

Gods in Exile by J.J. Van Der Leeuw

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by J. J. Van Der Leeuw

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TO MY TEACHER C.W.LEADBEATER
TO WHOM I OWE MORE THAN CAN EVER BE REPAYED

FOREWORD

THE following pages are based on an awakening of Ego-consciousness which came to me some little time ago. It brought with it knowledge which, though it came in but a single moment, has taken many days to realize and many pages to describe.

I do not claim any credit for the teachings. I received them as we receive all things on the Path, and pass them on to others in the hope that they may help them as they have helped me.

J. .J. VAN DER LEEUW

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CHAPTER 1

THE DRAMA OF THE SOUL IN EXILE

THE Path of Occultism is often called the path of Woe.

There is no reason why we should call it a Path of Woe rather than a Path of Joy; the same achievement which means woe to our lower nature, spells joy to our higher Self, and it depends on the standpoint we take whether our experience will be joyful or sorrowful. The immediate goal on the Path of Occultism is to accomplish the union [Page 12] of these two, of what we commonly call our lower and our higher Self; and this union is achieved in the first of the great Initiations. Since the moment of individualization there is no greater event in the history of the human soul than Initiation. It is, as the word implies, a new beginning, the beginning of a new life, of conscious life in our own true Self or Ego.

THE AWAKENING OF THE SOUL

As long as man, in his pilgrimage through matter, identifies himself entirely with his bodies and follows entirely their dictates, in utter oblivion of his own true, divine nature, he does not suffer, but is contented in an animal way. It is only when the soul in her earthly prison begins to recall the divine [Page 13] Home from which she lives exiled, when through love, beauty or truth, consciousness of her own true nature awakens, that suffering begins. We are like Prometheus, chained to the rock of matter, but it is not until we become conscious of what we truly are, that we are at all aware of being prisoners, of being exiles. Thus might one live, who in the days of his youth had been banished from his native land and who, for many years had been among strangers, hardly remembering, in the privations and miseries of his exile, that once he knew different surroundings. But some day, perhaps, he hears a song which he knew in his youth, and in sudden agony remembers all he has lost, realizing in pain that he is an exile, far from all that was dear to him. In that [Page 14] memory the yearning for his native land is born again, and becomes stronger than it ever was. It is only then that suffering and struggle begin; suffering because of the knowledge of what he has lost, struggle in the attempt to regain that which once he possessed.

In a similar way, the awakening of the soul, when it comes in the course of human evolution, brings not only joy, but also suffering in its wake. As long as man lived the animal life of his bodies, he knew contentment of a sort; but with the remembrance of his true nature, with the vision of the world to which he belongs, there is born that age-long struggle in which he tries to free himself from the entanglement with the worlds of matter which he has brought [Page 15] about by identifying himself with his bodies. Where up to this moment he was not conscious of his bodies as a limitation, they now become to him as the burning garment of Nessus, clinging to him the more he tries to free himself from their contact. From now onwards, he is to know himself as two persons in one; he is to be conscious of a higher divine Self within, ever calling him back to his divine Home; and a lower animal nature, which is his consciousness bound to and dominated by the bodies.

MORAL STRUGGLE IN MAN

There is no greater problem, no greater difficulty in human life than this consciousness of being two persons in one. Thus [Page 16] St. Paul groaned under the strife of the law of his members against the law of the spirit and exclaimed in distress: "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Roman. 7, 19-24.) Nowhere perhaps is this struggle in man more profoundly described than in the *Confessions* of St. Augustine. [Page 17] He says: "I was ravished to thee by thine own Beauty; and I was torn from thee by my own weight, throwing myself with groanings upon these lower things, and this weight was the custom of my flesh." (7,17.) And again he says: "The joys of this my life which deserve to be lamented, are at strife with my sorrows which are to be rejoiced in, and which way the victory will incline, I yet know not." (10, 28.) It is the eternal experience of striving man, expressed by Goethe where he exclaims: "Two souls, alas, live in this breast of mine." It is the experience of every aspirant on the Path of Occultism, or even of any human being who tries to live nobly according to the dictates of his higher Self, and finds himself retarded and impeded by the desires of his lower self. [Page 18] There is not a human life free from this fundamental struggle; in countless forms, this many-headed Hydra confronts us, and the life of many a candidate for Occultism is a tragedy because of this inner strife, which not only causes acute suffering and self-contempt, but which exhausts the bodies and drains the vitality. Is there anything in human life harder to bear than to see the vision of the spirit and the next moment to deny that vision in the practice of our lives? We, then, feel the self-contempt of which P.B.Shelley speaks as "bitterer to drink than blood," the despair of failing again and again to live as we would live.

Great as is this human tragedy, the most tragical part of it is that it is largely unnecessary and a result of our ignorance; ignorance [Page 19] with regard to the working of our own consciousness.

IGNORANCE THE CAUSE

The last thing man discovers is himself. It is a strange yet universal truth that man's thirst for knowledge should begin with that which is furthest and end with that which is nearest. Primitive man already has studied the heavens, but only modern man is beginning to explore the mysteries of his own soul.

Most men are a mystery to themselves; many are even unaware of the existence of the mystery. If we were to ask the average man what he, the living human being, really is; what happens when he feels, and thinks, [Page 20] and acts; what the cause is of the struggle between good and evil of which he is conscious in his own breast, he would not only be unable to answer, but the very questions would seem strange and novel to him. Yet, what could be stranger than that any human being should go through life and bear with all its vicissitudes, suffer the miseries common to all men, rejoice in the evanescent pleasures of life, bear its incessant burden and never ask why? If we were to see a man travelling under great discomfort and many hardships, and if, when we asked him whither he was going, he were to answer that the question had never occurred to him, we should certainly consider such a man crazy. Yet

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that is exactly the case of most people in ordinary life. They go on the journey from [Page 21] birth to death, they toil along the weary road of life, and never ask why, or if they do, they ask the question in a superficial way, not really caring whether they find the answer or not.

But the time comes for every soul in her long pilgrimage, when life becomes impossible to her unless she does know why; when, disillusioned by the world around in which lasting satisfaction can never be found, the soul ceases for a moment her frantic chase after illusions and in utter exhaustion, rests silent and alone. It is then that within the soul is born the consciousness of a new world; it is then that, having turned her face away from the glamour of the world around, she discovers the abiding reality of the world within, the world of the Self. Then, and [Page 22] then alone are questions of life answered, but, as Emerson has it, the soul answers never by words, but by the thing itself sought after.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF OUR TRUE NATURE

During the period of struggle, questions as to the purpose of life and man's own being had formulated themselves, but when the answers come they do not answer the questions but rather obliterate them in the experience of the reality itself. Thus, with regard to the mystery of man's own being, the answer is not an intellectual exposition of the constitution of man, but rather an awareness of his own inner Self [Page 23] and as a result, the discovery of the world of that Self. When, in that world, we consider the problem of the duality which we all experience in daily life, of a higher Self on the one hand and a lower self on the other, we find a wonderful truth.

Man is essentially divine; as a son of God he partakes of the nature of his Father and shares His Godhead. Man's own and true home is therefore the world of the Divine; there we live and move and have our being "from eternity to eternity". In his own world the Ego of man has his own activities and lives a life of joy and splendour beyond all earthly conception. There is, however, one lesson or experience which he cannot learn in his own world, but for which he has to put forth his consciousness into the [Page 24] worlds of outer manifestation where there is manifoldness and the antithesis of "I" and "not-I". It is there alone that, through the medium of bodies composed of the matter of these outer worlds, the Ego can gain self-consciousness, that is to say, consciousness of himself as a separate individual. The divine world which is the true home of the Ego is a world in which there is not that distinction between Self and not-Self, but in which every part shares the universal consciousness of the whole. That is why in this world the particular self-realization which is necessary to the Ego cannot be gained. It is only in the three-fold universe of outer manifestation, the physical world, the emotional world and the mental world, that we find the duality of subject and object [Page 25] necessary for the gaining of self-consciousness. Thus it is truly for the gaining of knowledge that the Ego puts himself forth into these outer worlds and assumes bodies of the matter of these worlds. It is this going forth of the soul into the worlds of darkness which we find symbolically described in the story of Genesis. Primitive Paradise is not a state which can last, however great its beauty and harmony. The soul must eat of the tree of good and evil, the tree of knowledge, even though at the cost of Paradise. Having thus become conscious of the desire to know the worlds of matter, the soul is clothed in "coats of skin," the bodies of matter, and henceforth has to live under the conditions of material existence, "labouring and bringing forth in pain". [Page 26] The end of this long exile is the redemption or regeneration, which takes place when the soul regains knowledge of her own divinity, and Christ is born in the heart of man. Then Paradise is regained, but now in full self-consciousness, the Ego in his own divine world possessing the fruits yielded by the soul's descent into the worlds of matter.

