P.O. Box that was used to send out CCSR's missives was just a few blocks down the street from the University of Santa Monica.

Looking at Dr. Melton's chagrined face that day made me think that he too realized how culpable John-Roger had been in smearing his defectors. It came as no surprise to me to learn later that MSIA didn't release the taped interview of Melton and myself at USM to the public. Why should they? It mostly shows me explaining how badly J.R. reacts to criticism.

While my life trajectory, and apparently that of John-Roger's as well, took a turn for the better during the next year, the same cannot be said for Peter McWilliams. The very next year Peter died. It was a death many observers

believe could have been prevented if the Federal Government would have listened to Peter McWilliams' plea for help. As the late conservative commentator, William F. Buckley lamented,

"Age? Fifty. Profession? Author, poet, publisher. Particular focus of interest? A federal judge in California (George King) would decide in a few weeks how long a sentence to hand down, and whether to send McWilliams to prison or let him serve his sentence at home. What was his offense? He collaborated in growing marijuana plants. What was his defense? Well, the judge wouldn't allow him to plead his defense to the jury. If given a chance, the defense would have argued that under Proposition 215, passed into California constitutional law in 1996, infirm Californians who got medical relief from marijuana were permitted to use it. The judge also forbade any mention that McWilliams suffered from AIDS and cancer, and got relief from the marijuana. What was he doing when he died? Vomiting.

The vomiting hit him while in his bathtub, and he choked to death. Was there nothing he might have done to still the impulse to vomit? Yes, he could have taken marijuana; but the judge's bail terms forbade him to do so, and he submitted to weekly urine tests to confirm that he was living up to the terms of his bail. Did anybody take note of the risk he was undergoing? He took Marinol -- a proffered, legal substitute, but reported after using it that it worked for him only about one-third of the time. When it didn't work, he vomited. Was there no public protest against the judge's ruling? Yes. On June 9, the television program 20/20 devoted a segment to the McWilliams plight.

Commentator John Stossel summarized: 'McWilliams is out of prison on the condition that he not smoke marijuana, but it was the marijuana that kept him from vomiting up his medication. I can understand that the federal drug police don't agree with what some states have decided to do about medical marijuana, but does that give them the right to just end-run



those laws and lock people up?’ Shortly after the trial last year, Charles Levendosky, writing in the Ventura County (Calif.) Star, summarized: ‘The cancer treatment resulted in complete remission.’ But only the marijuana gave him sustained relief from the vomiting that proved mortal. Is it being said, in plain language, that the judge's obstinacy resulted in killing McWilliams? Yes. A Libertarian Party press release has made exactly that charge. ‘McWilliams was prohibited from using medical marijuana--and being denied access to the drug's anti-nausea properties almost certainly caused his death.’

Reflecting on the judge's refusal to let the jury know that there was understandable reason for McWilliams to believe he was acting legally, I ended a column in November by writing, ‘So, the fate of Peter McWilliams is in the hands of Judge King. Perhaps the cool thing for him to do is delay a ruling for a few months, and just let Peter McWilliams die.’ Well, that happened on June 14. The struggle against a fanatical imposition of federal laws on marijuana will continue, as also on the question whether federal laws can stifle state initiatives. Those who believe the marijuana laws are insanely misdirected have a martyr.”

In conclusion I should point out one of the very kind things Peter McWilliams did near the last year of his life. Because he felt badly about how the legal case against me turned out, Peter did all that he could to rectify the situation, including issuing statements that would help set up a relative truce between me and John-Roger.

Although it is widely reported that Peter somehow repudiated the findings of *Life 102* (as it states in the *Wikipedia* entry on him, dated June 7, 2012, “The content of the book is no longer one with which I would like to have my name associated.”), I know from my personal conversations with him that Peter issued that statement in part to help insure that John-Roger and I could reach some sort of peace agreement. The truth of the matter is that



Peter had become completely disillusioned with religion in general and as such didn't see MSIA as all that different from Roman Catholicism, since both of them believed in things that he thought were at best silly and at worst downright horrific. As I recalled in a brief piece I wrote about Peter's later theological views near the end of this life, *God 101: There is None?*

"However, before my case went to trial I got the chance to meet Peter again in his Hollywood home (which he had bought with his new found wealth). He was chain smoking pot and had his pool in the dead of winter heated to about 100 degrees. He greeted me at the door with a bird on his shoulder wearing nothing but a bathrobe and a reefer dangling out of his mouth. We discussed many things that night (which, again, I hope to retell in more detail in a different article), but one thing he said has always stuck with me. Peter mentioned that he wanted to write a final book in his *Life 101* series which had made him and J.R. relatively famous since they sold hundreds of thousands of copies.

Peter had been deeply involved with mystical traditions for decades (he once wrote a very popular treatise on Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and T.M.) and felt that they were completely wrong. Indeed, he changed from becoming an extremely devoted believer to a rabid skeptic of anything smacking of religion. He wanted to call his new book, **God 101: There is None**. Peter, as far I know, never finished that book because his life was cut short when he was forced by the Feds to stop his intake of medical marijuana, the one substance that he found that could control his nausea after taking his AIDS medicine.

Without the pot, he couldn't hold down his prescribed medicines. I can personally vouch for this since I saw Peter's condition when he was in jail without pot and when he was at his home with an abundant supply. In any case, Peter chided me on my persistent agnostic-mystic leanings (as I tell my students at CSULB and MSAC, when they ask me about my



religious tendencies, 'I am just too stupid to be a full-fledged atheist'), and tried to convince me that the only real enlightenment to be had was through hemp! I have always had a fondness for Peter, even if at one-time I was aghast that he compromised so many of his informants, including me, by selling *Life 102* to J.R.

However, I too have found myself in compromising positions (where I made my own bargains with the Devil) and one can quite understand how two million dollars cash can be a persuasive deal maker. Peter McWilliams, I believe, would have written one of the best atheist books in the past twenty years if he had lived long enough. He could have given Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, and Sam Harris a serious run for their money, primarily because Peter would have written a genuinely funny book on why he and everyone else shouldn't believe in God.

