

Guidance in Esoteric Training

GA 245



Guidance in Esoteric Training

GA 245

by

Rudolf Steiner

1904 – 1914

Source: [Rudolf Steiner Archive](#)

Table of Contents

Prefatory Note

1. The Task of Spiritual Science
2. General Demands of Every Aspirant
3. Main Exercise
4. Explanation of the Foregoing Exercise

Prefatory Note

The contents of this book are selected from the matter of Rudolf Steiner's Esoteric School. The School remained in existence for ten years from 1904 to 1914, when the outbreak of the First World War prevented its continuance. During that period Rudolf Steiner was still within the Theosophical Society, and he used the words 'theosophy' and 'theosophical', though always (as he tells us in his Autobiography) in the direction in which his anthroposophical spiritual science had from the first been pointing. After the lapse of a further ten years, when he went on to found the General Anthroposophical Society and himself became its President, his esoteric guidance of those members who sought it was continued on a somewhat different footing, in closer association with the organization and direction of the Society.

The institution of the Esoteric School in 1904 had been quickly followed by publishing descriptions of the path which pupils should follow, in the book *Theosophy*, in the series of *Essays, Knowledge of the Higher Worlds. How is it achieved?* (first published in book form in 1909), and also in *Occult Science: an Outline*, which appeared early in 1910. A description of the basic conditions for inner development, particularly of the 'subsidiary exercises', is also to be found in these books, and after their publication Rudolf Steiner sometimes alluded to such exercises by reference to them. In Chapter V of *Occult Science: an Outline* ('*Knowledge of Higher Worlds. Concerning Initiation*') he lays down as follows the necessary precondition for all the exercises.

We can however understand from this how necessary it is that man should not demand entry into the spiritual world until he has learned and understood certain essential truths of that world by the simple exercise of his everyday intelligence, developed in the physical world. If spiritual development follows the right and normal path, then before he aspires to enter the supersensible world the pupil will already have mastered with his ordinary intelligence the whole of the earlier contents of this book.

In 1947, thirty-three years after the First World War had interrupted the Esoteric School and two years after the end of the Second, Marie Steiner, in response to requests from members of the Anthroposophical Society, set about publishing the most important of the Contents of the Esoteric School.

Numerous works on oriental training methods (Yoga etc.) were making their appearance, and it was her object to set against these something from the European discipline of Rudolf Steiner. 'By making available', she wrote in a letter, 'examples of Rudolf Steiner's careful, personally-delivered advice, I wished to ensure that something could come forth from that Rosicrucian stream which is more in tune with the present age than decadent Indian and Tibetan methods.'

Three separate series of selections in English translation, entitled From the Contents of the Esoteric School, have previously appeared in 1948, 1949 and 1954. The following includes a revised translation of all that they contain together with some additional material not previously published in English.

Owen Barfield

Note: The term 'Theosophy' has been changed below to 'Anthroposophy' in this version of the text where appropriate for clarification of Dr. Steiner's intended meaning for our time. ~Anthony



1

The Task of Spiritual Science

Notes of a lecture given in Berlin in 1903 or 1904.

There is a beautiful saying by Hegel: The most profound thought is bound up with the historical, external Figure of Christ. And the greatness of the Christian religion is that it is there for every stage of development. It is within the grasp of the most naive consciousness and at the same time it is a challenge to the deepest wisdom.

That the Christian religion is comprehensible to every stage of consciousness is shown by the very history of its development. Properly understood, it must be the task of Anthroposophy, or of Spiritual Science in general, to show that the Christian religion calls for penetration into the deepest Wisdom-teachings. Anthroposophy is not a religion, but an instrument for understanding the religions. Its relation to the religious documents is rather like the relation of mathematics itself to the writings in which it was originally taught. A man can understand mathematics through his own spiritual faculties and comprehend the laws of space without having to refer to any such early text. But if he has really absorbed the truths of geometry, he will value all the more highly the original texts through which these laws were first presented. So it is with Anthroposophy. Its sources are not in ancient documents, nor do they rest upon tradition; they lie in the reality of the spiritual worlds. It is there that they must be found and grasped by the development of a man's own spiritual powers, just as he grasps mathematics by endeavouring to develop the faculties of his intellect. Our intellect, by means of which we are enabled to comprehend the laws of the world of sense, is supported by an organ, the brain. Similarly, in order to grasp the laws of spiritual worlds, we need appropriate organs.

How have our physical organs developed? Because forces from outside have worked upon them: the forces of the Sun, the forces of sound. Thus did eyes and ears come into being - out of neutral, sluggish organs into which, at first, the sense-world could not penetrate, and which opened only by degrees. If our spiritual organs are worked upon by the right forces, they too will open.