THE DRAMA OF THE SOUL

We may thus look upon the repeated incarnations of the divine soul in the worlds of outer manifestation as an especial activity of the Ego, for the specific purpose of acquiring knowledge which can only be gained in this manner. With this putting forth of the divine consciousness into the three [Page 27] bodies, the physical body, the body of emotions and the body of thought, there takes place the tragedy, the true fall into matter, which is the cause of all subsequent suffering in the pilgrimage of the soul. For in the process of putting forth a part of her consciousness into the three bodies, that part identifies itself with the bodies into which it is extended, and in that identification, feels itself to be the bodies which are meant to be its servants. Feeling itself to be these bodies, the incarnate consciousness no longer shares the all-embracing consciousness of the divine Self to which it belongs, but shares the separateness of the bodies and becomes an entity, separate from and opposed to other beings - the personality. It is the ancient story of Narcissus, who, beholding [Page 28] his image mirrored on the surface of the pool, yearns to embrace that image and in so doing is engulfed in the waters which mirrored him. Thus the incarnate consciousness is engulfed in the sea of matter and, in its identification with the separate bodies, is shut off from the Self of which it is part and no longer knows itself as that which it truly is - a son of God.

Then begins the age-long tragedy of the soul in exile, oblivious of her own divine heritage and degraded in her unconscious submission to those bodies which should be her willing instruments. It is the old Gnostic myth of Sophia, the divine soul, living in exile amongst thieves and robbers who abuse and humiliate her until she is redeemed by the Christ and returns to her divine home. [Page 29]

Can there be a greater tragedy and a more profound degradation than that in which the divine soul, member of the highest Nobility, that of the Godhead itself, is subject to the humiliation and indignity of an existence in which, forgetful of her own high rank, she suffers herself to be enslaved by matter? Sometimes when we see humanity at its worst, ugly in its hatred, disharmonious in its estrangement from Nature, coarse and brutal or stupid and superficial, we feel this intense tragedy of the exile of the soul and are acutely conscious of the degradation suffered by the immortal Self within.

A CHANGE OF ATTITUDE NECESSARY

Thus then our consciousness of being dual, of being a higher Self within and a [Page 30] lower self without, is based on ignorance. We are not two, but one. We are the divine Self and nothing else. His world is our world, his life our life. What happens is that when we put forth our divine consciousness into the bodies through which we have to gain certain experiences, we identify ourselves with these bodies and become oblivious of what we truly are. Then the imprisoned consciousness, enslaved by the three bodies, follows their desires and we call it the lower self or personality. The voice from within, our own true voice, we feel as the call of the higher Self; and between these two, Ego and personality, our struggle and suffering, our veritable crucifixion, takes place. Yet most of that suffering is due to our ignorance and ceases when we realize [Page 31] our true nature. This, however, means an entire change of attitude. To begin with, our conception of the duality of our nature is wrong. We always speak of the soul, spirit, higher Self, Ego, or whatsoever else we call our higher nature, as of something or some one up above, while we ourselves, the lower nature, or personality, live down below. We then look upon our efforts to reach the higher as the attempt to gain something essentially foreign to ourselves and

consequently hard to obtain. So, often we speak of the "tremendous effort" required to reach the higher Self; at other times again we speak of inspiration or knowledge, spiritual strength or love, as coming from that higher Self to us down below. In all these cases, we commit the fundamental [Page 32] error of identifying ourselves with that which we are not, and we approach the entire problem in that attitude. The first condition of spiritual achievement is the certainty beyond any doubt that we are the spirit or higher Self; and the second condition, as important and essential as the first, is the confidence in our own powers as the Ego and the courage to use them freely, Instead of looking upon our usual state of consciousness as natural and normal, and looking upwards towards the Ego as a lofty being to be reached by continuous and tremendous effort, we must begin to look upon our ordinary state of consciousness as abnormal and unnatural and upon the life of the spirit as our own true life, from which by continuous effort we keep ourselves estranged. [Page 33]

SEPARATENESS THE ABNORMAL STATE

It hardly ever occurs to us what persistent and formidable effort we all have to make in order to maintain the illusion of our separate personalities. All day long we have to assert ourselves, defend our beloved individuality from attacks by others, see that it is not ignored, slighted, offended or in any way denied that recognition which we feel is owing to it. Then, again, in all the things which we desire for ourselves we seek to strengthen our separate personalities by the acquisition of the desired objects.

It is by the identification of our true spiritual Self with the temporary bodies through which the Self is manifest, that the illusion [Page 34] of our separate self is born. It is as if the consciousness of the true Self or Ego were stretched downward into the bodies and there got entangled and twisted in such a manner that it forms a separate sphere of consciousness centered round the bodies to which it is thus attached. But it is not a normal state, it is distinctly and essentially abnormal and unnatural. As well might we call it normal and natural if a band of India-rubber were to be pulled down and stretched out in one particular spot and the extension thus formed be attached to some fixed object. The attachment is abnormal and the moment it is disentangled from that fixture it will resume its natural shape and the band of rubber will once again be one harmonious whole. In like manner we need [Page 35] only release our consciousness from the bodies to which we have attached it. We need only surrender the illusion of separateness which we so tenderly foster all day long, and the extension of consciousness, which forms the separate personality, will naturally and automatically flow back into the greater Self which we really are. We speak a great deal about the effort and strain needed to attain to spiritual consciousness, but how much attention do we ever give the appalling strain and effort needed to maintain the illusion of separateness? It is true, we are not conscious of maintaining it, it has become a second nature to us to assert ourselves at the cost of our surroundings, to get what we want and to keep what we have, and in consequence, the gigantic effort [Page 36] needed for this self-assertion and magnification of the personality is unnoticed by us. It is there nevertheless.

Let us, then, by a definite effort of the will shake off that mighty superstition which holds us enslaved to the worlds of matter and prevents us from seeing what we truly are; and let us recognize, assert and maintain our own divinity. There is never pride or separateness in that assertion, for the keynote of that world in which we thus enter, our own true world, is unity, and such a thing as self-conceit or pride in personal greatness cannot exist in that atmosphere. Pride is a plant which can only flower in the heavier regions of the worlds of matter; the moment we enter our true Home such things must necessarily cease to be. [Page 37] It is only by thus liberating our consciousness from the thralldom of the bodies, by

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realizing the powers which we, everyone of us, have as a divine Self or Ego, and finally, by refusing to become entangled again in the web of material existence, that we can attain that which we set out to reach; freedom from the exhausting and embittering struggle between higher and lower self which poisons the life of so many an earnest aspirant; withdrawal of lower into higher Self - Initiation.

DOING, NOT AGREEING

There is no use in reading a thing and recognizing that it is true, appreciating, as it were, its correctness from a distance. [Page 38] If we would benefit by it, it must become more than a teaching, it must become practice. And so in the following pages we shall try to make the experiment, not merely of recognizing that we in our true consciousness are the Ego, but of actually disentangling that consciousness from the limitations, in which it is imprisoned, and bringing it, thus released, into the world of divine joy and freedom where it belongs.

