



DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

DAVIS, CALIFORNIA 95616
July 18, 1983

Recently it has been brought to my attention that Shree Rajneesh has made an application with the Department of Immigration and Naturalization to be allowed to remain in our country. I am aware in a general way of the controversy that has surrounded the establishment of the community of his followers in Oregon. Still I am moved to write in support of his application.

I have taught philosophy for fourteen years at several major universities in this country. After completing two years of study as a Fulbright Fellow at Oxford, England, I returned to this country and taught for the next five years at the University of California, Los Angeles. I taught for four years at New York University and for another four years at Stanford, and most recently at the University of California, Davis. I have given public lectures in philosophy at Princeton, Columbia and Harvard, among other places.

I tell you this about myself only to make it very clear that I am intimately familiar with the mainstream of contemporary academic philosophy. It is only as a philosopher and only through his published writings that I know Rajneesh. As a philosopher he stands in my judgment among the most gifted representatives of a metaphysical and epistemological perspective that regards consciousness as primary in the order of being and explains matter as secondary and derivative. In the west from ancient times this perspective, sometimes called the Perennial Philosophy, has been associated with Plato and his disciples. It stood then against Democritus and the Greek atomists who held that primary in the order of being are the atomic units of nonconscious matter out of whose myriad and purposeless motions and combinations consciousness emerges as a derivative and secondary mode of being. It is this perspective that provides the philosophical foundations of the world's great religions.

In the intervening centuries neither of these opposed metaphysical perspectives has succeeded in entirely supplanting the other. To each, historians can attach a long list of impressive adherents and representatives. The disputes generated between them have not always remained on a dispassionate intellectual level. But whichever side one takes, if one can take sides at all, it must be acknowledged that in his philosophical writings Rajneesh demonstrates a masterful understanding of the basic metaphysical and epistemological questions at issue in this perennial clash of world views.

As a teacher of philosophy I have profited greatly from his discussions of the problems of choice and the nature of human freedom, of the nature and concept of personal identity, and of the general rela-



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tionship between consciousness and the world of experience. In return I can only offer my support for his request to remain in our country to continue his work.

The intellectual, cultural and religious life of our nation has been immeasurably enriched by the contributions of immigrants to whom we have given the opportunity to pursue in freedom their life's chosen work. Often these people have arrived on our shores amid a swirl of controversy and opposition. Although at times we have succumbed to public hysteria and sinned against our commitment to freedom, by and large our tradition in this area is one of which as an American I feel justly proud.

As I have said, in a general way I am aware of the controversy and opposition surrounding the presence of Rajneesh in our country. I have read the reports in the press and have seen various presentations on television. By and large their tone has been unfavorable. Yet I have seen nothing on the public record that could provide a genuine justification for turning him away from our country. I am hopeful that in your decision on his case you will be guided by what is best in the American tradition and refuse to be swayed by the evanescent winds of public emotion.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,
John M. Taurek
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