Peter McWilliams on John-Roger as Thief

In 1983, several of the people who left MSIA (one John-Roger's personal secretary, another a member of John-Roger's live-in personal staff) were tired of the intimidation, threats, and harassment, and also felt that the hidden story about John-Roger's evil empire needed to be told. They contacted Professor David Lane, Ph.D., who had written a book, *The Making of a Spiritual Movement*, which conclusively proved that the teachings of Eckankar came from the Radhasoami tradition of India. The book rocked the Eckankar organization to its very foundation. (Or, if you prefer, rocked the Eckankar foundation to its very organization.) Dr. Lane had also met with John-Roger on several occasions, and they were on friendly terms. To the former staff members, Dr. Lane seemed to be the ideal choice to investigate and report on what had been carefully hidden within John-Roger's organizations: he was an academician with a commitment to truth and a knowledge of spiritual practices (he himself follows a spiritual path) that would allow him to distinguish between legitimate spiritual teaching and the illegitimate-sometimes outrageous-justifications in the name of God given by John-Roger.



Dr. Lane's casual but cordial relationship with John-Roger would eliminate any basis for the charge that Dr. Lane had intentionally set out to do a hatchet job. After doing some preliminary research, Dr. Lane found that, although he was certainly shocked by what he discovered, he was somehow not inclined to complete the project. Dr. Lane was on the verge of abandoning his article when John-Roger- who shoots himself in the foot so often he should wear stainless steel socks-began harassing Dr. Lane. Wrong move. Dr. Lane, as he had proved when he took on the entire Eckankar organization (far larger than MSIA) did not succumb to intimidation. The fact that John-Roger was so eager to keep Dr. Lane from exploring any further indicated that there was good exploration ahead. In mid-1984, he published *The J.R. Controversy: A Critical Analysis of John-Roger Hinkins and M.S.I.A.* This article, published in Dr. Lane's research series "Understanding Cults and Spiritual Movements," was a breakthrough work on exposing the dark side of John-Roger's farce. The article revealed and documented for the first time John-Roger's plagiarism, intimidation, violence, and sexual exploits.

John-Roger's response? A general denial of the facts, and a general attack on Dr. Lane. On October 5, 1984, having driven to Del Mar, California, in John-Roger's baby-blue Lincoln Continental, John-Roger and Michael Feder broke into Dr. Lane's apartment in Del Mar, California. John-Roger is placed at the scene of the crime because of two words he wrote on a box containing copies of *The J.R. Controversy*. The words were: "NO MORE." Handwriting experts have verified that this was written in John-Roger's hand, and it fits John-Roger's pattern of not being able to resist having the last word or to add a didactic comment to every situation.

By writing "NO MORE" on a box containing *The J.R. Controversy*, he did both. Michael Feder was placed in the apartment because the bed was turned completely over, a physical feat John-Roger would have been incapable of doing alone. Only John Roger and Michael Feder made the trip (they told the other staff members they were going to San Diego. It is possible that John-Roger left Michael Feder behind and picked up another henchman in Del Mar, but considering Michael Feder's ongoing shady doings with John-Roger, Feder is the

most likely suspect. In addition to the bed's being turned over, the entire apartment was ransacked. To make absolutely certain that Dr. Lane would not think common, garden-variety thieves had broken in, the television, stereo, and other valuables were not taken. What *was* taken was Dr. Lane's years of research on spiritual groups and cults—the files on MSIA and Eckankar in particular. Also taken were two personal diaries written by Dr. Lane's wife, Jacquie; the list of subscribers for Dr. Lane's research series "Understanding Cults and Spiritual Movements," Dr. Lane's briefcase containing uncorrected term papers ("to the chagrin of my college students," notes Dr. Lane), and a card file containing a lifetime of Dr. Lane's collected recipes. The latter was "a heavy blow for me," remembers Dr. Lane, "the robbers probably thought it contained secret, inside information and thus was done in code."

It was not immediately clear who took the materials— it could have been someone from MSIA, or it could have been someone from Eckankar, from one of the other cults Dr. Lane was researching, or someone who gets off on reading the diaries of college professors' wives. The police, with so many possible culprits, were unable to act. Over the next year (which we shall explore next), as the information implicating John-Roger gradually appeared, the handwriting analysis of "NO MORE" confirmed John-Roger's physical participation in the robbery.

With the robbery, John-Roger's work was far from done. He began writing letters to Dr. Lane's spiritual teacher in India, referring to stolen documents and intimate entries in Dr. Lane's wife's diary: These were sent under an assumed name, but all came from the same printer connected to John-Roger's Lisa computer locked in a room in Mandeville Canyon to which only John-Roger and Michael Feder had the key. John-Roger must have supposed that Dr. Lane's spiritual teacher was the same sort of vindictive rumor-mongering, petty person as John-Roger. (Tattletale letters—many anonymous—are rampant in MSIA. And John-Roger *loves them*. The rules of evidence don't apply around John-Roger: however information is obtained is fair game.)

Fortunately, Dr. Lane's spiritual teacher was genuinely spiritual: his only response was to forward the letters that John-Roger had penned over any number of names along with a note saying simply; "I see no reason to do



anything about these." Dr. Lane's spiritual teacher did not even give John-Roger's nonsense the dignity of a response. And a response was possible: John-Roger gave his post office box just in case Dr. Lane's spiritual teacher had a little dirt to share about some of John-Roger's disciples. The international spiritual kaffeeklatsch envisioned by John-Roger never materialized. Using the same post office box, John-Roger began an organization entitled (get this) Coalition for Civil and Spiritual Rights. That John-Roger would start a campaign for civil rights is so heavy with irony that I can't even get it off the ground with a good metaphor. The only civil rights John-Roger cares about- like all the great autocratic rulers before him- are his own. And spiritual rights? Well, John-Roger likes to use the word *spiritual*, and he always needs to be right, but that's about the closest connection I can make to the term "spiritual rights" and John-Roger Hinkins. The Coalition for Civil and Spiritual Rights was, of course, an organization with a good-sounding name that allowed John-Roger to pretend Dr. Lane was attacking John-Roger's religious freedom.

