

# Mysteries of the Soul

## Reflection 2 - transcending dualities

### **Spiritual text: *The Admonition of the Soul 3:1-13***

As a soul, you are called to become a link between the unity and the multitude, a living connection between heaven and earth. This new genesis will arise when you realise, based on boundless awareness, that the soul is formless and timeless; when you experience that your consciousness is a revelation of a grandiose reality, all-pervasive and perfect. The domain of the soul is characterised by unity, freedom and love. These are not objective characteristics but rather qualities that can be experienced intensely, for the world of the soul is not localised in time and space but encompasses living experience, where there is no distinction between subject and object. To lead a conscious and attentive life in the here and now – to be alert, in fact – contributes to the possible awakening of the soul.

Another classical and proven way to make the soul wake up and become active is to let holy texts speak to you and to reflect on them. Mistakes are easily made in interpreting holy texts, mainly because different kinds of language are used all together. A distinction is often made between:

- Descriptive language, where the phrases literally reproduce what is meant; this language is usually the easiest to understand;
- Veiled language, where jargon that has been developed to identify notions that are not very concrete and sometimes also to hide deep truths from persons who do not understand;
- Mystery language, where texts or parts of texts have been received from heavenly areas of experience. These texts are usually completely incomprehensible to logical reasoning until they are understood on the basis of insights and powers derived from spiritual traditions.

It is also a very important fact that holy texts have been created within a certain context, that they are meant for certain people, in a certain period, in a certain area, in a certain culture. The Quran is said to have been given by the angel Gabriel to the prophet Mohammed and written down in virtually one session. The gospels in the Bible were probably inspired mainly by oral tradition.

### **Divine revelations**

The Quran and the Bible can be considered divine revelations in which universal truths have been revealed. These revelations are not the only disclosures of the divine reality. There are many other holy scriptures from many cultures and from different eras. It would not be wise to seek the truth only in holy scriptures. If you would place divine authority so exclusively outside yourself, you would tie yourself to forms that can never be entirely true, ignoring your inner knowledge and the prospect of divine revelation in the present moment.

The sacred does not reveal itself only in holy scriptures but also in nature and in man. In this regard the classical Rosicrucians from the seventeenth century spoke of the book T (Theos =

God or Testamentum = covenant), the book M (Mundi = world) and the book H (Homo = man). Humans are capable of reading these three books, that is to say, we can probe into deeper realities, into other dimensions, in order to fulfil our inner assignment. (See image 2)

In the past, much trouble has been caused by holy texts having been taken out of context, objectified and interpreted literally. Humanity is still struggling with significant problems arising from fundamentalism and fanaticism in the pseudo-religious field. Fortunately fundamentalism – the literal interpretation of holy texts – does not always lead directly to social difficulties, but it can contribute to the encapsulation of the soul, hindering its manifestation and development. To prevent mistakes in the interpretation of holy texts, it is wise to verify interpretations not only against your own inner self but also especially against an authentic spiritual tradition, or better still, against several spiritual traditions.

Tested methods are in use within these circles and experiences and findings have been extensively shared and often written down as well. In chapter 1 of Ashtavakra's Song there is a verse that can be easily misunderstood: *'You have no caste. No duties bind you. Formless and free, beyond the reach of the senses, the witness of all things. So be happy! Right or wrong, joy and sorrow, these are of the mind only. They are not yours. It is not really you who acts or enjoys'*. These words are meant for the soul. The soul is totally free indeed, having no desire. Some people infer from the above text that they are free if they are aware of the soul and live mindfully. Such living does lead to a certain enlightenment, but not to the resurrection of the inner man of which the holy scriptures speak, as clarified in the book [Spiritual Easter and Pentecost](#).

### **Impeding conditioning**

The resurrection of the inner man is the result of a new creation that unfolds in an entirely natural way, for such a renewal has nothing to do with time and space. Yet going a spiritual path requires a considerable amount of time and attention because dissolving obstructing conditions takes time. When those barriers are gone, the new creation unfolds by itself. It is comparable to a block of wood that is hidden under a heap of stones at the bottom of a deep lake. The wood has a natural tendency to rise to the surface of the water due to its lower density, but it can do that only after all the stones on top of it have been removed.