What then are the forces which surge in upon our still inert spiritual organs? During the daytime, the astral body of modern man is assailed by forces that work against his development, and even destroy such organs as he formerly possessed before the dawn of his clear day-consciousness. In earlier times, man received direct astral impressions. The surrounding world spoke to him through pictures, through the form in which the astral world comes to expression. Living, inwardly organic pictures and colours hovered freely in surrounding space as expressions of pleasure and repugnance, sympathy and antipathy. Then these colours wrapped themselves, as it were, round the surface of things, and objects acquired fixed outlines. This was when the physical body of man was steadily gaining in solidity and becoming more highly organized. When his eyes opened fully to the physical light, when the veil of Maya spread itself over the spiritual world, his astral body received impressions of the surrounding world by way of the physical and etheric bodies. The astral body itself transmitted these impressions to the 'I' and from the 'I' they passed into his consciousness. Thus he was personally involved and continuously active. But the forces working upon him were no longer plastic, weaving forces akin to the nature of his own being; they were forces that fed upon him, destroyed him, in order to awaken the I- consciousness. Only in the night, when he sank down into the rhythmic- spiritual world homogeneous with him, did he acquire new strength and become able once more to feed forces into his physical and etheric bodies. Out of this conflict of impressions, out of the deadening of the astral organs formerly working unconsciously in man, the life of the individual 'I', the I-consciousness, arose. Out of life-death; out of death- life. The ring of the serpent was complete. And now from this wakened I- consciousness there had to arise forces that would kindle life again in the defunct vestiges of earlier astral organs, shaping and moulding them.

Mankind is moving towards this goal, guided by its Teachers and Leaders, the great Initiates, of whom the serpent is also the symbol. It is an education towards freedom, hence a slow and difficult education. The great Initiates could have made the task easier, for themselves and for man, if they had worked upon his astral body during the night, when it is free, in such a way as to impress the astral organs into it from outside. But such an act would have operated in man's dream-consciousness; it would have trespassed on his sphere of freedom. The highest principle in man, the Will, would never have unfolded. Man is led onward stage by stage. There has been an Initiation in Wisdom, an Initiation in Feeling, an Initiation in Will. True Christianity is the summation of all stages of Initiation. The

Initiation of antiquity was the prophetic announcement, the preparation. Slowly and gradually the man of later times emancipated himself from his Initiator, his Guru. Initiation, to begin with, proceeded in deep trance-consciousness, but was equipped to imprint in the physical body a remembrance of what had transpired outside the body. Hence the necessity of releasing the ether-body, the bearer of memory, as well as the astral body. Astral body and ether-body sank together into the Ocean of Wisdom, into Mahadeva, into the Light of Osiris. This Initiation proceeded in deepest secrecy, in absolute seclusion. No breath from the outer world might intrude. The man was as if he had died to outer life, and the tender seeds were nurtured away from the blinding light of day.

Then Initiation came forth from the darkness enshrouding the Mysteries into the clearest light of day. In a great and mighty Personality, the Bearer of the highest unifying Principle, of the Word — of Him who is the expression and manifestation of the hidden Father, and who taking on human form became the Son of Man and thereby the Representative of all mankind, the Bond uniting all I's — in Christos, the Life-Spirit, the Eternal Unifier, the Initiation of mankind as a whole was accomplished, as historical fact and at the same time as symbol, on the plane of feeling. So potent was this Event that in every individual who modelled his life on it, its power could continue to work — right into the physical, expressing itself even in the appearance of the stigmata and in the most piercing pains. Feelings were shaken to their innermost depths. An intensity of emotion, the like of which has never surged through the world before or since, arose in mighty waves. In the Initiation on the Cross of Divine Love the sacrifice of the 'I' for All had taken place. The blood, the physical expression of the 'I' had flowed in love for mankind, and the effect was such that thousands pressed forward to this Initiation, to this Death, letting their blood flow in love and devotion for mankind. That blood untold was poured out in this way has never been sufficiently emphasized; the thought no longer enters the consciousness of men, not even in theosophical circles. Yet the waves of ardour which in this streaming blood flowed down, and then ascended, have fulfilled their task. They have become the wellsprings of powerful impulses. They have made mankind ripe for the Initiation of the Will.

And this is the legacy of Christ.