Never mind that he wanted the freedom to pass himself off as the one and only person on earth directly connected to God, as well as the civil rights to manipulate others unscrupulously; without being subject to criticism or external control. John-Roger, of course, did not step forth to defend himself: he created a triumvirate of characters (Michael Hunt, Kip Ferguson--a character he no doubt stole from one of his gay pulp porn novels—the distinguished Peter Davidson, Ph.D.). These three defended John-Roger's position with all the sophistication and elan of Ruby of Orange County. Fortunately (again), the Coalition for Civil and Spiritual Rights—which John-Roger no doubt envisioned as his own personal Moral Majority--never got off the ground. (Too heavy with irony; as you will recall.)

John-Roger also sent a 28-page, single-spaced letter (probably written by Michael Feder with John-Roger's comments) to Dr. Lane's professors (he was working on his doctorate), employers, and members of the spiritual and psychological intellectual community. By November of 1985, John-Roger had had just about as much fun with Dr. Lane as he (John-Roger) could tolerate. He packed up a good cross-section of the purloined Dr. Lane research materials, threw in Dr. Lane's wife's diaries for good measure, and sent the whole thing

anonymously to Eckankar headquarters. Since all the materials sent either directly related to Dr. Lane's Eckankar research, Dr. Lane's informants, or possibly embarrassing information about Dr. Lane (his recipe for Del Mar Lentil Loaf is positively scandalous), John-Roger assumed the Eckankar people, who had previously been reported on by Dr. Lane, would take over where John-Roger left off. More torment for Dr. Lane. Good. But there was something even better: if the Eckankar organization began using information from the robbery in its own smear campaign, the robbery would then be traced to Eckankar and not to John-Roger. It seemed a brilliant move: kill two birds plus crush every egg in the nest with one exceedingly large stone.

Brilliant, brilliant! Destroy his competition (Eckankar) and his critic (Dr. Lane) with one well-placed box of papers. Alas, John-Roger's Wile E. Coyote complex once again raised its weary head. Just as M. Coyote shoves a stick of dynamite down Roadrunner's throat, only to find it explodes in his own butt, John-Roger's best-planted bombs often wind up exploding in his own face. In this case, the Eckankar people opened the box, and sent it directly to their lawyers; the lawyers immediately placed the entire box in another box and sent it to David Lane. By this point, David Lane was entirely certain that John-Roger was not only the thief, but also the mastermind and head writer (why didn't John-Roger spend all that writing time working on a book such as *Petulance 101?*) behind the smear campaign.

Also in the box of materials returned by John-Roger (by way of Eckankar), was, as Dr. Lane puts it, "cherry on the sundae." In the margins of Dr. Lane's wife's diary were handwritten comments. Handwriting experts venfled that this was the handwriting of . . . Beep beep."



THE J.R. CONTROVERSY

A Critical Analysis of John-Roger Hinkins and M.S.I.A.

[Written in 198/1984 and published in Understanding Cults and Spiritual Movements]

What would you do if you learned one day that your spiritual teacher sexually harassed his male disciples and covered up his sexual affairs; a plagiarist who lifted his teachings from other traditions without due reference; a spendthrift who lived extravagantly, though he took a vow of poverty; a questionable business man who engaged in risky and possibly illegal activities; and a religious charlatan who consistently told untruths about a variety of issues?

Break-off your discipleship? Leave the organization? Stay with the movement? How would you feel? Shocked, disgusted, saddened? Or, perhaps, a strong sense of rationalization: okay, he may be sexually manipulative, a plagiarist, a crook, and a liar, but I have benefitted from him spiritually!

Right now this is the dilemma of several members of M.S.I.A. (Movement of Spiritual Inner Awareness) who believe that their teacher John-Roger has misled them and thousands of others. Based primarily upon the personal testimony of disciples of John-Roger about his hidden life, a scandal of devastating proportions has begun to rock the Movement's international membership. This article, the first of its kind, will take a close look at the present controversy, addressing the larger issue of how new religious groups should be studied in light of legitimacy and authenticity.

The Critical Imperative: Legitimacy versus Authenticity

With the continuing growth of new spiritual movements, it is imperative for both the scholar and the seeker to be able to discriminate between groups which are fraudulent and manipulative and those which are genuine and beneficial. The failure to do so has troublesome consequences:

witness Jim Jones and Jonestown. What is necessary, therefore, in the examination of religion and its mystical claims--be them old and traditional like Roman Catholicism or new and emerging like the Unification Church--is unbridled rational scrutiny. That is, the opportunity to fully investigate every facet about the particular spiritual movement: from the biography of its founder, the history of its organization, the value of its teachings, to the practical application of its techniques, etc. Nothing, in this purview, is too private, too esoteric, or too trivial for examination.

However, some of today's religions resist such inquiries, fearing the negative repercussions that may result from an intensive study of their history and doctrines. For instance, note the reluctance of many followers to accept historians' allegations that many esteemed religious leaders plagiarized their writings from other authors, e.g., Joseph Smith (Mormonism) and Mary Baker Eddy (Christian Science).

Though we may indeed find many unpleasant facts out about the originators and promulgators of spiritual movements, this does not in any way lessen our responsibility to uncover the truth (in whatever form it may appear). This above all else is the rational imperative and the duty of human intelligence: to question and probe unceasingly.

Ken Wilber, perhaps more than any other transpersonal theorist, has stressed the need for intelligent discrimination in the face of our modern cultic renaissance. In his books, *A Sociable God* (1983) and *Eye to Eye* (1983), Wilber has proposed a simple but dynamic paradigm in which to critically analyze new religious movements.[1]

Borrowing his terminology from linguistics and sociology, Wilber argues that spiritual groups should be judged on two criteria: legitimacy and authenticity. The former deals with the relative degree of meaning value found in the group. How well do its teachings integrate one within both the membership fold and the exterior community? Does the leader/teacher live up to his/her own ethical standards? To the moral heights of other

enlightened masters? What are the group's historical antecedents? How is it viewed by outsiders, etc.? Legitimacy is a horizontal enterprise, the valuation of the movement's aims within the individual, membership, and the society at large.

Authenticity, on the other hand, is concerned with the actual transformation offered and delivered by the respective sect. Is the group engaged with transcendent practices for uplifting the soul to higher realms? Or, just the alteration of social and political awareness? Are participants experiencing directly those desired aims, etc.? This, as Huston Smith in *The Forgotten Truth* has pointed out, is a vertical appraisal, gauging the spiritual focus and power of the movement both theoretically and practically.

