

## REALITY AND ILLUSION

Greetings, my dear friends. God bless all of you and your dear ones.

All spiritual teachings and philosophies agree that the world of manifestation is illusory. The only reality exists beyond your earth sphere. This is not a geographical concept but a matter of awareness. Although the perception of absolute reality is an impossibility for a human being, it can be sensed to a small degree by raising one's consciousness through the elimination of one's inner conflicts, which is a consequence of the work of self-search this path offers you. In the course of this work, you become aware of your emotions and their significance. Thus you find the unconscious, erroneous concepts that you have harbored so far. You then become aware of the unreality in which you have lived (emotionally), and thereby you approach reality. This is, broadly speaking, the only possible way. You cannot ever sense absolute reality by studying and reading, be it the greatest wisdom of the ages. In that way, you would acquire only theoretical knowledge that has no real root in your inner world.

By becoming aware of the existing unreality within yourself, in that you see with absolute clarity how untrue have been your concepts -- and perhaps still are -- you may glean a moment of recognition as to what reality really is -- its totally different quality and its steadfast character.

To live in the comparative reality accessible to you as long as you are an incarnated human being depends on your maturity, mental as well as emotional. Maturity, in turn, depends on your capacity and willingness to love. The more the personality is afraid of love, unwilling and thus incapable of loving, the more he lives in unreality, or illusion.

These words will do you no good if you accept them at face value. To begin with, you will have to understand how this is so, at least theoretically. Therefore I shall try to explain in detail.

In previous talks, we discussed the legitimate desire to be loved. We also discussed that the immature part of yourself, the child in you, requests an unlimited amount of love, covered by various superimposed desires such as the wish for approval, etc. The more immature the person is, the more he will crave being loved without taking the apparent risk of loving. The more one is afraid to love, the greater the desire to be loved will become. The greater this discrepancy, the more is the personality torn in this conflict as well as in many others arising from this basic problem. I repeat, the first and perhaps hardest step is to become aware that this very deep problem does exist. When this is found, the most difficult part of the battle is accomplished. For then it will be relatively easy to see how unrealistic the imbalance is, how unfair is this request for something that one is not willing to give oneself. The desire to be loved is legitimate only if one is prepared oneself to give as much as he asks. This is reality. It is not reality to ask for more than one is willing to give, nor is it reality to claim one does not wish to be loved. Some people have withdrawn so much and

found an apparent, temporary, superficial contentment, that they are unaware of their deep inner yearning. This lack of awareness is self-deception and is therefore also illusion.

When you consider all this, you may begin to observe your surroundings with a different understanding. You will see that those people who emanate a genuine warmth, who are outgoing, and whose love can truly be felt have less need to be catered to, to be approved of, to be agreed with. While he who withdraws in fear from love -- and therefore from life -- will have a very great desire to be loved, in that proportion. It is an equation that must come out even; it cannot be otherwise. Yet this does not mean that by the ability to love, you should not desire to be loved. But, your desire will be less strenuous, less urgent. Therefore, to that degree, less tension and anxiety will exist in you. Incidentally, another one of those misconceptions or illusions which is largely responsible for your fear of loving is the idea, perhaps unconscious, that true love will forever be unreciprocated and that in proving true love you have to give up your personal integrity, your legitimate needs, your dignity. Another time we shall go into that particular subject in greater detail and discuss how you resort to one wrong extreme in the belief that this is the only possible way not to fall into the other extreme. All these hidden emotions have to be brought to the fore in order to clarify this confusion. You have to become acutely aware of the existence of all these unrealities in you if you are to have any chance of approaching reality. Hence, whatever I say here is directed to the inner trends, to the unconscious emotions. Many human beings may not demonstrate all these confused emotions that we are now discussing. They may not be aware of them at all. Therefore, when they hear or read these words, they may not feel an echo in themselves. In fact, as the slightest danger signal occurs of an unpleasant reaction when pondering over these words, they will quickly close the door tighter. They will say to themselves, "Oh, because of this and that, this really does not apply to me." And they will think of so many other people to whom it very obviously does apply. Be careful, my friends, for this is a sure sign that you are not even willing to see the unreality in you. How then can you ever hope to attain even the slightest glimpse of reality? The higher, spiritual, absolute reality cannot be found by a short cut. It can only be attained by changing your inner world of unreality into one of reality. You cannot do this if you are not willing to face the confusions and misconceptions. So, be on the alert for the inner defensive, of closing the door.