2

General Demands of Every Aspirant

Subsidiary Exercises

General Demands Which Every Aspirant for Occult Development Must Put to Himself

In what follows, the conditions which must be the basis of any occult development are set forth. Let no one imagine that he can make progress by any measures applied to the outer or the inner life unless he fulfils these conditions. All exercises in meditation, concentration, or exercises of other kinds, are valueless, indeed in a certain respect actually harmful, if life is not regulated in accordance with these conditions. No forces can actually be imparted to a human being; all that can be done is to bring to development the forces already within him. They do not develop of their own accord because outer and inner hindrances obstruct them. The outer hindrances are lessened by means of the following rules of life; the inner hindrances by the special instructions concerning meditation, concentration, and the like.

The first condition is the cultivation of absolutely clear thinking. For this purpose a man must rid himself of the will-o'-the-wisps of thought, even if only for a very short time during the day - about five minutes (the longer, the better). He must become the ruler in his world of thought. He is not the ruler if external circumstances, occupation, some tradition or other, social relationships, even membership of a particular race, the daily round of life, certain activities and so forth, determine a thought and how he works it out. Therefore during this brief time, acting entirely out of his own free will, he must empty the soul of the ordinary, everyday course of thoughts and by his own initiative place one single thought at the centre of his soul. The thought need not be a particularly striking or interesting one. Indeed it will be all the better for what has to be attained in an occult respect if a thoroughly uninteresting and insignificant thought is chosen. Thinking is then impelled to act out of its own energy the essential thing here, whereas an interesting thought carries the thinking along with it. It is better if this exercise in thought-control is undertaken with a pin rather than with Napoleon. The pupil says to himself: Now I start from this thought, and through my own inner initiative I associate with it everything

that is pertinent to it. At the end of the period the thought should be just as colourful and living as it was at the beginning. This exercise is repeated day by day for at least a month; a new thought may be taken every day, or the same thought may be adhered to for several days. At the end of the exercise an endeavour is made to become fully conscious of that inner feeling of firmness and security which will soon be noticed by paying subtler attention to one's own soul; the exercise is then brought to a conclusion by focusing the thinking upon the head and the middle of the spine (brain and spinal cord), as if the feeling of security were being poured into this part of the body.

When this exercise has been practised for, say, one month, a second requirement should be added. We try to think of some action which in the ordinary course of life we should certainly not have performed. Then we make it a duty to perform this action every day. It will therefore be good to choose an action which can be performed every day and will occupy as long a period of time as possible. Again it is better to begin with some insignificant action which we have to force ourselves to perform; for example, to water at a fixed time every day a flower we have bought. After a certain time a second, similar act should be added to the first; later, a third, and so on . . . as many as are compatible with the carrying out of all other duties. This exercise, also, should last for one month. But as far as possible during this second month, too, the first exercise should continue, although it is a less paramount duty than in the first month. Nevertheless it must not be left unheeded, for otherwise it will quickly be noticed that the fruits of the first month are lost and the slovenliness of uncontrolled thinking begins again. Care must be taken that once these fruits have been won, they are never again lost. If, through the second exercise, this initiative of action has been achieved, then, with subtle attentiveness, we become conscious of the feeling of an inner impulse of activity in the soul; we pour this feeling into the body, letting it stream down from the head to a point just above the heart.

In the third month, life should be centered on a new exercise - the development of a certain equanimity towards the fluctuations of joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain; 'heights of jubilation' and 'depths of despair' should quite consciously be replaced by an equable mood. Care is taken that no pleasure shall carry us away, no sorrow plunge us into the depths, no experience lead to immoderate anger or vexation no expectation give rise to anxiety or fear, no situation disconcert us, and so on. There need be no fear that such an exercise will make life arid and unproductive; far rather will it quickly be noticed that the experiences to which this exercise

is applied are replaced by purer qualities of soul. Above all, if subtle attentiveness is maintained, an inner tranquillity in the body will one day become noticeable; as in the two cases above, we pour this feeling into the body, letting it stream from the heart, towards the hands, the feet and, finally, the head. This naturally cannot be done after each exercise, for here it is not a matter of one single exercise but of sustained attentiveness to the inner life of the soul. Once every day, at least, this inner tranquillity should be called up before the soul and then the exercise of pouring it out from the heart should proceed. A connection with the exercises of the first and second months is maintained, as in the second month with the exercise of the first month.