With Wilber's astute reconnoitering of religious groups, it will enable us to examine John-Roger and M.S.I.A. more fully, taking into consideration both the integrative and transformative dimensions of his group.

A Brief History of M.S.I.A.

In 1968 John-Roger Hinkins, reportedly a former police dispatcher and ex-high school teacher raised in Mormonism, started his spiritual ministry in California. He was associated with Paul Twitchell and his group, having been a mail correspondent member and a second initiate.[2] There are also reports that he was connected with other metaphysical groups, learning firsthand about meditation, light-attunement, and aura balancing,[3] which he later incorporated into his own movement.

Although Hinkins' name appears in Twitchell's newsletter (dated in the late 1960's) as a convener for Twitchell sponsored meetings in Southern California, John-Roger does not see his connection with Paul Twitchell as a master/disciple or teacher/student relationship. Be that as it may, the fact remains, however, that his group and his teachings are almost exactly the same as those taught by Paul Twitchell, not even excepting particular

Twitchellian nuances.[4] Likewise, some M.S.I.A. initiates recall that in the early meetings J.R. would "call in" the spirit of brother Paul Twitchell, as a master conversant in soul travel. It should also be recognized that M.S.I.A.'s organizational structure is almost parallel to Twitchell's group with regard to initiation, discourses, and cosmology.[5]

John-Roger is known to members of M.S.I.A. as the physical manifestation of the Mystical Traveler Consciousness, an all-powerful inner spirit that guides the progress of soul travelers. (This concept, by the way, is quite similar to the Satguru in the Radhasoami tradition and the Mahanta in Twitchell's group.) According to Roger's account, the mantleship of the MTC was passed on to him in or around 1963.[6] During this time, Roger claims to have met Sawan Singh, the late Radhasoami Satsang Beas master who died in 1948. "J.R.," as Hinkins is affectionately called, holds that Sawan Singh was the previous receptor of the MTC and passed on the "keys" to the Kingdom to him on the inner spiritual planes. In the beginning, however, J.R. did not recognize the luminous being as Sawan Singh. At first, he alleged to be in communication with Rebazar Tarzs, a 500 year old Tibetan monk, who, as it turns out, was a fictional character created by Paul Twitchell to hide his past associations.[7] Accordingly, it was only later when Roger saw a photograph of the Radhasoami guru that he placed the picture of Sawan Singh with the powerful entity he encountered in meditation.[8]

John-Roger's group has grown considerably in the last ten years, and now has centers throughout the United States and in several countries across the globe. M.S.I.A. publishes its own newspaper, *The Movement*, and the writings of J.R., including such books as *The Sound Current*, *A Consciousness of Wealth*, and *The Christ Within*. Recently there took place the creation of the John-Roger Foundation, a non-profit, tax-exempt organization which supports J.R.'s numerous activities. This Foundation backs the following enterprises:

1. Public Communication: Educational programs; NOW productions; Book division; The Movement Newspaper; and Audio tape division.
2. Educational Institutions: Insight Transformational Seminars; Koh-E-Nor University; PRANA Theological Seminary and College of Philosophy.
3. Health Treatment Baraka Holistic Center for Therapy and Research.
4. Community and Public Service: Insight Service Training; Insight Service Projects; and Individual Service Projects.
5. Spiritual and Philosophical Service M.S.I.A.; Counseling; Publications

At first glance, John-Roger and his Movement appear to be a viable alternative in today's expanding religious market. The official history of M.S.I.A. goes a long way in trying to portray J.R. and his mission as a great boon for humankind and society. At long last, the West has an authentic master of the Sound Current, one who can convey Eastern wisdom in practical, accessible terms--or so the general membership believes. But, according to a growing number of students of J.R. who have recently defected from the ranks, there is a hidden side to the history and design of M.S.I.A. which displays not a genuine spiritual teacher and a true path to God, but a misguided charlatan who will use anything in his power to achieve his aims. It is, no doubt, a controversial issue but, nevertheless, it is one that demands closer scrutiny. The following series of "allegations," which are at the heart of the scandal, will allow us to determine the ultimate legitimacy and authenticity of J.R.'s mastership.

J.R. is a Plagiarist

Since the inception of M.S.I.A., John-Roger has infused his group with a variety of teachings, practices, and New Age techniques from other spiritual traditions. At times this has been a source of embarrassment because his extensive "borrowing" has occasionally turned out to be blatant plagiarism. For instance, compare M.S.I.A.'s cosmology (as found in The



Sound Current by John-Roger, dated 1976) with Twitchell's cosmology (as found in *The Spiritual Notebook* by Paul Twitchell, dated and copyrighted in 1971):

Paul Twitchell's Cosmology (Region and Sound)

1. Physical (Thunder) 2. Astral (Roar of the Sea) 3. Causal (Tinkle of Bells) 4. Mental (Running Water) 5. Soul (Single Note of Flute) 6. Alakh Lok (Heavy Wind) 7. Alaya Lok (Deep Humming) 8. Hukikat Lok (Thousand Violins) 9. Agam Lok (Music of Woodwinds)

John-Roger's Cosmology (Region and Sound)

1. Physical (Thunder) 2. Astral (Roaring Surf) 3. Causal (Tinkle of Bells) 4. Mental (Running Water) 5. Soul (Sound of Flute) Sound of Wind, Humming Sound, Ten Thousand Violins, Sound of Woodwinds

Roger's cosmology is exactly the same as Paul Twitchell's. This is unusual because of Twitchell's own creative implantations which were uniquely his own. Both of the above schemas represent a radical departure from the Radhasoami esoteric version which was the primary source for Twitchell's understanding of the Sound Current and Surat Shabd Yoga practice.[9]

Not only did J.R. copy from Twitchell's publications (consciously or otherwise), but he also appropriated word for word from other metaphysical texts. Perhaps Roger's most graphic example of plagiarism was from Florence Scovel Shinn's book, *The Game of Life and How to Play It*, published by DeVorss & Company and copyrighted in 1925. Take a close look at the following comparisons; not a sentence has been changed:

Florence Scovel Shinn (1925)

God is my unfailing supply, and large sums of money come to me quickly, under grace, in perfect ways.