So I say to all of you, find these specific emotions, hidden as they may be. Learn to understand the language of vaguely felt emotions. Analyze their meaning. Only in this way can you find out that what I say to you here is truth. Reality is truth, way beyond what meets the eye. The more you are in reality, the deeper is your comprehension. You may be in comparative reality in one area of your inner life, while in another you are in deep unreality. In this instance, you will see only the superficial facts and ignore the deeper connections. Thus the wider truth is in darkness. Let us take a common and simple example. If someone hurts you, what he said and did will actually be a hurt. But as long as you see only the fact that has occurred and ignore the reason, you will remain hurt. The moment you fully understand, it is impossible to be hurt any longer. I am certain that every one of you has occasionally experienced such a happening. And yet you always fall into the same trap on another occasion. You know very well by now that only by understanding yourself can you come to understand others. This understanding will eliminate the hurts because you are in truth, or in reality. This is why it is said that truth makes one free. This is why the resistance of the child in you that shows reluctance towards fully facing yourself is so entirely unreasonable and damaging for yourself.

Unreality or illusion is bound to bring you unhappiness, confusion, tension, and fear. Reality, or truth, is bound to bring you happiness and freedom. The resistance to face your unreality and to change is in itself an unreality because it is untruth in that you regard it as to your disadvantage. If somehow you would not believe this, you would not resist. Moreover, the resistance to truth in you and to change requires much strenuous effort on your part in order to maintain the illusion. Illusion always causes tension and strain, for, by itself, it cannot stand. This causes many vicious circles and chain reactions.

As you learn to understand your emotions, you will evaluate the outer happenings in a different way. These outer happenings are real in their occurrence, but, up to now, the importance you attached to them (at least, emotionally) was unreal. Think of the example I cited before. So is it with everything else.

The greater the urgency to be loved, approved of, etc., due to your fear of loving, the more rigidly and tensely do you go about constructing illusory forms, so to speak, in the hope that this desire can be fulfilled. This can take place in a very subtle way and happens in many different forms. For instance, if you desire very much to be loved by a specific person or if, very ardently, you just wish to impress a particular person, you will think up situations in which you see this wish gratified. Every favorable sign will be taken not in its reality value, but will be put into an illusory construction. Even if you actually obtain what you wish in love or admiration, you do not perceive it as it is really forthcoming in the particular personal flavor and atmosphere of the person involved. You cannot be satisfied with it in the long run because it does not live up to your idea of it. Finally, what actually comes forth has to crumble as illusion. Unconsciously, you struggle against this as long as possible and strain even harder to maintain an illusion where none would be necessary. You constantly suspect that what actually is does not correspond to your idea of it, and therefore you feel yourself endangered. Every little indication of reality, clashing with your illusion, brings you a disappointment which in turn creates a hostility in you of which you are no more aware than of this entire process which I describe. This hostility is bound to affect the other person so that he will react in such a way that your illusion cannot be maintained any longer. This will cause an all-black and subjective view in you. It will produce the reaction we recently discussed. Hence, it is your urgency that causes the illusory construction, whereas in many cases no such construction would be necessary. Actually, it is never necessary because even if, for his own reason, the other person cannot respond to your desire, you would be better off to see it and let go. But often you could obtain your wish, but only if you are in freedom, without urgency, and therefore without any unreal, preconceived constructions of situations, relationships, and reactions on the part of the other person. You would be able to adapt flexibly to the particular ways of the other person and would not find it necessary to mold him and the situation to your ideas.

