

Friday reflection 6

SELF-INITIATION BASED ON SELF-AUTHORITY

The human being is not yet complete by far. The microcosm we inhabit holds great innate capabilities that can be employed once the Other-One-within-us regains the possession of its heavenly body. We, mortals, with our limited consciousness and ego instincts that are difficult to restrain, could easily unleash formidable and destructive forces with these capabilities.

In order to avoid further disaster and perhaps for our own safety, these powers can only follow their natural development after 'the knowledge of good and evil' has matured sufficiently. Only then is the outer man able to turn away from being innately self-centred and devote himself to the life of the Other-One-within-him. The life of the inner man – the new soul – is very pure and unfolds in a life domain that is characterised by conscious unity.

The immense capabilities of the microcosm are therefore in safe hands only when they are used by the Other-One-within, having become its tools. From the moment that the new soul begins to develop, the microcosm will be healed and its latent abilities can then be activated and developed as intended in the divine plan.

Through 'the fall' not only the development of the original Man came to a halt but also that of the entire creation – it became frozen as it were. All visible and especially all invisible life in creation is waiting for the healing and restoration of all microcosms. Only when the last one is healed and restored will all of creation be able to proceed on its way.

The awakening microcosms are being watched as with bated breath while they try to work their way back to the true life. And all nine spiritual hierarchies stand ready to assist humanity.

In our current phase of development we generally experience ourselves as a personality, as an 'I' and as the centre of our existence. We have become more or less familiar with the four aspects of our personality: the physical body, the etheric body, the astral or desire body and the mental body.

These four bodies have been developed over the course of millions of years, during several human ages. Considered as a unity, matter-born humanity was called to be a suitable but temporary replacement for the disintegrated heavenly body of the fallen original Man so that some of his microcosmic capabilities – at least in a weakened form – could again be employed.

The etheric body contains the human life-force. It is subtle and penetrates the entire physical body with its ethers, ensuring that the physical body is what we call 'alive.' All by itself the physical body is nothing but a gigantic collection of atoms. The etheric body gathers these atoms together into a physical body and ensures its vitality and strength.

The living physical body plays a key role on the spiritual path, because it enables us to gain experiences in the material sphere of life. Animals and plants also have physical bodies and etheric bodies

The astral body is subtler and larger than the etheric and physical body. It is the domain where human emotions and instincts are located in all their variety, from the basest to the most sublime.

Just as the physical body operates by means of actions in the material world, likewise the astral body expresses itself in what we know as passions – emotions and desires. Animals also possess astral bodies. The activity of the astral body can be 'perceived' in the heart through our emotions. It presents itself in our blood in the form of human hormones, which control all biological actions. For example, fear becomes adrenaline with its paralysing effect, narrowing the mind by focusing on the object of fear. Feelings of joy are related to endorphins which supply energy and make the mind more open to the environment.

And the mental body – not yet fully grown by far – offers us the ability to 'think,' to receive and produce thoughts. Arrayed around the head like a spherical cloud, it sets the astral body 'on fire' by means of its sparks of thought. That is the reason why we are often advised to place a guard on our thoughts. The mental body belongs to the toolbox of faculties of the animal we call 'man.'

However, the complete human personality is not fourfold but sevenfold. The personality has three higher aspects at its disposal, aspects that steer the fourfold bodily figure through life. Together they are called the 'threefold ego.' A pale

reflection of the original threefold ego is active in every physical human being as thinking, feeling and willing. In their coherence, they always lead a person towards a visible deed. Without this 'helmsman' the fourfold human personality would not be able to move into action nor know where to go.

Usually one of the three aspects is predominant, which gives rise to the occurrence of the thinking type, the feeling type and the active type of personalities and the resulting continual confusion, mutual misunderstanding and disharmony.

During thousands of years these three aspects of the ego have been developed during various periods and cultures: willing in the Persian culture (5000 – 3000 BC), feeling in the Egyptian-Chaldean culture (3000 – 750 BC) and thinking in the Greco-Roman culture (750 BC – 1400 AD). During the latter time period Christianity also emerged as the synthesis of all the previous liberating religions.

But, as we noted, man is not yet complete. In us mortal beings, these abilities function only in an obscured and weakened way. Nevertheless, their influence on the world and humanity is formidable although not always exactly uplifting.