According to several authentic traditions, the awakening of the soul evokes an inner struggle. And it requires a lot of attention, energy, time and endurance to win this struggle in favour of the soul. Within Islam the term jihad is used in this respect. This notion is often mistakenly translated and understood as a holy war involving violence. In reality the word jihad refers to the aspiration and the struggle to do the right thing, to live in accordance with Allah's will. To live a mindful and heartfelt life is merely the beginning of the spiritual path. On the basis of awareness and receptivity for the truly holy and inner elevation, a personal and shining, twofold

garment of the soul will gradually be woven as one progresses on the gnostic path, subsequently the golden robe of the spirit-soul.

Chapter 3 of the booklet 'Admonition of the soul', accredited to the legendary Egyptian sage Hermes Trismegistus, may seem very clear at first glance. Both for the successful

entrepreneur having achieved all that he or she wants, and also for the loyal employee suffering from burn-out in the rat race of high-performance society, the following age-old words may be a feast of recognition and a source of encouragement. First the shining garment of the soul, symbolised by the pentagram or the five-pointed star, will be woven, and subsequently the golden robe of the spirit-soul. Chapter 3 of the booklet 'The Admiration of the soul', accredited to the legendary Egyptian sage Hermes Trismegistus, may seem very clear at first glance. Both the successful entrepreneur, having achieved all that he or she wants, and also for the loyal employee suffering from burnout in the rat race of high performance society. The following age-old words can be a feast of recognition and a source of encouragement.

*'How long, o soul, will you continue to be vexed by unsatisfied desires, ceaselessly fleeing from each sensation to its contrary, now from heat to cold and now from cold to heat, now from hunger to saturation and now from saturation to hunger. As long as you are in want of these corporeal goods, you are vexed by unsatisfied desire for them; if you get possession of them, then, all the time that you have them, you are tormented by fear of losing them; and if they quit you, and you no longer have them, then you are freed from that fear, but the loss of them affects you with grief and sorrow. So lay down, o soul, the cause of this pain and sadness. Do not regret to leave thus sadness, sorrow, fear and pain, caused by unsatisfied desires. Do not let it bother you any longer that you, satisfied in this way, become free of fear and happy.'*

### **To give up fascination**

This text is clearly meant to drive those people who have experienced the limitations of a life that focuses only on the sensory perceptible world to higher life, to the life of the soul. There is a risk that those people will exchange the fascination for the sensory world for a fascination for the world of the soul because they cannot wait to be liberated from the earthly life, which they experience as a vale of tears. This is an understandable albeit selfish thought that does not comply with man's spiritual assignment to be a living connection between heaven and earth.

If earth is your exclusive focus, you live in a symbolic darkness and do not establish a connection between heaven and earth. If heaven is your main focus – or what you consider to be heaven, although it is not – you neglect the earthly reality and you cannot be a bridge between the two. Classical holy texts sometimes lack subtlety because they are intended to drive people to inner renewal, to actual soul life. It is therefore necessary that impeding conditions that may have been of value in the past but is no longer functional, is broken open, so that processes of renewal can take place. This renewal will, in the end, also become manifest in the cells of the physical body.

In this twenty-first century our minds are much further developed than the minds of our ancestors. The New Zealand psychologist James Flynn concluded that the average scores of intelligence tests have continued to increase over the past century. He attributes this mainly to the ever-growing complexity of society which has gradually increased the importance of abstract thinking. Now that our cognitive capabilities have grown significantly, it would be to our benefit to interpret the subtle meanings of holy texts through inner comprehension. It would, for instance, be foolish to consider material reality as an illusion, as suggested in the

texts of Ashtavakra and Hermes. Whoever thinks that matter is not real should try to walk through a closed door.

### **To live in illusion**

Matter as such is not an illusion, even if it does keep changing form. We are living in illusion, however, if we consider the sensory perceptible world and forms in general as the only reality and immerse ourselves in it, just like the chained people in the allegory of Plato's cave consider the moving shadows on the rock wall as their only reality. Hermes Trismegistus is – to put it mildly – not expressing approval about someone who is focused solely on the hunt for earthly delights. In his 'Admonition of the Soul' he wrote:

*'For he who prefers unsatisfied desire to satisfaction, fear to absence of fear, and degradation to high dignity, is a fool; he who is a fool goes astray; and he who goes astray comes to destruction.'*

Although this is a very clear statement, it can cause quite a bit of pain. Does it demonstrate soul quality to call a fellow human being who hunts for unsatisfied desires a 'fool', when in fact he is doing the only thing that he can do? It does not, does it? The statement is easier to accept when it refers to someone who has inner knowledge, someone in whom the soul is awake and who has every possibility to avoid the wrong track but has intentionally chosen to follow it anyway. Is satisfaction really a better choice than chasing unsatisfied desires?