Every plan my father in heaven has not planned, shall be dissolved and dissipated, and the Divine Idea now comes to pass.

Only that which is true of God is true of me, for I and the Father are ONE.

As I am one with God, I am one with my good, for God is both the Giver and the Gift. I cannot separate the Giver from the gift.

Divine love now dissolves and dissipates every wrong condition in my mind, body and affairs. Divine Love is the most powerful chemical in the universe, and dissolves everything which is not of itself!

Divine Love floods my consciousness with health, and every cell in my body is filled with light.

My eyes are God's eyes, I see with the eyes of spirit. I see clearly the open way; there are no obstacles on my pathway. I see clearly the perfect plan.

John Roger Hinkins (1981) [Affirmations]

“God is my unfailing supply, and large sums of money come to me quickly, under grace, in perfect ways. Every plan my father in Heaven has not planned, shall be dissolved and dissipated. The Divine Idea now comes to pass. Only that which is true of God is true of me, for I and the Father am one. As I am one with God, I am one with my good, for God is both the Giver and the Gift. I cannot separate the Giver from the Gift. Divine love now dissolves and dissipates every wrong condition in my mind, my body and affairs. Divine Love is the most powerful chemical in the universe and dissolves everything which is not of itself. Divine Love floods my consciousness with health and every cell in my body is filled with Light. My eyes are God's eyes. I see with the eyes of Spirit. I see clearly the open way. There are no obstacles on my pathway. I see clearly the perfect plan.”

John-Roger appears to have a proclivity for taking other teachings, writings, and practices and developing them as his own. Besides the

obvious similarities between Roger's Insight Transformational Seminars and Life Spring (as well as Est) one can see his tendency for "borrowing" in his curious use of the word "Sarmad" as a term for God. It seems likely, given J.R.'s track record in matters of religious shoplifting, that he first learned the word "Sugmad" from Paul Twitchell. However, after his exposure to certain Radhasoami Beas texts (particularly the one entitled Sarmad), he transposed Twitchell's term "Sugmad" (which stands for the Highest Lord) into M.S.I.A.'s "Sarmad." In any case, "Sarmad" is actually the name given for a famous Indian-Jewish saint in the Shabd Yoga tradition who died a martyr because of his claim that he was one with God.[10]

Roger, coincidentally, has also taken over the "Holy Five Names" mantra from the Radhasoami Beas and Ruhani Satsangs. In doing so, though, J.R. has mistakenly rearranged the order in two of the names, betraying his ignorance in understanding Indian terminology.[11] This type of indiscriminate borrowing, at least to practitioners from established centers of Surat Shabd Yoga, shows John-Roger to be an unscrupulous spermologos and his group M.S.I.A. to be a potpourri of unoriginal spiritual teachings. The allegation that J.R. is a plagiarist, to some disciples, looks more and more to be a statement of fact.

J.R. Sexually Manipulates His Disciples

Perhaps the most shocking thing to be alleged about John-Roger by a number of M.S.I.A. members is that he sexually manipulates his disciples into having a homosexual affair, claiming that it is for their best spiritual interests. According to several reports, J.R. has apparently been using his spiritual title in order to have sexual relationships with numerous male disciples.

In this regard, Roger joins the growing ranks of gurus who have crossed the ethical borderline between religious guidance and physical intimacy. This infamous assemblage now includes the likes of Swami Muktananda,



who according to William Rodarmor's article in *CoEvolution Quarterly* (Winter 1983), was having numerable sexual encounters with his female followers both in America and India before his death in 1982; Neem Karoli Baba, Richard Alpert's teacher, who is recorded to have had "making out" sessions with some of his female American devotees; and Sathya Sai Baba, perhaps India's most famous mystic, who is described by Tal Brooke (one-time disciple) in *Lord of the Air* (1979) to be a practicing homosexual.[12]

As sexuality is undoubtedly a personal matter and perhaps a skeleton in most individual's closets, it is not my wish to elaborate any further on this private issue which has turned public within the last decade. However, it should be pointed out that spiritual teachers by necessity must be judged by a high moral standard, for they are allowing themselves to be examples of what other humans can and should be. Though, indeed, gurus are human like the rest of us (and deserve our understanding and forgiveness), they represent a higher potential, a supposed enlightened state. Hence, when one does "fall off the pedestal" it should not be ignored or condoned with lame excuses. To do so only allows for more ethical transgressions to occur. Gurus don't hesitate to point out their devotee's weaknesses, nor should disciples be hesitant in criticizing their teacher's faults. Critical exchange is crucial and healthy for any type of relationship--including teacher/students ones.

J.R. is a Charlatan

According to many disenchanted followers, though J.R. claims to be the manifestation of the Mystical Traveler Consciousness he exhibits many of the qualities of a charlatan. Questions have been raised about Roger's lifestyle, business practices, and way of dealing with people.

For instance, it appears that M.S.I.A. (presumably with J.R.'s knowledge) has illegally used the Atman Travel Agency to secure discounts on flights for staff members and other interested parties. The way this is done is to introduce a staff member as a full-time travel agent. But, in most cases, the

individual does not work in that capacity, thereby deriving benefit for a service never rendered.[13]

This type of questionable activity extends even to J.R.'s Mandeville Canyon property. When the city of Los Angeles' Department of buildings and Safety sent a letter to John-Roger Hinkins to discontinue the operation of commercial ventures on his residential property, it appears that J.R. (under guidance from his attorney) tried to hide the business dealings going on at Mandeville. This included, among other things, the claim by Roger's lawyer to Senior Building-Mechanical Inspector (J. Anderson) that "editing" on tapes and books, etc., was a "hobby"--though obviously this was not the case.[14]

J.R.'s personal lifestyle can best be described as luxurious. He has at his disposal hundreds of thousands of dollars for a number of projects. Though he claims to have taken a vow of poverty, Roger lives quite expensively, having the latest in technology and comfort.

Though the preceding sections only partially describe the hidden side of John-Roger, they do bring to focus the important question of whether or not J.R. has any genuine spiritual authority or if his group M.S.I.A. is at all a legitimate and authentic enterprise.