It has almost become a platitude to say that what we want in our times is action and not words, but yet it is profoundly true, and it should be carried out in a type of lectures and books, in which the author or speaker does not merely say things which may or may not be appreciated by his public, but in which he and his readers or [Page 39] hearers together go, as it were, on an expedition into the realms of the unknown, where one may lead and others may follow, but where all have to go for themselves. Thus our lectures should be action-lectures, our books action-books and those who read or listen should undergo in their own consciousness that which is spoken about. Let us then do so in our attempt to know ourselves as that which we truly are, not reading these pages in an objective way as if contemplating a spectacle outside ourselves, but trying to identify ourselves with what is said, and doing in our own consciousness that which we read about in these pages. [Page 40]

CHAPTER 2

THE WAY TO THE EGO

BEGIN then by thinking about yourselves and watch what comes into your mind when you do so think. You will find that you naturally think of yourself as you appear physically, as you look in the mirror with the face which is familiar to you and bearing the name which is at present yours. This is the first illusion you have to conquer, for as long as we think of ourselves as the physical body we continue to identify ourselves [Page 41] with that body and that is exactly what we should not do. By identifying ourselves with the physical body, or its subtler counterpart the etheric body, we make ourselves subservient to their desires and their conditions of existence; consequently our body responds to every change of circumstances to which it is subjected and it follows its own way instead of ours. The result is weakness and ill-health, and a certain heaviness or dullness in the body which makes it unable to respond to the Self within.

THE CHANGE IN THE PHYSICAL BODY

All that changes when we overcome the illusion of being the body and see it as just what it is, as our servant or instrument in [Page 42] the physical world. We must, as it were, change the polarity of the whole relation; instead of the physical world dominating us through the physical body with which we have identified ourselves, we must control the physical world through the physical body which we have made subservient to ourselves. The centre of gravity must be shifted from the physical body to the consciousness which is ours, we must as it were feel that we withdraw the centre of our consciousness and feel ourselves standing behind and working through the physical body, not one with it. The result produced by this change of attitude towards the physical body is profound; as small particles of iron filings group themselves round one common centre when a magnet is brought [Page 43] near, and become all arrayed along the lines of force in the magnetic field thus caused, even so the particles of the etheric and physical bodies, instead of being chaotic and aimless and subject to any chance influence from without, become subservient to the one controlling influence of the will within. We must feel them like that, feel the change brought about by our assertion that we are not the body but that the body is ours. We must feel that henceforth it is vitality from within which nourishes and energizes the etheric and physical bodies, more so than vitality from without. The entire change is one which must be experienced and felt rather than thought about and discussed. We must feel our physical body becoming vibrant and responsive to the [Page 44] consciousness within, subject to its laws and conditions rather than to those of the physical world around.

In all we do during our daily life that attitude must be maintained. We must feel all the time that we consciously work through the physical body and that it does not work of its own accord. Thus we must give it regularity of habits, of eating and sleeping and of exercise, so that it may be a perfect instrument. Unless the muscles of our physical body are trained daily by physical exercise we cannot expect our body to be resilient and responsive, and far more depends on physical health than is recognized in practice. In a similar way we must regulate our eating so that it becomes possible for the physical body to be alert and [Page 45] responsive. Instead of eating any food in any way, we must eat only those forms of food which will make the body a cleaner, stronger and finer instrument for us to use, and while we eat we must be conscious of what we are doing, building the nourishment into the body from within. This again is something we must do and experience rather than approach intellectually. We must have the feeling that

we eat consciously and that while we take a mouthful of food, we spiritually build it into the texture of the body. Those amongst Christians who belong to a church which recognizes the value of the Sacraments know the meaning of Communion, know also the particular way in which the consecrated elements are consumed. In just the same way we should [Page 46] take all food, for all matter is consecrated by the presence of Christ, and His Life is in all things, even though in the consecrated Host and Wine that Presence is manifest in fullness.

In those and in many other ways we can assist the change in the etheric and physical bodies, which the Hermetic philosophers knew so well as the regeneration of the body, and make them perfect instruments for the Self within. It is a very real change and, when accomplished, for ever breaks the dominion of the physical body over our consciousness, making it a well-attuned instrument for us to use.

THE CHANGE IN THE ASTRAL BODY

Now withdraw the centre of consciousness from the physical body, a process which [Page 47] takes place naturally when we change our attitude with regard to the body. Of course we do not withdraw the consciousness entirely, for then we should fall asleep or go into a trance, but we no longer keep our consciousness in the body, we keep it at a higher level and work through the body, and that is a very different matter.

Having done so we must bring about the same change with regard to our emotional or astral body as we did with regard to our physical body. Again we find the same difficulty. As a rule we allow our emotional bodies to belong to the emotional world, we allow that world to determine them and allow desires and emotions to be formed in the emotion-body by influences from without. Of course we do not always know it; [Page 48] we have not yet learned the distinction between "I" and "not-I" with regard to what we call the "inner" worlds, the world of the emotions and the world of thought, and in consequence we feel emotions and thoughts "coming up within us", whereas in reality they come over us from without or at least are incited from without. The result, when looked at clairvoyantly, is that the astral body shows different patches of colour, distributed irregularly over it and changing readily under external influences. All that must be changed. We must see our emotion-body and realize it as our vehicle in the astral world. We must take it in the firm grip of the Ego and effect the same change in it which we made in the physical body; we must vitalize the emotional [Page 49] body from within and send through it the emotions which we determine to have.

Try to feel that change in yourself. Try to feel your astral body swept clean of all those petty desires and emotions which are so troublesome, and determine what emotions you, the divine Self, are going to allow in that emotion-body of yours. Feel these emotions and let them radiate out consciously. First of all feel love, not love which desires to possess, but love which goes out freely to all beings and all things. Then feel devotion - devotion to the Master, devotion to the great work, devotion to the highest you know - and flood your astral body with that devotion. Next feel sympathy for all who suffer; feel that your heart goes out in compassion to everyone who suffers in the [Page 50] wide world. Finally feel spiritual aspiration; feel yourself aspiring with intensity to higher things, and feel that true spirituality radiating out through your emotion-body. When in this way you, the Self, determine what feelings to have and consciously send out these higher emotions through your astral body, it becomes a very different thing indeed. Instead of showing drifting, cloudy emotions which change constantly, it becomes a radiant object, steadily sending

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forth the emotions which you determine to have and throbbing rhythmically under the impulse from within. Seen clairvoyantly also it becomes a very different object; instead of showing cloudy patches of colour it shows a few clearly defined emotions, concentrically arranged, [Page 51] radiating out steadily from the centre of the astral body. Thus again the same change is brought about in it, of which we spoke in connection with the physical body.

Here again we can compare the change to that in a mass of iron filings brought under the influence of a magnetic field. There is now in the astral body a central governing, dominating Will and consequently it is now vitalized and determined by that Will from within. It has now become our servant, and no excitements, emotions or temptations from without can awaken within it emotions or desires which we do not wish. The astral body is no longer just part and parcel of the astral world around it, but has been singled out [Page 52] from the remaining astral world and becomes co-ordinated with the Self within. The polarity has, as it were, been changed; it is now vitalized from within and radiates out steadily the higher emotions for the helping of the world around.

In bringing about this change in the astral body we have taken one more step towards overcoming that duality of higher and lower self which caused us so much trouble in the past and was due to our ignorance in allowing part of our consciousness to be dominated over by the bodies. In making the astral body subservient to the Self within, we again withdraw the centre of consciousness from it, disentangle the consciousness, as it were, from the body in which it had become entangled, and lead [Page 53] it one step nearer to the world where it belongs, holding it like that, vitalized from within, our servant.

THE CHANGE IN THE MENTAL BODY

Next we must consider the thought-body and change it round too. In some ways the change to be brought about in that mental body is the most essential of all, for in that thought-body our real danger lies, even though we may be ignorant of such danger.