In the fourth month, as a new exercise, what is sometimes called a 'positive attitude' to life should be cultivated. It consists in seeking always for the good, the praiseworthy the beautiful and the like, in all beings, all experiences, all things. This quality of soul is best characterized by a Persian legend concerning Christ Jesus. One day, as He was walking with His disciples, they saw a dead dog lying by the roadside in a state of advanced decomposition. All the disciples turned away from the disgusting sight; Christ Jesus alone did not move but looked thoughtfully at the corpse and said: 'What beautiful teeth the animal has!' Where the others had seen only the repulsive, the unpleasant, He looked for the beautiful. So must the esoteric pupil strive to seek for the positive in every phenomenon and in every being. He will soon notice that under the veil of something repugnant there is a hidden beauty, that even under the outer guise of a criminal there is a hidden good, that under the mask of a lunatic the divine soul is somehow concealed.

In a certain respect this exercise is connected with what is called 'abstention from criticism'. This is not to be understood in the sense of calling black white and white black. There is, however, a difference between a judgment which, proceeding merely from one's own personality, is coloured with the element of personal sympathy or antipathy, and an attitude which enters lovingly into the alien phenomenon or being, always asking: How has it come to be like this or to act like this? Such an attitude will by its very nature be more set upon helping what is imperfect than upon simply finding fault and criticizing.

The objection that the very circumstances of their lives oblige many people to find fault and condemn is not valid here. For in such cases the circumstances are such that the person in question cannot go through a genuine occult training. There are indeed many circumstances in life which

make occult schooling impossible, beyond a certain point. In such a case the person should not impatiently desire, in spite of everything, to make progress which is possible only under some conditions.

He who consciously turns his mind, for one month, to the positive aspect of all his experiences will gradually notice a feeling creeping into him as if his skin were becoming porous on all sides, and as if his soul were opening wide to all kinds of secret and delicate processes in his environment which hitherto entirely escaped his notice. The important point is to combat a very prevalent lack of attentiveness to these subtle things. If it has once been noticed that the feeling described expresses itself in the soul as a kind of bliss, endeavours should be made in thought to guide this feeling to the heart and from there to let it stream into the eyes, and thence out into the space in front of and around oneself. It will be noticed that an intimate relationship to this surrounding space is thereby acquired. A man grows out of and beyond himself, as it were. He learns to regard a part of his environment as something that belongs to him. A great deal of concentration is necessary for this exercise, and, above all, recognition of the fact that all tumultuous feelings, all passions, all over-exuberant emotions have an absolutely destructive effect upon the mood indicated. The exercises of the first months are repeated, as with the earlier months.

In the fifth month, efforts should be made to develop the feeling of confronting every new experience with complete open-mindedness. The esoteric pupil must break entirely with the attitude which, in the face of something just heard or seen, exclaims: 'I never heard that, or I never saw that, before; I don't believe it - it's an illusion.' At every moment he must be ready to encounter and accept absolutely new experiences. What he has hitherto recognized as being in accordance with natural law, or what he has regarded as possible, should present no obstacle to the acceptance of a new truth. Although radically expressed, it is absolutely correct that if anyone were to come to the esoteric pupil and say, 'Since last night the steeple of such and such a church has been tilted right over', the esotericist should leave a loophole open for the contingency of his becoming convinced that his previous knowledge of natural law could somehow be augmented by such an apparently unprecedented fact.

If he turns his attention, in the fifth month, to developing this attitude of mind, he will notice creeping into his soul a feeling as if something were becoming alive, astir, in the space referred to in connection with the exercise for the fourth month. This feeling is exceedingly delicate and subtle. Efforts must be made to be attentive to this delicate vibration in the

environment and to let it stream, as it were, through all the five senses, especially through the eyes, the ears and through the skin, in so far as the latter contains the sense of warmth. At this stage of esoteric development, less attention is paid to the impressions made by these stimuli on the other senses of taste, smell and touch. At this stage it is still not possible to distinguish the numerous bad influences which intermingle with the good influences in this sphere; the pupil therefore leaves this for a later stage.

In the sixth month, endeavours should be made to repeat all the five exercises again, systematically and in regular alternation. In this way a beautiful equilibrium of soul will gradually develop. It will be noticed, especially, that previous dissatisfactions with certain phenomena and beings in the world completely disappear. A mood reconciling all experiences takes possession of the soul, a mood that is by no means one of indifference but, on the contrary, enables one for the first time to work in the world for its genuine progress and improvement. One comes to a tranquil understanding of things which were formerly quite closed to the soul. The very movements and gestures of a person change under the influence of such exercises, and if, one day, he can actually observe that the character of his handwriting has altered, then he may say to himself that he is just about to reach a first rung on the upward path. Once again, two things must be stressed:

First, the six exercises described paralyse the harmful influence other occult exercises can have, so that only what is beneficial remains. Secondly, these exercises alone ensure that efforts in meditation and concentration will have a positive result. The esotericist must not rest content with fulfilling, however conscientiously, the demands of conventional morality, for that kind of morality can be extremely egotistical, if a man says: I will be good in order that I may be thought good. The esotericist does not do what is good because he wants to be thought good, but because little by little he recognizes that the good alone brings evolution forward, and that evil, stupidity and ugliness place hindrances along its path.