Thus is there a manifest unreality in this procedure. But it also exists in your reactions during the entire process. The "favorable" signs, fitting into your constructions, are overvalued. They produce more joy than reality warrants, not because the other person dislikes you, but because his reaction is just different. You are in unreality because you can rejoice only if what happens fits into your construction. On the other hand, when it cannot, your crushing disappointment is equally unrealistic. The many repercussions and ramifications of this state are too numerous to discuss at this point.

In order to realize all this, you would have to begin by becoming aware of the many little disappointments of which you do not allow yourself to be conscious. This is so partly because you tend to deceive yourself and do not like to face anything unpleasant, and, partly because in your intellect you know better than to be so childishly disappointed about a little thing, and you therefore feel guilty about such childish reaction. But it is essential for you to train your awareness in this direction, regardless of whether it is right or wrong. You know better than that by now. You know that the childishness does not disappear by looking away from it. By becoming aware of these many little disappointments, you will come to see how you reacted -- and still react inwardly although now you observe it -- and how as a result, you let that which is most negative in the other person serve to justify your wrath. By seeing all this, you will notice the personal, colored subjectivity we discussed the other day; and thus you will see a special type of unreality that you live in.

Objectivity and subjectivity which we discussed last time is also one phase of reality versus unreality. It is necessary for you to understand that your subjectivity, and therefore unreality, is created by you through the strong and urgent need of having your illusion nourished. This urgent need for illusion comes from the forcing current of the child in you that must have everything his own way. All this is so subtle, my friends, so do not be deceived by a superficial right reaction. Think of where your problems are in life; discover your emotions in connection with them; and then try to find this current or condition in you. You are bound to find it, for it must be in you also.

To the degree that you learn to give up this forcing current and become free of a great inner tension, to that degree will you be free to receive something. Perhaps this will prove to be not at all less valuable than you had imagined, or perhaps even more valuable, although not necessarily attained as quickly as the child in you wanted it. In fact, when you do get it, the extent of its value will depend largely on your increasing awareness in this respect.

As you progress in this particular direction on the path, you will also see that whenever you do not get what you want (and you will not get it all the time), it will not cause you half the distress and despair it caused you heretofore. But, as I said, first you have to become aware that in not getting your way, be it in outer things or be it regarding other people's reactions towards you, you have felt disappointment. And you have to see what this unconscious disappointment made you do. Only then can you give up this forcing current, thereby giving up the contrived illusions, thereby being free to receive real value, or, if not receiving it, discovering that it is not half as tragic as the child in you thinks.

The difficulty here is that in your intellect you will readily agree with what I say. And because you can agree, you are likely to overlook the urgency of your very contradictory emotions as they manifest inwardly and not, necessarily always, outwardly. It is sufficient that they exist inwardly.

In this predicament, you have an unreal picture of other people since you are tempted to increase their value if they please you and to decrease their value if they do not. The picture you have of them is not unreal because what you emphasize in each specific mood is necessarily wrong. It is unreal because of your real motive in seeing the other person's good or bad side rather strongly. And it is unreal because, in each specific instance, the overall coloring in which you perceive the whole person is tainted and one-sided. When you see the good, due in part to subjective reasons, you will possibly see what is really good in him. On the other hand, when you see the bad, you will

possibly see what is really bad in him. But in each case, either you will feel the other person good or feel him bad.

You also have an unreal idea of the importance that the reactions of others or incidents have on you. Again, intellectually you may know better, but emotionally, at this moment, this incident is of disproportionate importance to you.

Hence, you do not see reality with respect to the quality of people, nor, to the quality of occurrences and happenings. And last but not least, you are in unreality because your concept of time-quality is false when your childish emotions are involved without your awareness.