We never act, we never speak unless we have first thought, first made an image of what we are going to do, first "imagined" it. We are not aware of this; the workings of the mind are so rapid and our consciousness is such unknown territory to us that we [Page 54] do not know the things that happen in it. But when we so much as lift our hand we first think the movement, we make an image of it and that image, being creative, is realized in action. Thought in us is the manifestation of the Holy Ghost, God the Creator, and it is that supreme creative Energy which is manifest in our power of thought, making it a double-edged sword, all the more dangerous to us when we do not know its power. When we think we make an image in the mental body, we create a thing and fill it with divine creative Energy, which must discharge itself in action. Sometimes a number of repeated thoughts are necessary before the total charge of creative energy is sufficient to bring about action, and, when often [Page 55] repeated, thoughts set up a habit or custom and many a time we become powerless to resist the thing we ourselves have created.

All that would not be harmful if we determined our thought-images from with-in, if we, the divine Self, made the image in full consciousness. The danger, the terrible danger to our entire life, lies in the fact that we allow the creation of thought-images to be incited from without, that we allow stimuli from the

outside world to call up images in the mental body, to throw the creative mental matter into thought-forms, charged with energy, which will necessarily seek to discharge and thus realize themselves. In this ungoverned activity of the mental body lies the source of practically all our inner struggle and spiritual difficulties. [Page 56] It is ignorance which allows the undisciplined function of a body which should be ours to use and which should not use us. When we do so allow our mental bodies to be roused from without to the making of images we are lost and our struggle begins.

THE DANGER OF AN UNDISCIPLINED IMAGINATION

Consider the example of a man craving for drink. He knows the misery caused by his weakness, he knows how it wastes his wages and starves his family, and, in his sane moments, he determines to give it up. Now he passes a place in the street where he can get drink, sees people go in and out and perhaps even smells the drink. Up to [Page 57] that moment he is safe from temptation, safe from struggle; but what happens now? In that short fraction of a second he imagines himself drinking; he makes a thought-image and for a moment lives and acts in that thought-image of himself enjoying his drink. He feels how it satisfies his craving, but in reality it has only increased it and made the ensuing action almost unavoidable. Then, having created the image, he belatedly calls upon his will and says: "I do not want to do this thing." But then it is too late, then the struggle is practically futile. Once the thought-image has been created, realization in action generally follows. Sometimes of course the image is not quite strong enough and he succeeds in repressing it. But even [Page 58] then there is all the struggle and exhaustion of the bodies and the suffering which results. The better way is to prevent the creative thought-image from being formed, to intervene when intervention is still effective.

More suffering is caused by this undisciplined imagination than we think. All the countless occasions to be found in the lives of so many where they fail to control their lower passions, especially sex-desire, are the result of an undisciplined imagination, not of a weak will. A strong desire may be felt, but it is creative thought which brings about action. Most people ignore their imaginings, day-dreams or thoughts and think they are harmless because not tangible or visible to the ordinary eye. [Page 59] In reality they are the one and only danger. For the man with strong sex-desire there is no danger in seeing or thinking of the object of his desire unless in so thinking he begins to imagine the satisfaction of his craving. It is when he has made the image of himself as giving way to his desires, and when he has allowed his desires to strengthen the image which he has made, that his danger begins. A man might be surrounded by objects of desire and yet not experience any difficulty or struggle if he could only prevent his imagination, his creative thought-power, reacting on the objects he sees. We never realize sufficiently that there is no power whatsoever in objects of desire unless we allow ourselves to react upon them, unless we [Page 60] indulge in imaginations which are creative. But once having done that, struggle is certain to ensue. We then call upon what we think to be our will, and try to escape from the results of our own imagination by a frantic resistance. Few people have learnt as yet that anxious or frantic resistance inspired by fear is something very different from the will.

THE USE OF THE WILL

When M. Couÿ, in his epoch-making exposition of the power of the imagination or the creative power of thought, said I that when the will and the imagination are at war the imagination always wins, he was quite right as long as by will we understand only that frantic and anxious [Page 61] resistance which to

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most people is the substitute for will. Thus when we learn to ride a bicycle and, seeing a solitary tree in our way make straight for the one obstacle which is sure to bring us to grief, our mistake lies in an uncontrolled imagination; we allow ourselves to imagine that we are going to hit the tree, create a thought-image of ourselves doing that and then strengthen it by emotion, in this case fear. Then we begin to resist it, but we should not call this anxious and frantic resistance "will". That resistance certainly strengthens the imagination and even assists in bringing about the event from which we try to escape. But if we used the real will we would not allow the imagination to react on the tree at all, in fact, having [Page 62] noticed the tree and calmly registered its existence, we would not allow it to influence our consciousness, but on the contrary keep our imagination busy with the clear and open road, which we desire to take. The tree would then be practically none existent for us and all we would see would be the open road.

There is an old story of three archers who had a contest as to who could hit a bird in a far-off tree. The first one saw the tree but missed the bird; the second one saw the bird, but only touched it; the third aiming at the bird (it must have been a very placid bird) saw neither the tree nor the bird but only the eye at which he aimed, and he succeeded. That is the power of the real will, the power to see only the one object we [Page 63] desire to achieve and nothing else. If the drunkard used his real will he would only see the one purpose of going along the road to his real destination, and passing a public house would not cause him any struggle or temptation. It is by the power of the real will that we can keep the imagination concentrated on the one purpose we have determined to achieve; the especial function of the will is not to do things or to struggle against things, but to hold one purpose in the consciousness and exclude all else.

THE MENTAL BODY, THE VITAL SPOT

Thus it is in the mental body that the wedge must enter; we must refuse to allow any images to be formed in the mental body without our sanction, unless we, the [Page 64] Self within, determine it. Sweep the mental body clean of all thought-forms, all images, all trains of thought which are irrelevant. Then do the same to it as we did to the other bodies, change the polarity, make all its particles responsive and obedient to the consciousness within and no longer subservient to the world around. Here again the change is readily evident to clairvoyant sight and the whole mental body appears luminous with the light of the Self within, a radiating object, attuned to and in line with our own true consciousness.

But even that is not enough; thus we can prevent the mental body from harming us and becoming an obstacle in our way, but no more. We must make the creative power of thought a definite power for good, not [Page 65] merely preventing it from harming us but using it to help us. This means that we must create and strengthen with our emotion those thought-images which we desire to see realized in our daily life. The goal of our evolution is perfection, not for the selfish purpose that we may be perfect, but rather that through us the burden of the world may be lifted a little. Instead of imagining ourselves, as we often unconsciously and unwittingly do, as being the things and doing the things which in reality we neither want to be nor to do, we must imagine ourselves as the perfect man we desire to be and shall be one day. Think with all the creative thought-power you have of yourself as divine in love, divine in will, divine in thought and word and action, [Page 66] and fill your whole mental body with that image, strengthening it with emotions of joy and love, of consecration and aspiration. This image too will realize itself, the same law holds good for it as for the undesirable imaginations which caused us so much trouble. Now we have wielded that power of the imagination consciously we are no longer its slaves, no longer used by it, but

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we ourselves use it; the same power which was our enemy has now become our friend.

There is no limit to the different ways in which the creative power of the imagination can be used constructively instead of destructively. Not only in our behaviour and daily actions, but in the work we do and in the way in which we recreate ourselves we can use this unlimited power when we **[Page 67]** make our mental body our servant and willing instrument.

Now withdraw the centre of consciousness from the mental body also and hold it responsive to the Self within, as you are holding the physical and astral bodies. We now hold the three bodies as our servants in the three worlds of illusion; they are the three horses which draw our chariot in the lower worlds, but the Self is the divine charioteer, no longer allowing the horses to run their own way, but making them run his way. He has withdrawn the consciousness from its entanglements with the three bodies. He has brought it back to the world where it truly belongs, and from there he can henceforth use these bodies as his willing servants. **[Page 68]**

CHAPTER 3

THE WORLD OF THE EGO

WHEN the consciousness is liberated from the three bodies in which it was imprisoned, it will naturally be reunited to the Self which it truly is.