What About Credentials? The Traditional Analysis

There are two major ways that one can judge the legitimacy of a spiritual movement: from inside the tradition and outside of it. Our critical analysis, therefore, will be on these two fronts, first utilizing the principles of Sant Mat, Radhasoami, and Shabd Yoga for the practical critique; and secondly, applying the evaluations of transpersonal psychology (via Wilber and Welwood) for the external appraisal.

Since John-Roger readily admits that Sawan Singh, the late Radhasoami Beas guru, was the previous receptor of the Mystical Traveler

Consciousness, it is only natural for our purposes to see if J.R. himself lives up to the guidelines of a true master, as posited by Sawan Singh and his predecessors.[15] (It should be noted that Sawan Singh [1858-1948] was a highly esteemed master of Shabd Yoga "union of the soul with the Divine Sound" in North India and had a very large following. His guru was Jaimal Singh, the spiritual successor of Shiv Dayal Singh, who founded the Radhasoami path in the mid 19th century in Agra, India.) Below are the results of the comparison:

[SAWAN SINGH]

1. True masters never charge money for their services in any form (this, of course, includes membership or initiation). Nor do they live off the offerings of their disciples. True masters are self-supporting.
2. True masters must be initiated themselves while in the body by a genuine guru. Successorship, naturally, necessitates an acknowledgement on behalf of the departing master of his heir.
3. True masters are strict vegetarians and insist that their disciples do the same.
4. True masters do not drink alcohol nor take mind-altering drugs.
5. True masters do not claim psychic powers or perform public miracles.
6. True masters only have sexual relations with their spouse.

[JOHN ROGER]

1. M.S.I.A., under the direction of J.R., charges a yearly rate for membership. (Initiation generally can only be secured if you are a member first.) John-Roger, though he claims to have taken a vow of poverty, has used thousands of dollars of his group's money for his own uses.

2. John-Roger disavows having taken initiation from any Shabd Yoga master while living in the physical body (including Sawan Singh, who had been deceased for fifteen years when J.R. claims to have met him).
3. John-Roger is a meat-eater. M.S.I.A. students do not take a vow of vegetarianism.
4. John-Roger is reported to consume alcoholic beverages and take a variety of legal prescription drugs.
5. John-Roger, on occasion, claims psychic ability.
6. John-Roger, according to a number of disciples, has sexually manipulated several males into affairs.

As is made obvious from the above analysis, John-Roger would not be regarded as a genuine master by Sawan Singh and the Sant Mat tradition. Rather, he has all the earmarks of a guru not to follow. This is further supported by the illuminating fact that Roger's spiritual and meditational advice is almost always opposite that given by Sawan Singh and other saints in India:

[SAWAN SINGH]

- A) A disciple of a perfect master once initiated can never be uninitiated or disconnected from the Sound Current or his guru. He is, in the course of time, assured of his destination, God-realization.
- B) Test the form that may appear in meditation by repeating the Holy Names given to them at the time of their initiation.

[JOHN ROGER]

- A)"Your reconnections to the Sound Current did not hold and this is to notify you that you are no longer initiates of the Mystical Traveler



and of the Sound Current."--letter from the Movement Board,[16] under the direction of J.R.

B) Advises his disciples not to repeat their Holy Tones when they encounter inner beings during their meditations.

In light of Sant Mat principles and history, John-Roger's story about receiving the mantleship of the Mystical Traveler Consciousness and contacting Sawan Singh on the inner planes, etc., cannot be taken seriously, as it would contradict the very teachings of Sawan Singh and Shabd Yoga. Hence, in this context, J.R. has no proof or rightful demand for his spiritual authority. Likewise, neither does M.S.I.A. (as a religious organization under the direction of Roger) have any substantial claim for being a true source or lineage for Sound Current practices and doctrines.[17]

The Humanistic and Transpersonal Critique

Due to the pioneering work of Ken Wilber and John Welwood,[18] it is now possible to critically analyze new religious movements and their leaders from a humanistic/transpersonal perspective.

If we apply Wilber's scale of legitimacy and authenticity to John-Roger, for example, we find that J.R. has a very weak case for his mastership, since he lacks both a documented historical lineage and outside confirmation from other well established Sound Current teachers. Concurrently, M.S.I.A., since it springs solely out of J.R.'s own creative enterprising, scores a low rating in legitimacy also.[19]

In terms of authenticity (the actual transformative powers of the group), there can be no question that M.S.I.A. does ultimately aim for higher realms of consciousness and that some sincere individuals may be achieving those exalted states. However, these experiences have nothing to do, per se, with John-Roger or M.S.I.A. Rather, as I have argued

elsewhere,[20] it is the person's own inherent capability for transcendent insights that enables one to have inner visions and out-of-body experiences. This is most acutely exemplified in the reports of near-death patients who describe beautiful encounters with a being of light. The NDE experience, as Moody, Ring, and Sabom have indicated in their research, is a transcultural phenomenon, available to any person no matter what religion or country they may belong to.[21]

Thus, following this line of reasoning, it would be erroneous for M.S.I.A. initiates who have mystical encounters to assume that John-Roger is necessarily the cause for it. Instead, it is one's own belief, faith, concentration, and potential for further structural adaptation which has acted as the catalyst for the elevation.[22] This does not mean, though, that true masters do not administer spiritual benefit to their disciples, but only that the individual must first allow for further insight and advancement. Enlightenment, as Wilber so aptly points out, cannot be forced upon people--only slavery can.

Another important appraisal of spiritual masters and groups comes from John Welwood's classic article, "On Spiritual Authority: Genuine and Counterfeit," which appeared in the **Journal of Humanistic Psychology** (Summer 1983). Welwood draws an important distinction between genuine and counterfeit gurus by illustrating the differences between Egocentricity and Being.

Diagrams Welwood [23]:

[EGOCENTRICITY]

concern with maintaining appearances; concern with maintaining and validating a self-image; contraction around "I-ness"; sense of insecurity and inadequacy;



[BEING]

concern with discovering truth; interest in and appreciation of the world, independently of how it affirms or negates any self-image; expansion outward toward life and the phenomenal world; basic sense of wholeness, well-being, aliveness, and intelligence

If we accept the picture of John-Roger that has been drawn by a number of ex-followers (and outlined throughout this article) and place it through Welwood's grid, it becomes obvious that J.R. has more traits of Egocentricity than of Being. This will become even clearer when we review Roger's reactions to criticism.