The child in you feels the importance of what happens at this particular moment of overexaggerated importance. It does not see its passing character. It does not perceive its overall quality, it knows only pain or pleasure at this moment, forgetting that in the relatively near future these strongly felt emotions of the moment will have lost their impact. For all your intellectual knowledge, in this respect your emotions still react childishly. Something unpleasant happens to you now, and you will be in a depressed state of mind although you know perfectly well that in a short time, you will not even think of this slight or disappointment anymore. This is the child in you that reacts to the moment almost like an animal. It knows no past and no future and therefore lacks the judgment to evaluate the happening in its true significance or, to put it differently, as to its reality value.

I often use the expression "to live in the now." As in everything else, there is a right way and a wrong way about this too. If you look back a few months to a mood wherein life seemed completely hopeless and you see your life now, only a few months later, you can best judge how unrealistic that mood was. Perhaps you are hopelessly depressed again, but it is very possible that the reason is a different one now. In any case, that which utterly crushed you only a while ago does not do so now -- and this is a good demonstration of what I mean by the unrealistic evaluation in time, or in the quality of happenings with regard to permanency, which is a facet of time.

The wrong way of living in the now comes from the child in you that exaggerates the importance of the moment. Even the real tragedies that befall every human being in the course of a lifetime, when viewed retrospectively, will be felt very differently than at the time of their occurrence. The saying "Time heals all wounds" is valid when it becomes clear that with but a little distance to one's personal involvement comes a more realistic or truthful view of the quality of the happening, of its importance.

Thus the person who approaches inner reality, due to a maturing soul, ready to meet life, unafraid of loving, unafraid of giving up the strong self-will current, will feel even tragedies with a very different impact than the immature soul. This is true detachment, which is only to be gained by maturing your emotions, in the sense that life and love is no longer in danger as personal slights lose their importance. True detachment can never be gained by forcefully superimposing right concepts on childish, illusory fears which continue to fester in your unconscious mind. Such a mature soul will of course feel the momentary impact of a tragedy with all its grief, with all its relative importance, but simultaneously it will perceive its passing importance and also genuinely evaluate the happening not only in the intellect but as to its overall significance and relative importance. Therefore the hardship will not be so great in the personal experience.

The factor that the child in you experiences life's happenings in illusory impressions of exaggeration, of black and white, brings in its wake a further conflict. That is the universal tendency of self-dramatization, again present to some degree in every human being. There are of course those with whom it is obvious. But there are also those with whom it is not apparent at all. In the latter, it is much more difficult to find because the trend is so hidden, so well camouflaged, and always rationalized with correct, or seemingly correct, outer reasonings. The only way you can find this tendency is, again, to analyze your moods, your emotions, and what they are saying and why. You may find, for instance, how a little encouragement, a little compliment, makes your spirit surge to heights of unreasonable joy or gratification beyond all proportion to their real value. And the way a little either real, imagined, or implied criticism can spoil the day for you. This black and white attitude causes you to dramatize yourself. You not only overdramatize the world around you as it relates to you, but you deliberately encourage it, although unconsciously and for a very good reason, my friends. Since the child in you is constantly clamoring for attention, it uses the dramatization either openly or subtly as a means of forcing others to comply. I repeat, this is not necessarily done by outer actions. It is much more often that the inner reactions work in that way, and you feel all the more frustrated because you do not dare to live it out. Thus you force the world around you in fantasy only. You build up an unreality form on an unreal premise.

You may think that in the positive manifestation it does not matter, by saying, "If I am overjoyed by a small thing, is that not good?" I say, no, because, if the joy is unrealistic, the disappointment will be all the more crushing. Hence, you have to learn to distinguish between the real and the unreal in this respect as well as in any other. It does not mean that you should force the joy away. But humor it, and look at it with a little detachment, in the same way as you should look at the depressing moods and other negative aspects. Just observe the child in you working. You cannot force it away even after you have fully recognized its existence.