Try to bring back the consciousness into the ego, more than that, try to realize - to know beyond a shadow of a doubt - that you are that Ego, a divine soul which was in exile. Bring it back to that world where it belongs, enter the world which is truly your world and in that self-same moment you will know yourself as the divine Self [Page 69] within, one with the divine in all things. Henceforth there cannot be any doubt as to what we are, the higher or the lower self, no longer can there be the exhausting struggle between the two opposite poles of our nature; they are no longer two; the imprisoned and exiled consciousness has been brought back into the parent-consciousness from which it strayed, and once again man is one, the divine Self within, consciously using the three bodies as his instruments, but no longer bound to them.

Do not bring the consciousness back into the Ego merely in thought, do not agree merely intellectually that you are the Ego, but do it in reality, be the Ego and live in your own world. If you have succeeded in disentangling the consciousness from the [Page 70] bodies, there can be no difficulty in bringing it back into the Ego, for it is the consciousness of the Ego and the world of the Ego is our own true home.

When we thus re-enter the world from which we have been exiled for so long, our first experience is an overwhelming sense of freedom and joy. Like a man who has been imprisoned for many years in a place where the rays of the sun do not penetrate and who, released from his prison, is almost blinded by the light without; so are we, entering our own world after our long exile in the prison-house of matter, overwhelmed by the light surrounding us and the freedom from the limitations which held us. Here in this world all is truly light and joy; the Ego in his own world lives a life [Page 71] of such incomparable bliss and beauty that, even though we were to see it but once, we can never again fall a victim to the world of illusion. We now know who we are. We have seen ourselves in our own divine beauty in the world which is our home, and no power on earth can ever again entice us into believing that we are the bodies. The spell is broken which held us, and now for the first time we know peace and absence of struggle.

It is wonderful how simple everything suddenly becomes when we reach that world of the Ego; how natural it now is to do the right thing. Our former life seems full of complications, almost incomprehensible in its problems; once we have dared to recognize ourselves for what we truly [Page 72] are all struggle and effort vanish and life becomes simple and natural, flowing harmoniously along.

THE LIFE OF THE EGO

One of the things which surprises us most when we realize ourselves as Egos is that in our own world we have a life of our own beyond and above what we call life down here. Even those who recognize that our earthly self is but a temporary manifestation of the divine Self within, often make the mistake of looking upon that temporary manifestation as of supreme importance and of absorbing interest for the

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divine Self. The reality is very different, the Self which we truly are has a life of his own, in which [Page 73] the subsidiary activity which we call life on earth has not by any means the importance we would fain attach to it. As we are conscious of ourselves as Egos we are simultaneously aware of the activities in which we as Egos are engaged. It is naturally very hard, if not impossible, to give any idea of these activities. We in our waking consciousness only know things of this physical world, and unless we can describe a thing in the terms and realities of this world down below, it has no meaning for us.

In his own world the Ego is ever active in the great work of creation; in company with the angelic hosts and other great beings he assists in the work of world-creation, by which this universe is sustained. God's work is creation; and the Ego, being divine, [Page 74] is engaged in that same divine creative activity. Only art can speak of this true work of the divine man, and it is to the poets and musicians that we must go if we would understand something of our work as Egos. Thus in *Prometheus Unbound* something of the work of our true Self is felt, where the "Chorus of Spirits and Hours" sings:

"Then weave the web of the mystic measure;
From the depths of the sky and the ends of the earth,
Come, swift Spirits of might and of pleasure,
Fill the dance and the music of mirth,
As the waves of a thousand streams rush by [Page 75]
To an ocean of splendor and harmony!"

and somewhat further where the "Chorus of Spirits " sings:

"And our singing shall build
In the void's loose field
A world for the Spirit of Wisdom to wield."

Singing, music, sound, are words which best convey an idea of the work of the Ego in his own world, and yet of course in that world there is nothing like what we know down here as sound. Yet the whole work impresses one like a great symphony, the notes and chords of which are living beings, singing the Song which is their own nature and creating by its power. Again we might picture it as the weaving of a web of light in which the beings are like radiant points connected by lines of light. But nothing [Page 76] can give an image of the pure Joy, the utter Bliss which permeates the world of the Ego and the sensation of being bathed in light and "beauty unbeheld". There is a phrase in the *Old Testament* which says that when the world was created " the, Sons of God shouted for joy," and in this expression there is something which reminds us of the Ego, truly a son of God, in his own world, full of joy.

The whole work is like a mighty ritual, a ceremonial Hymn of creation by which the worlds are maintained, and what we know as Ritual here on earth is as a shadow of that true and greater ritual which we all know so well in our own true world. That is why in the rituals of the great World-Religions and of Freemasonry, there is that [Page 77] which reminds us of the land to which we belong; in them we

hear faint echoes and fragmentary melodies of the song which we are always singing in the world of the Ego.

OUR LIFE ON EARTH

When in this state of Ego-consciousness we think of our life on earth, the life which, in our ordinary waking consciousness down here, seems so all-important to us, it appears to us unreal, almost like a dream and certainly not of the importance which we generally attach to it. As Egos we look upon it in the light of a task which must be done, a lesson which has to be learned and which perhaps can be best expressed as "self-realization". It is only in these [Page 78] denser worlds that there is sufficient resistance and separateness to develop the sense of individuality and of "I" consciousness, which then has to be brought back into the greater unity.

Seeing thus our life from the world of the Ego we gain a greater equanimity in the existence we have to live on earth, for it is profoundly true that nothing in it matters much and most things do not matter at all. When once we know ourselves in our full glory as Egos, life down here seems but a subsidiary activity, to which we give a little of our consciousness, a little of our attention, in the same way as a statesman with mighty work to do might give a little of his attention to some small personal activity in which he is interested. [Page 79]

THE BEAUTY OF THE EGO

In the world of the Ego there is not form and colour such as we know here, but there is that which we can translate into terms of colour and shape. Thus we can speak of the appearance of the Ego, even though he does not appear to us as objects in the world of phenomena do. So it must not be misunderstood when we say that the Ego appears to us in a glorified human form, and that in this form we then see ourselves as we truly are. The human form in which we there see ourselves is at the same time representative of our real type or genius, of our mission in the great Work. Thus one Ego I know appeared as a radiant youth, like a Greek Apollo carved out of glistening [Page 80] marble and yet immaterial, with inspiration as his keynote. Another Ego was in appearance somewhat like the sculpture of Demeter in the British Museum, a dignified, serene and peaceful figure, brooding, as it were, over the world which it helped to foster and protect. Thus every Ego has his own radiantly beautiful appearance expressing his mission or genius.

When we have brought back our consciousness into the world of the Ego and know ourselves as such, we must try to see what we are like in that world and henceforth think of ourselves only in that way. Having seen what we really look like we must never again allow ourselves to think of ourselves as the image we see when we look into a mirror. Once we have realized that we [Page 81] are the divine Self within, we must never, not even for a moment, suffer ourselves to slip back into the old illusion that we are the physical body and have a divine Self somewhere up above. Henceforth the position is reversed and, when speaking of ourselves, we speak of the radiant Being we truly are, not of the bodies through which a part of our consciousness is temporarily manifest.

MAINTAINING THE EGO-CONSCIOUSNESS

Since we have behind us ages of evolution in which we were content to suffer exile in the darkness of the outer world, there is, even when we realize ourselves for a short **[Page 82]** while as the Ego, always the tendency to slip back into the old accustomed ways of identification with the bodies.

That is often our mistake. When we have experienced a moment of great spiritual upliftment during meditation or during some ceremony, we sit down and say to ourselves: "Well, that was very fine; I am sorry it is over." Do not make this mistake; when you experience something great, when you know yourself as the divine Self, say: "This is very fine, and it is going to remain with me." That is the great difference. Our weakness is so often that we experience these higher things, and then are resigned to see them pass away again. Never be resigned in that way, be rebellious and say to yourself: "I am not going to let this go; **[Page 83]** I will keep this divine realization; I, the divine Self, *will* to keep it." It is possible. It has been done; it must be done. We must all some day realize our divine powers, and learn to keep as an abiding reality that consciousness which usually we have but for a few moments; so why not do it now?