The Days of the Week

The pupil must pay careful attention to certain activities in the life of soul which in the ordinary way are carried on carelessly and inattentively. There are eight such activities.

It is naturally best to undertake only one exercise at a time, throughout a week or a fortnight, for example, then the second, and so on, then beginning over again. Meanwhile it is best for the eighth exercise to be carried out every day. True self-knowledge is then gradually achieved and any progress made is perceived. Then later on — beginning with Saturday — one exercise lasting for about five minutes may perhaps be added daily to the eighth so that the relevant exercise will occasionally fall on the same day. Thus: Saturday — Thoughts; Sunday — Resolves; Monday — Talking; Tuesday — Actions; Wednesday — Behaviour, and so on.

Saturday

To pay attention to one's ideas.

To think only significant thoughts. To learn little by little to separate in one's thoughts the essential from the nonessential, the eternal from the transitory, truth from mere opinion.

In listening to the talk of one's fellow-men, to try and become quite still inwardly, foregoing all assent, and still more all unfavourable judgments (criticism, rejection), even in one's thoughts and feelings.

This may be called: 'RIGHT OPINION'.

Sunday

To determine on even the most insignificant matter only after fully reasoned deliberation. All unthinking behaviour, all meaningless actions, should be kept far away from the soul. One should always have well-weighed reasons for everything. And one should definitely abstain from doing anything for which there is no significant reason.

Once one is convinced of the rightness of a decision, one must hold fast to it, with inner steadfastness.

This may be called: 'RIGHT JUDGMENT' having been formed independently of sympathies and antipathies.

Monday

Talking. Only what has sense and meaning should come from the lips of one striving for higher development. All talking for the sake of talking — to kill time — is in this sense harmful.

The usual kind of conversation, a disjointed medley of remarks, should be avoided. This does not mean shutting oneself off from intercourse with one's fellows; it is precisely then that talk should gradually be led to significance. One adopts a thoughtful attitude to every speech and answer taking all aspects into account. Never talk without cause — be gladly silent. One tries not to talk too much or too little. First listen quietly; then reflect on what has been said.

This exercise may be called: 'RIGHT WORD'.

Tuesday

External actions. These should not be disturbing for our fellow-men. Where an occasion calls for action out of one's inner being, deliberate carefully how one can best meet the occasion — for the good of the whole, the lasting happiness of man, the eternal.

Where one does things of one's own accord, out of one's own initiative: consider most thoroughly beforehand the effect of one's actions.

This is called: 'RIGHT DEED'.

Wednesday

The ordering of life. To live in accordance with Nature and Spirit. Not to be swamped by the external trivialities of life. To avoid all that brings unrest and haste into life. To hurry over nothing, but also not to be indolent. To look on life as a means for working towards higher development and to behave accordingly.

One speaks in this connection of 'RIGHT STANDPOINT'.

Thursday

Human Endeavour. One should take care to do nothing that lies beyond one's powers - but also to leave nothing undone which lies within them.

To look beyond the everyday, the momentary, and to set oneself aims and ideals connected with the highest duties of a human being. For instance, in the sense of the prescribed exercises, to try to develop oneself so that afterwards one may be able all the more to help and advise one's fellow-men — though perhaps not in the immediate future.

This can be summed up as: 'TO LET ALL THE FOREGOING EXERCISES BECOME A HABIT'.

Friday

The endeavour to learn as much as possible from life.

Nothing goes by us without giving us a chance to gain experiences that are useful for life. If one has done something wrongly or imperfectly, that becomes a motive for doing it rightly or more perfectly, later on.

If one sees others doing something, one observes them with the like end in view (yet not coldly or heartlessly). And one does nothing without looking back to past experiences which can be of assistance in one's decisions and achievements.

One can learn from everyone - even from children if one is attentive.

This exercise is called: 'RIGHT MEMORY'. (Remembering what has been learnt from experiences).