In connection with the negative side as far as the self-dramatization is concerned, I would say that you build up your situation to appear so bad and thereby try to force others to sympathize with you, to pay attention to you, to do your will or to side with you against those who do not. All this can be done ever so subtly, and, again, it needs utter self-honesty to recognize the emotions in this respect. Even if you manage not to show it, still the voice exists deep down in you that says, "Look at poor little me, how I suffer, how unfairly I am treated, how absolutely miserable everything is." Or conversely, "Look how bad I am. By recognizing my wickedness, I show you how honest I am so that you will give me the admiration I want." This dramatization can take many forms, but it is always a form of exaggeration in order to enhance self-importance either openly or hiddenly.

It will be of great value for all of you, my friends, who work on this path to find this particular aspect of your world of illusion -- where, how, and in what way you dramatize yourself and what is behind it. Then ask your emotions further: "What is the aim? Do I really believe it is as bad as all that, whatever it may have been?" To begin with, the difficulty is that nine times out of ten you are not even aware that you are depressed, let alone why. So you must start by questioning what you really feel, every day. And then you can go deeper to discover the why and wherefrom. If the depression cannot be hidden away, in most instances you seek and find more acceptable reasons, or you may even say, "I do not know why I am depressed." But if you search diligently, you will always find a personal slight, something that has not gone according to your will, something that the child in you considers a disappointment.

How then does the absence of this forcing current bring you into reality and thereby into a more secure state of happiness and serenity? If this forcing current is absent, you are bound to experience -- provided you are certain of yourself -- that the disapproval, if it actually exists, is but an illusory hurt. And you cannot be certain of yourself so long as there is the child in you with all its selfishness, egocentricity, one-sidedness, and unfair demands. Thus you are in a vicious circle. Disapproval strikes a chord in you because something knows deep down that, no matter how unfounded the criticism in this case, you yourself criticize your lack of courage to help mature the child in you. To the degree you go about this maturing process and thereby lose all the negative aspects of the child, you will gain in stature, in certainty, in clear-cut realistic concepts that you can rely upon deep within yourself. By gaining this self-respect, you will become less and less dependent on approval by others. If, then, it still comes occasionally, you may search if there is not some grain of truth involved even if the other person does not bring out the true core. The moment you find it, the justified or unjustified disapproval will no longer be a hurt. In this attitude, you will not have the fear of criticism or disapproval; your forcing current will dissolve.

If it is not disapproval, but outright need of being loved, and this love is not forthcoming, you may be a little sad, but your life will not depend on it. You will come to see that not being loved to the desired degree is a consequence of your own problems: the inability to love and the fear of love. You will also recognize that, for a long time, the slowly growing child still produces hostility and aggressiveness ever so subtly when it feels slighted. You will, moreover, see that these emanations contributed greatly to the other person's negative reaction. These insights will free you and help you to further the maturing process.

With the forcing current removed, you will see all that. Therefore what used to be a hurt will cease to be one. What once in a while may actually be a disappointment will not be half as despairing as it used to be and still is. Thus you have gained true insight and therefore the freedom that only the approach to reality can bring.

When a relationship is undecided between human beings, it happens so often that, in your daydreaming, you create situations as you would want them to be. This happens even in relationship of old standing. You constantly "dream" about how it should be. It is said that this is an escape from reality. Reality is too bleak to endure so you create a more pleasant world for yourself. This is true, but there is more to it than that. This, in itself, is also part of a vicious circle. The reality is so bleak because of the illusory importance placed upon this forcing current, of the exaggerated need to have everyone approve of you. That is what makes reality so unbearable that you escape into an illusory world. This happens by concocting daydream fantasy situations. The more you fabricate these daydream situations, the more you spin around this unending vicious circle. For, how is it possible for reality to ever fit into this picture? It cannot. So whatever happens, even under very favorable auspices, it is bound to disappoint you since part of the illusory childhood world is the desire for instant gratification, the total lack of patience. If patience is not there, every little sign indicating that the prefabricated situation is not duplicated will create disappointment and therefore hostility. As I have said, this hostility cannot help affecting the other even if you are both aware of it. With this, you sabotage, you spoil, you destroy every favorable situation that could come your way.