Knowing yourself then as the Ego, sharing that life of divine joy, of bliss unutterable, decide to remain there. Do not go back again into the darkness of exile. Why go back to that cramped existence in a dark dungeon which is the life of the personality, when you can live in the sunlight of divine Life? Why not remain there, work from there, live there? **[Page 84]**

CHAPTER 4

THE POWERS OF THE EGO

HAVING established ourselves in the realization that we are the Ego we must realize powers which, as Egos, we can wield.

There is first of all the love of the Ego, the power of unity, the aspect of the Ego which, in Theosophical terminology, we call Buddhi.

Part of the tragedy which takes place when the consciousness of the Ego is put forth into the three bodies, and is seized upon by their elemental consciousness, is that it begins to feel itself as a separate [Page 85] being, moving about, separate from all the world around it. The moment we return to the Ego, this illusion of separateness vanishes and we realize what unity is. The wonder then takes place that we still know ourselves as individual beings, but at the same time we are in the life of every one of our fellow beings, of every creature. We are the life of growing trees, the life in the waters of the sea, we *are* the life in the clouds and in the sunshine, the life in all things. Such is the love-power of the Ego - our realization of unity at that level - *and it is the only motive power on the Path of perfection*. It is not will or thought which moves us along on the Path towards divine Union, It is only love. Love is realization of unity, and the more we realize unity, the more we [Page 86] feel we can love all our fellow men, love the very trees and rocks, the more we are drawn into union with the divine Life - magnetically drawn towards union. Try to feel that power of the Ego to be at one with all things; try to feel your consciousness dissolve into the greater Consciousness until it *becomes* that greater Consciousness.

First try to feel your own consciousness as part of that of the Master, losing yourself entirely in Him. Do not contemplate that unity with the Master, but feel it, let it be an actual thing with you so that you feel yourself to be merely a part of Him. Doing that you can easily feel how it is that love is the only motive power on the path; it is the intensity of our love and adoration for the Master, the measure in which we can [Page 87] feel one with Him, which makes it possible for Him to take us as His pupils.

In the same way, but in a far greater measure, does our consciousness expand when we try to feel our unity with the great Brotherhood itself, and try to feel something of the amazing unity of that Consciousness, having only one Will, the Will of the King Himself and yet consisting, as it does, of many great Beings. Here again, when we can realize the unity of that Consciousness, this realization will draw us into it and make us one with it; it will lead us to the first of the great Initiations. Love is like a magnet; it draws us into and makes us one with what we love, and when we succeed in realizing the love of the Ego and feel how it goes out towards everything, [Page 88] towards every creature in this wide world, it cannot fail to bring us to the goal of evolution - union with the Divine.

When we feel this we can understand what is meant by the occult maxim "grow as the flower grows". When the flower feels the warmth of the sunlight, it expands and in its yearning for the sunlight grows towards it. It is the love of the flower for the sunlight which makes it grow, and in the same way it is the love of the soul for the divine Sunlight which causes the soul to grow. There is no effort in this growing, it is not a pushing or straining forwards, it is a natural at-one-ment with what we love. That is why our love

must be all-embracing, nothing excluding why it must flow out freely to all things, for in all things is the [Page 89] divine Life which we seek. If we exclude it in one thing or being, which we separate from ourselves, we exclude the divine Life itself and make our conscious union with it harder. Think of the Christ as the Heart of this Unity of all things, feel His Love as the love which binds all things, and in loving Him you will come to love all things. We shall then begin to see how profoundly true is His own saying that whatsoever we do unto the least of our brethren, we do unto Him.

Once again, in realizing this particular power of the Ego, there must be no mere contemplation or intellectual conception of love; we must feel that love of the Ego, become it, and then, on its wings we can ascend to higher things. It is a power which we must learn to use consciously. [Page 90]

THE WILL OF THE EGO

The next power of the Ego which we must learn to realize as our own is the power of the will, what we call in Theosophy, the Atma. We must not confuse this truly divine power with the feeble thing which we call "will" in daily life. There is hardly any word which is so misunderstood and abused. We use it when we really ought to say "wish" or "desire"; we speak of a person as "having a weak will" when there is no such thing as a weak will, we speak of the "clash of wills" when we merely mean the clash of selfish desires. As already mentioned above, Couÿ and Baudouin use the word where they really mean anxious and frantic resistance, and [Page 91] so, even in one of the most important works of modern psychology the issue is confused.

First of all we must abandon the widespread idea that the will *does* things; that we carry through something by an effort of the will. To do and to carry out is not the function of the will, but of a quite different aspect of the Ego, the creative activity. The will is the Ruler, the King who says "this shall be done", but who does not go to do things Himself. Speaking psychologically the will is the power to hold the consciousness focussed on one thing and exclude everything else. We thus see what an exceedingly serene, quiet, unmoving power the will is; it is just the power to hold one thing and exclude all else. But [Page 92] that is a tremendous power, the more so because it is so little understood.

NOT A WEAK WILL, BUT AN UNCONTROLLED IMAGINATION

We can understand this best by analysing some instances where, as we put it in ordinary language, our will is not strong enough. Imagine that we determine to get up at six o'clock in the morning. When the hour comes and we wake up we naturally feel sleepy and tired. If now we used the will in the right way there would be no difficulty in getting up, we would just hold the one thought of getting up and exclude everything else and there would be no struggle. But what we do in reality is [Page 93] to allow our creative imagination to play about with the problem of getting up, and we begin to imagine on the one hand how unpleasant and cold it will be to get out of our warm bed, how uncomfortable to dress in the dark, and on the other hand we imagine how very pleasant it would be to lie in bed a little longer or to go to sleep again. Thus we have created images which naturally tend to realize themselves and make us stay in bed. When then we begin to resist, that resistance is but a feeble thing, and even if it should win we have made for ourselves a quite unnecessary struggle which uses up vitality and could easily have been avoided had we but understood the true function of the will. In not getting up we have shown signs not

[Page 94] of a weak will, but of an uncontrolled imagination. The right use of the will would have been to keep the creative thought or imagination centred and focussed on one idea only: that of getting up, and in excluding every other thought. In that way we would not have allowed the imagination to toy with such thoughts as the unpleasantness of getting up and the comfort of remaining in bed, and we would have experienced no difficulty whatever in getting up at once. Truly Hamlet uttered a deep psychological truth when he said that "the native hue of resolution is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought". It is the power of the will within to keep the consciousness focussed on the one thing in hand and exclude every idea, feeling, person [Page 95] or influence that would interfere with that or tempt us aside.

To give one more example: practically everyone has experienced the unpleasant sensation which comes over us when we are about to jump or dive into the water from a greater height. We have determined to do it, but when we actually find ourselves about to jump we shrink back and possibly it takes us quite a long time before we can, as we call it, screw up enough courage to do the thing. What really has happened is that we have allowed the imagination to create for us a terrifying image of the plunge we are about to make, and of the advisability of not doing it. Having made that creative image we naturally find ourselves impeded by it and the jump into the water [Page 96] begins to hold terror for us, whereas before it seemed attractive. The way out is again to keep the will focussed on the one thing only: the jump to be made, and to exclude every thought, feeling or influence that might interfere with this. Then we find that there is no difficulty, in just doing the thing.

THE USE OF THE WILL IN OCCULTISM

When we apply all this to the use of the will in reaching the perfection which is our goal, we can readily see how it is that we fail so often. We determine to reach the goal, to achieve that which is our spiritual destiny. In doing so we lay down a line of [Page 97] action and certain principles of conduct which we see as essential. Now if we can only keep the will focussed on that one purpose and exclude anything that would interfere with it, we shall experience no difficulties, no struggle. What we do in reality is something on the following lines. When occasion offers to carry out the line of action upon which we have decided, we begin to imagine the advantages and disadvantages, the pleasantness or unpleasantness of the particular action and having created images, or thought-forms as we call them, we strengthen them by feeling or desire, and they become obstacles in our way when we try to carry out our original intention. Then the struggle begins with all its attendant evils, suffering to ourselves, [Page 98] exhaustion to the bodies and the danger of failing in the task we have set ourselves. All that is not only wrong but is superfluous. When we use the will as it should be used, to hold one purpose and nothing else, there can be no difficulty. But the moment we allow an interfering thought or influence to enter our consciousness and claim its attention we are lost. We must certainly consider circumstances, always using common sense and deliberate judgment, but we must not allow extraneous influences to divert us from our line of action.