Chasing desires, after all, at least provides experience while satisfaction can lead to stagnation – 'use it or lose it'. It is no use to isolate yourself in order to gain false satisfaction. The earthly life has to be lived. The interpretation implies that here it is wrong to view 'satisfaction' as a synonym for passivity; harmony is the issue here. The soul human being is not passive; she is harmonious, because there is a good balance between activity and passivity, between breathing in and breathing out. The satisfaction that is mentioned here refers to resting in consciousness: there can be serene silence, but it can also occur in noisy, crowded places. Ashtavakra said:

*'Earth, fire and water, the wind and the sky – you are none of these. If you wish to be free, know you are the Self, the witness of all these, the heart of awareness. Set your body aside. Sit in your own awareness. You will at once be happy, forever still, forever free. You have no caste. No duties bind you. Formless and free, beyond the reach of the senses, the witness of all things. So be joyful!'*

We have all followed foolish ways and all of these ways have provided experiences that were often far from pleasant, but they did make us who we are now: a person probing into the mysteries of the soul. So foolish ways are followed not only by fools and fortunately they do not all lead to a downfall. Moreover fools who recognize their own foolishness can be transformed into enlightened sages.

This text from Hermes Trismegistus speaks directly to the soul and makes a clear distinction between two life fields. The soul is asked to make a choice in order to free itself from its inner attachment to the world in which everything in our experience moves between polarities. As a human being we can only be conscious of differences, of contrast, and so we need polarities in order to become conscious. And if we are able to handle the sword of the power of

distinction – that is the gift that we receive after lived countless experiences, the knowledge that can cut through your chains – then the inner master speaks to us:

*'Here below, o soul, is the physical world, the abode of unsatisfied desire, fear, degradation and sadness; there above is the world of the spirit, the abode of satisfaction, freedom from fear, high dignity, and joy. You have seen both worlds, and have had experience of both; now make your choice between them, in accordance with your experience. You can dwell in which of them you will; you will not be repelled or rejected from either. But it is impossible for a man to be at the same time vexed with unsatisfied want and fully satisfied, tormented by fear and free from fear, exalted and degraded, joyful and sorrowful. And therefore it is impossible for a man to combine love for this world with love for the other world. That cannot possibly be done.'*

### **Inner comprehension**

Here too inner comprehension is essential. The text says that the love for this world and the love for the world of the spirit cannot be united. Does this not contradict the assignment to love

everything and everyone in an impersonal sense? And does it actually comply with the vocation of the inner man to be a living connection between this world and the world of the spirit? Real love, after all, does not exclude anything or anyone! The expression 'love for this world' obviously means 'fascination for this world' and 'attachment to this world'. This fascination and this attachment have to disappear so that one can live in 'the world above' while at the same time working in 'the world below'.

Then such a man or woman is a living connection. He or she is like a tree, firmly rooted in the earth and at the same time stretching its top up into heaven. Man can be a living connection between the sensory world and the divine world if he crosses – in a symbolic sense – the water of the ever-changing world of forms. The following passage of Hermes can give us insight and hope as well as inspire us to overcome the dualities internally and thus gain, from the non-duality or unity, the rest of consciousness that we seek.

*'A boat, as long as it floats on the water, cannot be still or at rest; or if at any moment it is still, it is so only by chance, and forthwith the water begins again to shake and toss the things which float upon its surface. Then only is the boat at rest, when it is taken out of the water, and drawn up on the land, which is the place of the boat's origin, and is on a par with the boat in density and weight; then, but not till then, is the boat truly at rest. And even so, the soul, as long as it is involved in the processes of the physical world, cannot be still, nor be at rest, nor get any respite; but if it returns to its source and root, then it is still and is at rest, and reposes from the misery and debasement of its wandering in a foreign land.'*