Without the forcing current, you will not need to daydream fixed situations. Therefore you will be flexible and face up to what is and will not be disappointed if it were different from what your daydreams spun for you. Therefore you will not create hostility in yourself. And therefore the other person will feel your openness in this respect, and a spontaneous, free reality situation can slowly grow.

My dearest friends, to find, detect, and change all this is of such primary importance to you. It applies to all human relationships. And it applies to your entire inner life and therefore also ultimately to your outer life.

If you truly understand the deeper meaning of these words, you will perhaps understand and somewhat experience what the term reality actually means. It means freedom from fears and therefore greater happiness and security. This can only be if emotional maturity exists. Emotional maturity, in turn, is the state of being willing to and capable of love. Hence, reality and the capacity to love are directly connected. We also know that the existence of the forcing current reduces your capacity to love. This has to be quite clear to you in theory as well as how it manifests in you personally and particularly. Find out how your fear of loving makes you withdraw and how guilty you feel about it deep down within your innermost self. Find also how you need to force others to love you in order to atone for this guilt as though it were a confirmation that the hidden voice of your guilt is wrong. Find the existing emptiness within yourself due to your unwillingness to love, which you would balance by making others love you. For all these reasons, the forcing current works strongly, although in very devious and hidden ways. When in the course of your further work you have recognized all these emotions and reactions, you will gain a great insight; you will understand much better what I am talking about here. We shall then discuss the mature concept of love about which there is so much confusion, so little clarity, and only very general spiritual concepts that most of you do not know how to apply to your personal emotional and inner life.

Without the forcing current, you permit another person freely to feel about you as he wants. And this approaches mature love much more than all your other devices of dramatizing your importance. Thus, you will not need to fabricate imagined situations. Therefore you will not be rigid in your expectations and not disappointed if things turn out differently than you might have expected. Then you will not have hidden hostility and resentments because there is no disappointment. In such a state of mind, you will give more to others. This giving will not always take the same form. In some cases, it will simply be affection shown in spite of the fact that your will was not done. You will give the freedom to another person you could not possibly give as long as these twisted conditions prevailed. By giving freedom, you give basic human respect regardless of whether or not your will is met. Thus the benign circle continues. In such inner freedom -- the freedom you have and therefore the freedom you give -- you can perceive reality. It is then that the real situation is experienced, as against the imagined and forcefully wished one, and in much larger degree.

Preconceived, imagined situations, as fabricated in daydreams, are the product of the forcing current and of self-centeredness. Only when liberated from this can you have the vision and comprehension of truth as it relates to you and around you at any given moment. Due to the lack of full understanding of the significance of certain of your emotions, confusions exist in you about certain concepts. In connection with this subject, the most widespread confusion is about the

meaning of mature love. Although we have touched upon some points of it in this and in previous talks, we shall go into it more fully in order to eliminate your unreasonable fear of it.

For the present, I shall say only this about it. You often labor under the misconception that true love means to give up your self-respect and dignity. You think you have to give in to the most selfish part of another person's nature. Naturally, you rebel against this. But your further misconception is that the remedy lies in withdrawing from love altogether. So you fluctuate between these two extremes. You are either submissive, and you feel this to be unhealthy for all concerned and as having not more to do with love than the opposite extreme; or you withdraw into a shell in which you find yourself not only lonely and unfulfilled, but also the constant nagging, gnawing voice of your higher conscience urges you not to do that. But you cannot heed this voice because your concept is confused, even in your thinking, let alone in your emotions. Another time we shall discuss this subject at a greater length, not from the point of view of ideals you cannot now attain but rather from a much more "practical" viewpoint. We shall see where and how you deviate out of unreasonable fear based on misconceptions. We shall then compare the right concept as it applies to your deviations.