Try then to realize this will within you, see it filling your consciousness as a blinding white light, feel that it is irresistible and has power to hold any purpose until achieved. [Page 99] Having once felt and realized this true power of the will we can never again speak of the will being weak! It is a truly divine Power, and unless we understand its functions and meaning in our life we cannot achieve our destiny.

Use this power of the will then to hold in your consciousness one purpose and one purpose only:

perfection for the sake of the world. That must be your one absorbing and dominating passion and nothing must be allowed to interfere with it. Do not think it is a selfish desire; as long as you think that, you have not yet entered the world of the Ego and do not yet realize what unity means. It is only when we understand, when we know that all creation is one, utterly and *indestructibly one*, [Page 100] that we realize the impossibility of such a thing as individual salvation. Salvation or perfection means union with the divine Life which is in all things, and therefore it can never be individual, can never be for a few elect. The achievement of any one is the achievement of all; when one human being attains to Adeptship, in him the whole of humanity, the whole of creation is triumphant, and another cord has been formed to bind humanity back to God, another power has been born to lift the burden of the world's suffering. When, in Dante's *Divina Comedia* a soul gains release from Purgatory and enters Paradise the whole of Mount Purgatory trembles for joy. And this is literally true. The achievement of any human being is a joy to all creation [Page 101] and is never an individual achievement only. The desire for perfection is the desire to give up the illusion of the separate self for the reality of universal life and thus selfishness and perfection are mutually exclusive.

Try then to use this truly divine power, which everyone of us has, for the greatest purpose of all and keep the consciousness focussed on the idea of perfection. Let that dominate all we do. In the beginning this may be a strain and we may find it difficult to do our ordinary work while keeping our consciousness focussed on the greater things, but very soon it will become a habit and the will to perfection will become the permanent background on which the pattern of our daily life is embroidered. [Page 102]

WE ARE THE PATH

There is a sense in which we are already perfect and divine at this very moment. The real you, the real being, is not the transient and ever-changing glimpse which we call present, but it is your entire past and your entire future; it is the complete being with his whole cycle of evolution contained within him. Thus we are primitive man as well as perfect man and that which we strive for is in reality ours already; *the secret of evolution is to become what we are*. Only then can we understand the meaning of another much used occult maxim, namely that "we ourselves must become the Path". It is so utterly true and yet we know it only when, in our consciousness as Egos, we have [Page 103] seen the goal, the purpose of perfection, the attainment of Adeptship not as a far away, extraneous thing to be approached from without, but as our own inner divinity, our own inmost Self. When we thus know what it means to become the Path ourselves we also know that nothing on earth can ever again come between us and our goal; we have seen it and we have become one with it; it is as if we had seen our own divinity and as if the goal were in the centre of our own being. The Path of perfection then becomes but the unfolding of our own divinity.

THE POWER OF CREATIVE THOUGHT

Having realized the Ego's powers of love and of will, we must now discover its third [Page 104] great power, that of creative thought or, as we call it in Theosophy, Manas. Thought in us is the manifestation of God the Holy Ghost, just as will is the manifestation of the Father and love of the Son. God the Holy Ghost is God in creative activity, God the Creator, and when we realize that power in us we feel ourselves inspired, possessed by boundless creative ability, by the power to do things. It is only thought in us which does, only thought which creates and carries out the decrees of the will. If the will is the King, thought is the Prime Minister and the activity of our creative thought should ever be directed by the will.

Its power to create seems unlimited; when once we realize it we know that as Egos we can "do all things," we [Page 105] feel a boundless creative energy within us to carry out whatsoever the will may decree. It is only when this third power, the creative thought or imagination, does its work that realization in action follows. That is why its power is so dangerous to man until he understands that he must consciously direct it, for if he fails to do so it will be directed by his *lower nature* and he will become its slave.

THE USE OF THE THREE POWERS

These then are the three powers of the Ego, or rather its threefold power, for the three aspects are one, truly a trinity. Having realized the three powers and felt their use [Page 106] in the great work, let us now try to use them simultaneously as they should be used, being a unity. Use the will to hold the one purpose of perfection for the sake of the world; use love to make you one with it and draw you into it; and use thought to create it and carry it out. It is only when these three are used together that result follows, but then there is nothing which we cannot achieve, for the power of the Ego is divine and therefore boundless.

It is not a thing which we should do only at odd moments. It should become a habitual activity, continuing, whatsoever else we are doing. That more than anything else is the secret of spiritual achievement: that having realized ourselves as Egos and become conscious of our powers as such, we [Page 107] should not again subside into the ruts of the ordinary body-consciousness, but should maintain the level which we have reached even though it may seem at first a superhuman effort to do so. The chart of our spiritual life shows too often but a continual series of ups and downs; we attain to some lofty spiritual height only to fall back again the next moment to the old level. If we would attain, we must not suffer that to happen; when the rare moment of spiritual exaltation and realization comes to us, in meditation or otherwise, we must cling to it with uttermost tenacity, maintaining the level we have reached regardless of anything and everything. It may be an agonizing strain for the first few days, but it soon becomes habitual and we learn to do our [Page 108] ordinary work from our new-found level. After all it is but our own true home in which we live now, not a foreign state upon which we seek to enter, but our own divine Home of which we were oblivious for a while. [Page 109]

CHAPTER 5

THE RETURN OF THE EXILE

REALIZING ourselves as Egos, we can look down upon the three bodies and determine that they shall be our three servants in the three worlds of illusion, and nothing more. We do not again descend into them; we do not again become entangled in those worlds of illusion; we do not again identify ourselves with the three bodies nor allow the elemental consciousness to seize upon the Ego-consciousness and dominate it. We must remain in our mountain top, seeing before us the unlimited view of life, and [Page 110] from there we must act and think and feel. It is possible, and we must do it.

From that mountain top think of your three bodies. See your mental body, swept clean of the futility of ordinary thought-images, and from *within*, create in it that powerful thought-form of perfection *for the sake of the world*. Hold that always with some part of your will, never let it dissolve, for that is the thought-form which henceforth is to govern your daily life. Hold the mind-body like that, and give it the order that henceforth, whatever the temptation from without, no thought-images, no thought-forms, shall be made without your consent.

Then look down on your desire-body again. Decide to hold it as you have seen it, [Page 111] vivified from within by the emotions of the Self. Flood it with love for all beings, with devotion, with sympathy, with spiritual aspiration; see these feelings radiating out from the centre of that body, see it throbbing with this new pulse of life, and determine that never again will you allow your astral body to be swayed from *without*.

Then look back on your etheric, and physical bodies, and decide that henceforth, they too are to be vehicles of the will. See how that will express itself through the body; see the divine Energy from the Self flowing down into the physical body, and feel that body being regenerated from within. That is the truth of the regeneration of the physical body; when we realize it as the vehicle of the Atma it is renewed, [Page 112] it becomes healthy and strong, free from disease, free from all the troubles which it has when it is merely part of the physical world. Lift it out of that bondage. It must be in the world, but not of that world. Its closest link should be with the Self, and not with the world. All your bodies should be subject to the Self, and the powers of the Self should radiate through them. Make them perfect channels for the three great powers of the Ego, but at all times do not become entangled, all the time remain upon your mountain top, and see the lower worlds from there.

In that way your life will become divinely happy; in that way all your difficulties will be swept away; for how can there be discord when you realize yourself as divine? [Page 113] Henceforth, when the same things occur which before caused you so much trouble and suffering, because you allowed yourself to be identified with the bodies, you will realize yourself as the Ego and there will not be any conflict. You have now made the one thought of perfection which dominates your mind-body, and nothing can trouble you, for it is a law that no two thought-images can dominate the mental body at the same time. While we hold this mental image of perfection we can do our usual work, but that thought-form will always dominate, and nothing else can seize upon the mind-body and shape it into a form which we do not want.