Summary

To turn one's gaze inwards from time to time, even if only for five minutes daily at the same time. In so doing one should sink down into oneself, carefully take counsel with oneself, test and form one's principles of life, run through in thought one's knowledge — or lack of it — weigh up one's duties, think over the contents and true purpose of life, feel genuinely pained by one's own errors and imperfections. In a word: labour to discover the essential, the enduring, and earnestly aim at goals in accord with it: for instance, virtues to be acquired. (Not to fall into the mistake of thinking that one has done something well, but to strive ever further towards the highest standards.)

This exercise is called: 'RIGHT EXAMINATION'.



3 Main Exercise

In the early morning, immediately after waking, before any other impressions have passed through the soul, the pupil gives himself up to his meditation. He strives for complete inner stillness, which means that all attention is withdrawn from impressions coming from outside and from all memories of everyday life. He also endeavours to free the soul from all cares and anxieties, which are apt to oppress it particularly at this time. Then the meditation begins. In order to facilitate this inner stillness, the consciousness is first of all directed to a single idea, perhaps that of 'Rest', and then this idea is allowed to disappear from consciousness so that no image whatsoever remains in the soul; the content of the following seven lines is then allowed to live in the soul, to the exclusion of everything else. These seven lines must be held in the consciousness for five minutes. If other images intrude, the pupil keeps returning again to these seven lines, in profound contemplation:

*In purest outpoured Light
Shimmers the Godhead of the world.
In purest Love toward all that lives
Outpours the god-hood of my soul.
I rest within the Godhead of the world;
There shall I find myself,
Within the Godhead of the world.*

After this has been practised for five minutes, the pupil goes on to the following:

He takes a calm, strong breath; after the in-breathing he breathes out, just as calmly and strongly, so that there is no pause between the in-breathing and the out-breathing. Then he abstains from breathing for a brief period, endeavouring however to let the breath remain wholly outside the body. The following are the approximate periods to be observed. The time taken by the in-breathing is optional, to be adjusted in accordance with one's capacities. The out-breathing should take twice as long as the

in-breathing, and the abstention from breathing three times as long as the in-breathing. If, for example, two seconds are needed for in-breathing, then four seconds are taken for the out-breathing, and six seconds for the abstention from breathing. This in-breathing, out-breathing, abstention from breathing is repeated four times. During the in-breathing and the out-breathing the mind is emptied of thought and the whole consciousness directed to the breathing; but during the first abstention from breathing the pupil concentrates on the point lying between and a little behind the eyebrows, at the root of the nose, inside the forepart of the brain, while he fills his consciousness exclusively with the words:

I Am

During the second abstention from breathing he concentrates on a point inside the larynx, while he fills his consciousness exclusively with the image:

It Thinks

During the third abstention from breathing he concentrates on the two arms and hands. The hands are either held folded, or the right is laid over the left. At the same time he fills his consciousness exclusively with the image:

She Feels

During the fourth abstention from breathing he concentrates on the whole surface of the body; that is, he pictures his bodily self with the utmost possible clarity and fills his consciousness with the image:

He Wills

If these exercises in concentration are continued strenuously for several weeks, something will be felt at those points upon which the consciousness has been focused: at the root of the nose, in the larynx, a stream in the hands and arms and on the whole outer surface of the body.

During concentration upon the arms and hands the pupil will feel as if a force were driving the hands apart; he lets them go apart, following the line of the force, but he does not suggest this to himself. The feeling must

come quite of itself.

In 'It thinks', the 'It' signifies the universal Cosmic Thinking which should live as impersonal power in our words. In 'She feels', the 'She' signifies the Cosmic Soul - it means that we should feel, not personally but impersonally, in the sense that the Cosmic Soul is impersonal. In 'He wills', the 'He' signifies God, within whose Will we instate our whole being.

When the pupil has carried through these four breathing exercises, he fills his consciousness for a while with one single image in which he is entirely absorbed, so that during this time nothing else whatever is present in the soul. This image is: 'My Power' or 'I in me' or 'I will'.

Then we pass on to complete absorption, for five minutes, in our own Divine Ideal. This exercise must be enacted with the utmost devotion and reverence.

The whole meditation need not last longer than fifteen minutes. In all the periods specified above, we do not go by the clock but by our feeling. Care is taken to adopt such a position of the body that the body itself cannot (because of fatigue, for instance) be a cause of distraction.

The previous Mantram in a rather more individualized form:

*In purest outpoured Light
Shimmers the Godhead of the world.
In purest Ether fire
Outpours the lofty Power that is 'I'.
I rest within the Spirit of the world,
There shall I find myself for ever,
In the Eternal Spirit of the world.*



4

Explanation of the Foregoing Exercise

Whoever strives for esoteric development must above all be clear that certain extremely simple formulae conceal a force which takes effect if these formulae or sentences are made alive in the soul. He does not rightly grasp what this implies if he tries to understand such sentences merely with the intellect. That way they say very little to him, to begin with. He must for a certain time fill his whole inner being with such a sentence, pouring himself into it with all the powers of his soul. Such a sentence is: 'I am'.