The Red Monk Disease

The most telling sign of whether a master is genuine or fraudulent, authentic or counterfeit, filled with Ego or Being, is to see how he reacts to personal criticism. It is easy to "look" majestic and benevolent when everyone around is adoring you. But, the real test is to find out how the guru responds in a negative situation. Only then can a disciple witness the real merits of his teacher.

How does John-Roger stand up on the face of adverse publicity? Not very well it seems. For instance, when word got out that several disciples were talking about his personal/hidden life, J.R. immediately tried to squelch it by having his lawyers send letters pointing out the possible legal ramifications if they persisted. Not satisfied with just a conventional defense, Roger also declared to his membership that certain wayward students were now embodying the "Red Monk," a negative delusion, etc. Declares a letter from the Movement Board to one of these "straying" followers:

"We will also once again be notifying those people that ask that you are once again embodying the Negative Power in the form of the Red Monk



and the consequences that goes with this power. Please understand that this action is not against you but for those whom you would once again contaminate with this energy field. Most of the people in the Movement who have contacted us have noticed the peculiar actions around you that reminded them of the occurrences when your egos led you into patterns of deceit and half truths in the past.”

What does this "Red Monk" do? According to the Movement Board it contaminates anything which comes into its field of energy. Who are the most likely candidates for the dreaded disorder? Students who criticize John-Roger or M.S.I.A. To show to what extent John-Roger will go in defending his actions, I have included some excerpts from letters that have been written on his behalf or M.S.I.A.'s to dissident students.

It has come to my attention that you and other individuals have been slandering and invading the privacy of several of my clients including John-Roger, the Church of the Movement of Spiritual Awareness...and others involved therewith...As attorney for these individuals and foundations, I have been instructed to request that you immediately cease and desist from said activities.

I direct your attention to California Civil Code Section 43 et seq. and related cases involving the possible penalties for your actions... (letter from attorney Marc Darrow on behalf of John-Roger)

This is to inform you that I am no longer in support of you being a minister in the Movement of Spiritual Inner Awareness and so I am requesting that you hand in your Ministerial ordination and pocket size credentials as soon as possible. Since you have effectively placed yourself under the power of the Kal power and its field of negativity known as the Red Monk I can also no longer support you as an initiate and ask that you request to have this relationship terminated... (letter from John-Roger to a former minister and student of M.S.I.A.)



What emerges from these letters is not a compassionate and forgiving spiritual teacher, but a resentful, obviously insecure individual who possesses the failings of a common man. John-Roger, and not his questioning disciples, appears to be suffering from a bad case of over-exposure to the fearful Red Monk disease. The only cure available for J.R., it seems, is to concede to the fact that he is more a charlatan than a saint.

Postscript (1993)

This article was originally written in 1983 after I was approached by several highly placed members of M.S.I.A. who felt betrayed by John-Roger Hinkins. Since I was somewhat friendly with J.R. (we had met on several occasions at his home about my research on Paul Twitchell, shabd yoga, and Radhasoami), I called him on the telephone to get his response to the three main allegations made against him (plagiarism, sexual manipulation, and charlatanism). J.R. did not take kindly to my questions and did not want me to do any further research on him. Indeed, after that phone conversation in the Fall of 1983 I was subjected to a series of threats, including several made against my life and the lives of my friends/informants.

The situation reached a peak the following year on October 5, 1984, when my home was ransacked and a number of my research files were purloined. Documentary evidence (outlined in a special issue of **UCSM** entitled "The Criminal Activities of John-Roger Hinkins") implicates John-Roger with the Del Mar robbery, as well as engineering a smear campaign replete with death threats against his critics. Subsequently major news organizations began to investigate J.R. A number of provocative articles were published which exposed John-Roger in a negative light, including an extensive two part critique in **The Los Angeles Times**.

It should be noted, however, that when **The J.R. Controversy** first appeared I had to go to press without using the names of my informants, each of whom declined to go public because they feared for their safety.

Thus, even though my critique was the first of its kind ever done on J.R. and the Movement, I was more or less a sitting duck for his retaliatory efforts. J.R. waged a systematic campaign against me by setting up a phony front organization entitled the "Coalition for Civil and Spiritual Rights." In order to mail out his threatening letters, J.R. rented a mail box in West Los Angeles under three pseudonyms: Peter Davidson, Ph.D., Michael Hunt, and Kip Ferguson. J.R. made one devastating mistake, though, in creating his front: he personally paid and signed for the mail box, betraying in one stroke of the pen his claim that he was not aware of C.C.S.R.

After discovering J.R.'s plot (and after receiving some of the stolen materials back which contained John-Roger's handwriting in the margins), I wrote another article which detailed his criminal activities. I also went on a couple of television programs, including the nationally syndicated **Now It Can Be Told**, and mentioned on air how J.R. was involved in a number of illegal dealings. Since all of my allegations were based upon extensive documentation, J.R. has never taken any legal action. The ironic twist in all of this, however, is that J.R. is now more popular than ever. This is primarily due to his co-authoring a number of bestselling books, with such catchy titles as **Life 101** and **Wealth 101**. Despite a flurry of negative publicity around the world (the U.K. press has been especially hard on John-Roger and his Movement), J.R. has shown a remarkable resilience to rebound from adversity.