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So remember henceforth to live from within; never again allow your bodies, [Page 114] to seize upon your consciousness and to obscure knowledge of Self. Determine that you, the soul, having returned to your divine home, are going to remain there. Do not again make the mistake of permitting yourselves to return to a level to which you do not belong. Have no fear to call yourselves divine. There is no conceit in it, there can never be pride in it, because pride is separateness and once we realize ourselves as Egos, we feel dissolved in a Sea of consciousness, we know ourselves to be one with a Consciousness so vast, so all-embracing, that the very thought of separateness becomes ridiculous. We are safe from that illusion, for we know that whatever we do is done through us, that when we feel and think and act it is the life of the Self which [Page 115] through us as a channel flows out upon the world.

In that consciousness, too, we know ourselves as one with the Master, we share the bliss of His Presence, and in His Presence all things become easy. In His Presence there can be no desire except the desire to draw closer to Him. In His Presence it is impossible to do the petty, ugly things which in the past we have done. We can only try to be great as He is, great in our sweep of feeling and thought, divine as He is divine.

Thus the way of the Ego is the way of Initiation. Initiation means a permanent reunion of the consciousness which was incarnate in and identified with the bodies, to the parent-consciousness of which it was [Page 116] oblivious; it is the beginning of a new life; conscious life as the Ego while functioning through the three bodies.

The qualifications for Initiation are given in different ways, but when we succeed in gaining Ego-consciousness as a permanent thing we shall of necessity have acquired the other qualifications too. Ego-consciousness brings Discrimination, since we see life from the world of the Ego in true perspective. Ego-consciousness brings Desirelessness, for when the incarnate consciousness has become disentangled from the bodies which dominated it, the bodies no longer follow their own desires, but the will of the Ego. Ego-consciousness means Good Conduct, since our conduct is no longer the conduct of consciousness enslaved by the bodies, but [Page 117] the conduct of the Ego himself, and that of necessity is good conduct. Ego-consciousness means Love in its widest sense since the world of the Ego is the world of Unity and we cannot touch Ego-consciousness without feeling at one with all that is.

But, apart from the fact that the practice of the presence of the Ego leads us to the immediate goal of our evolution which is Initiation, it carries its own reward with it in that it bestows a deep and abiding joy and power and peace on him who attains it, in that it is the beginning of a new life.

We can all come to this realization; we can all claim what we are. It is not something strange, something outside ourselves which we have to conquer; we have only to [Page 118] enter the world to which we belong, only to claim that which we truly are.

Let us then take joy in our own divinity, claim the divine birthright which is ours, and decide to return to that native land, whence we have been exiled for so many thousands of years in these worlds of darkness and suffering. And may the blessing of the Masters Whom we serve be with us, may Their love protect and shield us, until we too stand where They stand, until we too have become the Perfect Man. [Page 119]

AFTERWORD

THE exploration of the world of our consciousness, so little known to most of us, is a necessity for him who would realize himself as he truly is, the Ego living in his own world, using the three bodies as vehicles for his consciousness, but not being used by them. In fact, the mystical journey described in the preceding pages is an exercise to be practised by all aspirants until they are so proficient in it that they can maintain Egoic consciousness all the time. The ideal is, that having attained the level of the Ego, we should stay there and refuse to be drawn into the old ruts of slavery to the bodies again. [Page 120] Some may succeed in doing that the first time, others may find themselves taken unawares by some excitement or trouble and slip back into the old attitude before they have had time to put themselves on their guard. In both cases the regular practice of the consciousness of the Ego is a necessity, in the first case in order to maintain what has been achieved; in the second case to retrieve what is in danger of being lost.

Since in the preceding chapters a good deal of explanation had to be given at different points, the actual spiritual exercise is perhaps not so easily followed by those who would try it in practice. It may therefore be well to repeat the main points of the exercise as a tentative route for those [Page 121] in quest of Egoic consciousness. It should be understood that there are many ways to attain the same end, but the one described in this booklet has been found useful in many cases and suitable for people of very different temperaments. I should rather call it an exercise than a meditation, though every meditation should be an exercise. If done by a group of persons together it may be found useful for one of the number to indicate *sotto voce* the stages of the exercise so that the efforts may be made simultaneously. As in all meditation the comfort of the physical body is more important than the striking of some unusual oriental posture, but it is well to find a place where disturbance is unlikely and where quiet can be found. [Page 122]

THE EGO MEDITATION

If the exercise is done in a group, begin by thinking of the unity of the group and try to feel that unity.

Then think of some high ideal, preferably of one of the Masters of the Wisdom and try to feel love and devotion for Him.

Now think of the physical body and see it as your servant in the physical world, feel it as healthy and strong and vitalized from within.

Withdraw the centre of consciousness from the physical body and etheric body, and look at the astral body; sweep it clear of all passing emotions and desires and pour out through it the higher emotions; feel love for all creatures, devotion to the [Page 123] Highest, sympathy for all who suffer, and spiritual aspirations; let these emotions radiate out from the astral body, steadily.

Withdraw the centre of consciousness from the astral body and look at the mental; sweep it clear of all

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thought-forms and images and pour out through it the light of the higher mind; let it radiate out through the mental body.

Create in the mental body the image of yourself as the perfect man; perfect in love, will and thought and fill the mental body with that image.

Withdraw the centre of consciousness from the mental body too, and feel the three bodies as perfectly controlled instruments in the power of the Ego. **[Page 124]**

Now realize yourself as the Ego, bring your consciousness back into it, and know that you are that Ego, living in your own world of joy and beauty; feel the joy and freedom and see the splendour of your own world and know that it is your own true home.

Now realize the powers of the Ego. First its love-power of unity with all things.

Feel unity with the Master, try to feel that you are part of His consciousness.

Next try to feel the unity of the Brotherhood; feel that mighty Consciousness pervading the entire world and know that all in It are one, utterly one.

Then feel unity with all that lives, with all Nature, with all mankind; feel love for all beings and feel your consciousness dissolving in the universal consciousness. **[Page 125]**

Feel the bliss of that unity and feel how, carried along by this love, you reach the heart of things, the love of Christ; feel yourself as part of His life and His love.

Now realize the will of the Ego, the Atma; feel it filling your consciousness like a searching light and feel that its power is irresistible.

Use the will to see only the one purpose which is "perfection for the sake of the world," and exclude all other things, filling the whole consciousness with that one purpose, until you become it.

Now realize the creative energy of the Ego, the Manas; feel that boundless creative energy and use it to create the idea of perfection, filling it with creative power so that it must be realized. **[Page 126]**

Now use the three powers together; the will to see the one purpose (perfection for the sake of the world), love to draw us into it and make us one with it; and thought to create it and carry it out. Keep on doing this all day long.

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Now realize yourself once again as the Ego, try to see the beauty of your own world, your own beauty in that world, and determine to maintain that state of Ego-consciousness whatever may happen to you during the day.

Now look back upon the three bodies, but do not go down into them again.

First the mental body, pour out through it the light of the higher mind and once again create in it the image of yourself as the perfect man. **[Page 127]**

Next look down on the emotion body and pour out through it the emotions of the Ego, love for all beings, devotion to the highest, sympathy for all who suffer, and spiritual aspiration, and let these radiate out steadily all the time.

Finally look back on the etheric and physical bodies, see them as the expression of the will, the Atma, and will them to be healthy and strong, radiating out vitality from within - regenerate.

Keep the three bodies like that, perfect channels for the powers of the Ego, and let the powers of the Ego radiate out through them.

But always and under all circumstances know yourself as the Ego and maintain without interruption the state of Ego-consciousness. **[Page 128]**

Finally send out a spiritual blessing upon the world around, thus pouring out the powers you have realized.

In finishing the exercise do not at once go back to the ordinary body consciousness, but try to maintain the Ego-consciousness all through the day, keeping part of your attention concentrated on it while doing the ordinary things of daily life.