In order to derive the real benefit from all my words, you have to experience your emotions and understand their language. I cannot emphasize this enough. By doing so, you will become more serene, less subject to fluctuations, and, as a result, your emotions will be more attuned to reality. Only in this manner can you slowly come to sense in this ineffable way that cannot be conveyed in words what absolute reality really means and why this world of the earth plane is illusory. As long as these are merely words you hear, as long as you do not discover where you are in unreality, this term will mean nothing to you. Only by seeing and therefore being able to eliminate your unreality can you slowly approach the door through which you may occasionally glean a sense of what cosmic, spiritual, or absolute reality is.

What is intelligence other than reality? Some people may have great intelligence -- and where it functions, they are in a sort of reality. Where it does not, they are submerged in their confusions and therefore removed from reality. The difficulty with people who are intelligent is, to a large degree, that they do not realize wherein this is not so. But then, the person who has little intelligence is unaware of his lack of reality, too. By the same token, mental and emotional health, sanity, is reality. To the degree that you are unhealthy, so you are in unreality. You do not see the truth.

We discussed the term "living in the now." I said that this can be done in the wrong, childish, unhealthy way as well as in the mature, constructive way. The latter will bring you peace and harmony, security, and a full experience of life such as you cannot possibly imagine. Living in the now, in the right way, means a complete and full awareness of the moment, its significance, its truth. This can be attained only by tuning in on what is, rather than by wishing for what might or should be. In other words, the rigidly built, imagined situations that prohibit reality also prohibit your full experience of what life really has to offer, or of living in the now. If you live in the now, there are no daydreams of that sort. There are no prefabricated situations. Thus you vibrate flexibly and live with the moment even if the moment is at times difficult or dull. You are completely there in the moment! Here! Now!

The concentration exercises I discussed awhile back are a valuable outer help as an addition to the inner requirements of analysis of your emotions in order to change those concepts which are not in accord with truth or reality. This additional step is a great help, provided it is not done instead of the inner work. If you recall what I said, you will see quite clearly that this is another approach to living in the now. I told you to concentrate on a state of nonthinking (by various methods which can be used), but not nonthinking by letting your thoughts float away in a haze of vague background thoughts, or escape, but rather by being right there. Nonthinking while being right there, in you rather than away from you, is a difficult thing to learn. The fact that it is so difficult shows you how little you live in the now, how much you are away from the reality of the moment. To the degree that you live in reality, to that degree will you be able to stay with yourself, observing yourself as you do not think. Of course, it is possible that people attain a comparatively high degree of efficiency in these exercises by mere discipline, while they neglect to find their inner obstructions. Then such proficiency certainly has the benefit of making them more fit to function where they are free already, but the discipline by itself will not eliminate the areas of obstruction. In these areas, confusion and unreality will persist and thus hinder their full experience of life, the full manifestation of their capacities and creativity. This is why both approaches are favorable. While the inner search and change is indispensable and can bring you to the goal without the outer help of such exercises, the latter will be a helpful addition. This should be clearly understood.

The difficulty you encounter in these exercises should not discourage or deter you. If you persist and persevere, you will eventually succeed, be it only for a few moments. This will be a good beginning. The effects this will have on you are much more valuable than you can realize at the moment, provided you do it in conjunction with the other type of work that we do.

I should like to give some further advice about these concentration exercises. Unfortunately, I must observe that my friends are not doing them as would be good for them. You have all been a little lax in this respect, and this is a pity. So, let me give you some further suggestions with which some of you may find it easier to succeed. Many people have to try various approaches until they find the one best suited for them. When you sit down for a few minutes of such practice, in the first place, observe your mood. See if you are impatient or hasty. Then ask yourself: "Where am I hurrying to? What do I think I miss by spending these few minutes on these exercises?" See the unreality of this haste. There is some feeling in you that this is a waste of time. Then begin to consider what a disproportionate amount of time you actually do waste on daydreams in one form or another or on insignificant floating thoughts of which you are only half aware. But when it comes to sitting down five minutes or so, at least your feeling tells you, "This is a waste of time;" otherwise you would not be hasty. Then you have all sorts of things to do that are more important. Realize the preposterous illusion of that emotion. By observing this attitude and mood, gaining a little distance from it, a certain amount of peace and relaxation will take hold of you by the mere fact that you think about it intelligently.