The whole secret of present-day human existence really lies in this sentence. Only a being possessed of an external form similar to that of earthly man today is able to think, feel and imbue these words with will. The form of such a being must have developed in such a way that the goal of all the forces working in the body was the frontward shape of the vaulted brow. This vaulted brow and the 'I am' belong together. Earlier in the evolution of the human form there was a stage when it had not yet pressed forward into such a brow. At that time the 'I am' could be neither inwardly thought, nor willed, nor felt. Now it would be quite wrong to believe that the form of the body, as described above, could itself bring forth the 'I am'. This 'I am' was already in existence, only it could not yet express itself in an appropriate form. Just as it now expresses itself in the bodily form of man, so, in an earlier time, it expressed itself in a world of soul. And it is this very power of the 'I am' which, having united in the far-distant past with a human body lacking the present brow-formation, impelled the forehead to assume its present shape. Hence it is that a man, by sinking deeply into the 'I am', can feel within himself the force which has moulded him in his present form. And this force is higher than the forces which, in his ordinary life, are active within him today. For it is the creative force of soul which forms the bodily nature out of the soul.

Anyone, therefore, who is aiming at esotericism must, for a short period, live entirely in the 'I am'. He must think this 'I am', while at the same time he experiences within himself something like: 'I rejoice that I, as an independent being, can participate in the work of shaping the world'. And he must also experience something like: 'I will my own existence; I resolve to place myself in the whole context of the world'. If a man concentrates

all this into a single, inner act of consciousness, and at the same time shifts the whole force of his consciousness upwards into the region of the brow and the inner members of the brain beneath it, then he actually transfers himself into a higher world out of which his brow-formation has been brought into being.

Let him not think, however, that he can attain these higher worlds tomorrow morning. He must have the patience to undertake this meditation day by day, over and over again, for a long time. If he has this patience, then, after some time, he will notice a thought arising within him - no longer a mere concept but a thought teeming with life and force. He will be able to say to himself: 'The force contained in the seed of a plant, impelling it to form the organs of the plant, must be inwardly alive, just like this thought of mine'. And soon this thought will reveal itself to him as if it were radiating light. In this inner radiation of light he feels happy, full of the joy of existence. A feeling permeates him which can only be described as joyful love in creative existence'. And a force imparts itself to the will as if the thought were radiating warmth through the will, energizing the will. All this can be drawn from sinking himself in the right way into the 'I am'. He will gradually realize that the highest intellectual, psychical and moral power comes to birth in him in this way, and that he thereby brings himself into a more and more conscious relationship to a higher world.

A second such sentence is: 'It thinks'. This 'It thinks' represents — in a way that corresponds to the account given of the 'I am' — the force through which the form of the human speech-organs has been developed from the higher worlds. When thinking was still functioning in a higher world of soul, and not yet within a human body, it worked from that higher world in such a way that organs of speech not yet existing in the human form were incorporated into it. If, therefore, the esoteric pupil sends his thinking, feeling and willing into the depths of the 'It thinks', at the same time concentrating his consciousness on the region of the larynx, there will arise in him an experience of the creative force of soul which, from the higher worlds, manifested in the creation of the organs of speech. If again he has the patience described above, he will experience how from the 'It thinks' rays go forth which are like the opening harmonies of spiritual music; they fill him with a feeling of reverent devotion, and at the same time with a force which tells him: 'What I will, as man, will gradually increase in wisdom.' An inkling will come to him of that force which as divine-spiritual force pours itself through the Cosmos, ordering all things according to measure, number and weight.

A third sentence is 'She feels'. In still earlier times, the force of this sentence, too, was not yet present within man but dwelt in a higher world of soul. Working down from that higher world, it re-cast the form of the human body. Until then there had been no difference between hands and feet; they were identically shaped organs of movement. Hence man had not yet attained his upright posture. It was a great step forward in human evolution when his anterior organs of movement were transformed into organs for manual work. He was then able to assume his upright posture and so to overcome his lower nature, inasmuch as his gaze was now directed out and upwards towards the heavenly worlds of Spirit. Thereby, too, he first became capable of fashioning karma. For it is only when a being possesses this particular form that his deeds come within his own, individual responsibility.