NOTES

1. See "Transcendental Sociology."
2. Personal interview with John-Roger Hinkins at his home in Mandeville Canyon (1978). Also refer to the May 12, 1973 issue of the **Movement Newspaper** which elaborates on J.R.'s association with Paul Twitchell.
3. Writes an ex-member of M.S.I.A., in a personal letter to the author (dated November 15, 1983): "You may be interested to know that years ago Roger Hinkins studied with a small group in Glendale, CA that still exists called the Fellowship of Universal Guidance. Some of us went there recently to hear one of their classes which consists of information about the 3 selves and the Christ. I believe Roger Hinkins very cleverly devised a saleable package by combining the material from [Paul Twitchell and his movement] with the material from this group. . . ."
4. An example of this is Roger's acceptance of Twitchell's unusual claim that the sound of the "flute" is heard on the soul plane and that the "tinkling of bells" is audible in the casual region. No shabd yoga tradition in India connected to Radhasoami has ever stated such a thing; rather, they make reference to the sound of a "vina" (or bagpipe) in Sach Khand and the "conch" (or drum) in Trikuti, the casual plane.
5. Paul Twitchell's group is also aware of this similarity and at one time threatened lawsuits against J.R. for his actions. Memos against M.S.I.A. have been sent out by Twitchell and his attorneys.
6. Personal interview with John-Roger Hinkins at his home in Mandeville Canyon (1978-1979). The latter interview has since been transcribed by John-Roger and copied.
7. See my book, **The Making of a Spiritual Movement** (Del Mar: Del Mar Press, 1994).
8. Personal interview with John-Roger Hinkins, op. cit.
9. This connection between Radhasoami and American Sound Current teachings is outlined in my paper "The New Panths: Shabdism in North America," which was first presented to the American Academy of Religion at Stanford University in 1982. It has subsequently been incorporated in my book **The Making of a Spiritual Movement** (op. cit.). Also see "Bhrihu Samhita."
10. Refer to Isaac A. Ezekiel's **Sarmad: The Jewish Saint of India** (Beas: Radha Soami Foundation).
11. Personal interview with John-Roger Hinkins (op. cit.) where he revealed the "Holy Five Names" to me off tape. Also this information was confirmed by several ex-members of M.S.I.A.
12. In early 1983 at a dinner date in San Diego, California, I had the opportunity to speak with author Tal Brooke about Sathya Sai Baba's alleged homosexual advances. Brooke informed me that Sathya Sai Baba had made a "pass" at him, overtly trying to handle his genitals. Undoubtedly this is a controversial issue, but one which is coming more into the limelight each day. Below is a list of gurus who are reported to have had sexual affairs with their disciples in some way: 1) John-Roger Hinkins; 2) Sathya Sai Baba; 3)

Thakar Singh; 4) Neem Karoli Baba; 5) Zen abbot Dick Baker; 6) Swami Muktananda; 7) Swami Rama; and 8) Frederick Lenz (Rama).

13. Interviews with ex-members of M.S.I.A. Also refer to the television program, "Now It Can Be Told" (Fall 1991), which records on tape the various allegations made against J.R.

14. Ibid.

15. Refer to Julian P. Johnson's **The Path of the Masters** (Beas: Radha Soami Foundation, 1939)--excerpts of which are included in the last note--and Sawan Singh's **Spiritual Gems** (Beas: Radha Soami Foundation, 1965).

16. Interviews with former students of J.R.

17. For more on the history of shabd yoga and the lineages of Sant Mat and Radhasoami masters please refer to Mark Juergensmeyer's **Radhasoami Reality** (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991) and this author's **The Radhasoami Tradition** (New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1992).

18. See Ken Wilber's **A Sociable God** (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1983) and *Eye to Eye* (New York: Doubleday/Anchor Press, 1983).

19. Ken Wilber, op. cit.

20. Please refer to *The Unknowing Sage: The Life and Work of Baba Faqir Chand* (Walnut: Mount San Antonio College Press, 1993).

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

23. John Welwood, "On Spiritual Authority: Genuine and Counterfeit," **Journal of Humanistic Psychology** (Summer 1983, page 50).



James Lewis on John-Roger's Past [from *Seeking the Light*]

He held down a number of jobs, including a short stint in the coal mines. While in college, he worked as a night orderly in the psychiatric ward of a Salt Lake City hospital. Later he held a part-time job as a PBX telephone operator and dispatcher with the Salt Lake City Police Department. After completing a degree in psychology at the University of Utah in 1958, he moved to southern California and eventually took a job teaching English at Rosemead High School.

The turning point of his life occurred in 1963, during what we might today call a near-death experience. While undergoing surgery for a kidney stone, he fell into a nine-day coma. Upon awakening, he found himself aware of a new spiritual personality--'John'--who had superseded/merged with his old personality. After the operation, Hinkins began to refer to himself as 'John-Roger,' in recognition of his transformed self.

Around this time John-Roger was a seeker exploring a variety of different spiritual teachings, including Eckankar, a Sant Mat-inspired group. Parallels between Eckankar and the Movement of Spiritual Inner Awareness have prompted critics to accuse him of plagiarizing Eckankar. During an interview with J-R, I asked him about his relationship with Paul Twitchell, the founder of Eckankar. His response was:

I've been asked, 'Were you a student of Eckankar?' Yeah, if you can consider I was a student of the Reader's Digest and National Geographic and the Rosecrucians and some other churches all at the same time. I went to some of the churches to see what they did--[I was what they refer to as] a metaphysical tramp. I call those my 'meta-fizzle' days because none of those ever worked out.

HI FUBBI, THIS IS GAKKO

Excerpt from *The San Diego Reader's* Cover story on Eckankar (1995)

Lane decided against pursuing a lawsuit against Hinkins, but he did go public with his story. In *Understanding Cults* Lane published "The Criminal Activities of John-Roger Hinkins," a laborious account of Hinkins' alleged break-in and smear campaign. He also gave full accounts to the San Diego Sheriff's Department and to numerous news agencies. "On the *Marie Vega Show* in Los Angeles, I said, 'John-Roger Hinkins robbed my house.' He threatened to sue the TV station for a million dollars if they ever ran the program again. But they kept running it, and he never sued them." In August 1988, *The Los Angeles Times* published an extensive two-part critique of John-Roger's activities, based on Lane's research. Lane also appeared on Geraldo Rivera's *Now It Can Be Told*. "Geraldo was in New York and I was on satellite hook-up at Universal Studios in San Fernando Valley. 'The Cadillac of Cults. Are your tax dollars being spent by this group?'

So they interviewed me, and I had this rainbow tie on, and Geraldo and I were going at each other. I said, 'Yeah, Geraldo, this guy robbed my house, he did this he did this he did that'--all on national TV. I just went off on him. At this stage Peter McWilliams, the guy who later wrote *Life 102*, was still pro-John-Roger, so he was putting his hands on the camera, that kind of scene, when they tried to interview John-Roger. So you get this juxtaposition, Lane really going off on John-Roger and McWilliams trying to protect J.R.'s reputation."

After such an exhausting chronicle, I feebly inquire, "Are you still doing research on John-Roger?"

Lane takes a deep breath. "No."