The next thing you may do, as you are completely relaxed in body and mind, is to close your eyes and try to see yourself as you sit there. Concentrate as though you were outside yourself or as though someone else saw you sitting there as you are now, what you wear, what your posture is, your facial expression. This is not egocentricity, nor does it lead to it, my friends. This merely leads to a detached self-observation from another approach. As you do this, you will undoubtedly find yourself becoming more calm. As you thus observe yourself, you may discover certain facial expressions you may otherwise not have noticed. You may feel, for instance, that your mouth pulls

down or your shoulders sag or that you forcefully straighten them in an unrelaxed, artificial way. Observe all that as you would closely observe another person. You do not have to do it for long. Then try either one of the exercises I mentioned previously. Or try this one, which is a little more advanced, but which some may even find it easier than the others. Watch yourself as you are not thinking. Be on guard for what thoughts may come. This is one of the best means of preventing background thoughts which take you away from the here and now. You can almost feel yourself standing poised on guard at a sort of threshold. If you succeed, be it only for half a minute, it will have a wonderful effect on you.

If after a few seconds, the chain is broken, never mind. Do not get impatient with yourself. Start again, observe again your state of not thinking. Observe the emptiness there. The more you succeed, the more you will see how you are in the present, aware of the moment, in this particular reality, not in a haze of vague floating thoughts often not at all pertinent, nor in a built-up dream world. When you float away into the unreality of your uncontrolled thought process, you are not in full awareness of self and of the moment, and therefore in unreality. The background thoughts you float away with are always away from you, as you surely will observe.

After you have succeeded in this exercise, be it only for a short time, it is a wonderful opportunity to make your prayer or meditation or to instruct your subconscious. For then you are fully open, receptive, and alive. You will be better able to formulate your thoughts, thinking of that which you need most at the present phase of your development. Whenever you feel confused or uncertain in your life about something you have found recently, whenever you are not clear about something that bothers you, that is the best time to clearly state your question, your confusion, your lack of clarity. This is always the first step toward gaining the necessary clarification. At such time, you may also express your utter will and intention to put aside all resistance towards facing yourself and changing where necessary. This is the time in which you can best observe the reaction of your subconscious when you utter such an instruction in its direction -- or ask God for His help. How much does it cooperate? It does, if you feel the unreserved desire to face anything that is within yourself. If you feel uneasy and anxious, if you wish to limit such insight, you know that the child in you resists -- and you should know by now that this is damaging for you and against your best interest.

You can also utter such instructions or thoughts in clear-cut foreground thoughts every time you feel you cannot "stand on guard" anymore. Each time your thoughts aim to float away from you into this vague haze, then is the moment to catch yourself. It is easier then to think constructively with deliberate and valuable foreground thoughts rather than to start again with thinking nothing. This can be resumed with more ease after calling forth a few such constructive, deliberate, concise foreground thoughts.

As you proceed on this path in the particular direction I lead you onto now, from the two approaches shown you, you will come to a point when you will not only free yourself of tensions and fears, of many unnecessary burdens, but you will also become much more alive to each moment. Your reactions will be much more spontaneous, more healthy; your intuition more reliable.

I am sure there will be many questions in connection with this subject. Think about them so that we can elaborate on them together. I know this is not an easy subject. It is elusive for those

who have not come across these emotions in their work yet. For those, these words should be a direction in which to search from now on. If you are not blocked, you will be successful and bring out many facets which you will now comprehend in a different light. I might put it this way: the natural process of your work will bring to light the very factors I have described here, and my words will help give you clarification. But you can never forcefully attempt a certain work process. If your search proceeds organically, it will bring all that to light which should be tackled at each phase. All that I have said today and in the recent lectures can be material for many months of work. Try to make it so, and you will gain freedom.

God's blessings, my dearest ones, for each one of you. May the strength and the blessings given unto you now help you to approach reality. Be in peace, be in God!

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