Thus it was that Spiritual Beings transformed man as the force of the 'She feels', which had previously reposed in them alone, streamed into the human body. If therefore the esoteric pupil sinks himself into the 'She feels', again in the way described above, he raises himself to the corresponding Creative Powers of the higher worlds. But together with the 'She feels' he must concentrate the whole of his consciousness on his arms and hands. Out of the thought 'She feels' an experience of indescribably blissful life will then stream to him. This feeling can be described as that of 'love in active existence'. Thereby he attains consciousness of how the Creative Love flows through cosmic space, and by its deed pours into all things the breath of life.

A fourth sentence is 'He wills'. It was by the force of this sentence that in a primeval past the human body, as a whole, was for the first time separated out as an independent being from its environment.

Before this force worked upon it from higher worlds, the human body was not shut off on all sides by an outer skin. Streams of substance flowed into the body from all sides and out of it again. It had no independent life but was entirely immersed in the life of its environment. In that epoch, of course, the environment was quite different from that of our own time. If the esoteric pupil now again sinks all his thinking, feeling and willing into the 'He wills', concentrating his consciousness on the whole surface of the outer skin, he transfers himself gradually into the sublime creative forces of the 'He wills'. These are the forces of the supersensible world whereby the things of the world of sense are given their form and shape. If he has sufficient endurance, the human being will feel, in the deeply inward experience of this thought, as if he were raised above all sensible-corporeal

existence and were looking down upon the field of sense-creation in order to work upon it in conformity with the Divine Thoughts attained in the spiritual world. The force proceeding from this thought is that of being joyously transported into pure spirituality, and the attainment of a consciousness that out of higher regions one can bring to the world of sense that of which it stands in need.

As he engrosses himself deeply in these thoughts that are forces, the esotericist will simultaneously have to focus attention on his breathing-process and, for a short time, transform it from an unconscious process into a consciously regulated act. For while the forces working from higher worlds upon the human form were achieving the transformation indicated, these same forces produced, within this form, the present breathing-system — the system necessary for a being whose body has an independent existence, the work of whose hands is his own responsibility, whose organs of speech can translate experiences in the life of soul into externally audible sounds. The ascent into the higher regions of world-creation is furthered by directing the attention in this way to the breathing process.

If the esoteric pupil learns by degrees thus to experience consciously the higher cosmic forces, which indeed are always slumbering within him but of which he has hitherto been unaware, then what he should already have assimilated through study becomes alive in him, begins to glimmer into perceptible reality. He should already have acquired the knowledge that man, together with the evolution of the Earth as a whole, passed through different stages of transformation before the present Earth came into being. These stages of transformation are called: the Saturn condition, the Sun condition, the Moon condition. The esotericist has also to acquire the knowledge that in later epochs there is a certain recapitulation of earlier conditions. Thus the Saturn, Sun and Moon conditions were recapitulated during the Earth-evolution, and in such a way that the Saturn repetition corresponds to the creative work of the 'He wills' on the outer sheath of the human being. The Sun recapitulation corresponds to the creative work of the 'She feels' on the arms and hands, and the Moon recapitulation to the creative work of the 'It thinks' on the organs of speech. The idea of the human body as a mere product of the sense-world is abandoned, and the esotericist finds his way to vision of those higher worlds whence come the forces that work creatively upon man. So, too, the bare concepts which have been acquired of such matters as Saturn, Sun and Moon become actual perceptions and experiences. And so indeed it must be if the way is to be found more and more from the exoteric to the esoteric.

The exercises given here must of course be regarded only as a beginning. The pupil must, however, work strenuously through them, and then he will reach the point where he can receive the further exercises through which still higher forces that slumber within him are awakened. The aim is to gain an inkling of the spiritual facts which underline the words, 'I am', 'I think', 'She feels', 'I will', and to feel their connection with the members of the human body, whose form has arisen from out of the spiritual world.

It should be added, for information, that in the above Words of Power, the three forms

IT-SHE-HE

are well founded in the nature of the higher worlds.

'It' is the Word of Power for the Cosmic Thinking: that is, for those Beings in the higher world to whom creative thinking belongs in just the same measure as sense-perception belongs to the human beings below them.

'She' is the Word of Power for the Cosmic Soul which originates the Feeling that streams out from it, whereas human feeling streams in, being stimulated from outside. This Feeling of the World Soul is the Creative Cosmic Love which brings all things into existence.

'He' is the Word of Power for the Cosmic Will, the Cosmic Spirit whose Will acts from out of Himself, whereas the human will is brought into action through the outer world. This 'He' is the Creative, Archetypal Power of the World.



Read & Write



kennethmdouglass.com