In the future development of humanity, these three faculties will have to manifest themselves at ever increasing levels of activity. While contemporary man generally considers his current thinking faculty as the highest achievement of humankind, in fact it is still in an embryonic stage. Yet daily we can observe around us what this embryonic thinking can already achieve.

In Theosophy the three higher aspects of the sevenfold personality are called Manas, Buddhi and Atma. In Anthroposophy one speaks of spirit-self, the life-spirit and the spirit-man relating respectively to imagination, inspiration and intuition (inner knowledge and understanding). Attempts have been made to methodically and consciously develop these 'higher powers' to try to lift material man up into the subtler fields. It may be clear that such methods, applied separately from true soul development, could cause further damage to the microcosm and the four vehicles. I-strengthening methods will definitely lead to a stronger bond to the material sphere instead of liberation from it.

True spirituality is always related to the dimension of the soul. So far the soul figure, the resurrection body, is the highest attainable state for human beings. But all possibilities of understanding, love and service with regard to the divine are already enclosed in it. Transfiguration, the process of change of the sevenfold personality, is a logical and natural consequence of acquiring such a new soul state. The soul awakens in the heart centre, in the 'cave of Bethlehem,' where the passions of the personality also reside. The passions are symbolised as the ox and the donkey in the story of the birth of Jesus. As soon as the light-power of the spirit-spark – also called the kundalini of the heart – is released in this cave, then not only does the soul begin to grow but the personality changes as well.

Gradually the three higher aspects of thinking, willing and feeling will be brought to a higher level in a totally natural and safe way. As soon as a person consciously chooses to leave behind the paths of his old crystallised thinking, feeling and willing, he simultaneously takes the first step on the path of self-initiation.

On that new path the light of the soul ignites new capabilities; the only thing you can contribute to this process is to deliberately free yourself from the ingrained patterns of thinking, feeling and willing. The inner light does the work. Initiation into the Christian Mysteries will therefore take place by means of the light itself, and that only to the extent that one is able to tolerate this light. Nothing or no one can do this for somebody else or act as an intermediary. Each human being carries his own priest in his heart.

The Christian mystery of initiation has nothing to do with secret knowledge, exercises or rites which would make one more powerful or enable him to achieve whatever he wants. On the contrary, by placing the sevenfold personality in service to the inner being, he enters the path of the endura, the path of 'diminishing daily.' The Christ Power which is in him and around him enables him to do so. Initiation in the Gnostic sense is not something that is ministered by one person to another; rather it is a process that a human being can realise within himself or herself through insight and dedication. 'Love for all and everything' is essential but not sufficient for initiation. In the Christian Mysteries based on the inner Jesus, three higher capabilities are developed in conjunction with one another: understanding, loving and serving. Understanding and serving are inseparable; their relationship is symbolised in the story of the two sisters Mary and Martha of Bethany, of whom it is said:

Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village, and a woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard his words. But Martha was burdened with much serving and came to him saying, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she may help me." Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful, and Mary has chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her."

The Gospel of the Holy Twelve 35: 9-11

Usually one considers this symbolic story as an advice to give priority to the inner life, to 'the food and drink that does not perish.' But if we realise that Martha and Mary live in 'one house', in one microcosm, then we can see Mary as the 'new understanding' and her sister Martha as the 'new serving'; and a completely new perspective unfolds. A spiritual path based on the inner Jesus is an individual path which is being walked, however, in a continuous awareness of unity. But it is also a path that can sometimes drive a person to despair and deep doubt because every painstaking step forward is usually preceded by what seems to be three steps back.

However the invisible power of the Gnostic path lies in the fact that the soul-light-power which is released while struggling forward on each step becomes immediately available to everyone and everything. Each individual step forward by one human being signifies a step forward for all of creation, which is waiting for this to happen. That is serving in the gnostic sense. And Martha's serving task, can only be carried out properly when it is accompanied by its sister task, Mary's 'clear understanding.' Mary sits at the feet of Jesus. The phrase 'sitting at the feet of...' is a universal term for 'being taught.' Similarly the word 'Upanishad' literally means 'sitting down near...' in the sense of a pupil sitting at the feet of the master. Mary symbolises the person who is following the path of initiation, gaining knowledge and experience within a living spiritual tradition.

This Mary corresponds to the light-power of the Seven-Spirit flowing in the 'descending serpent' of the serpent-fire system. Due to the transformation of the chakras the natural 'I am'-orientation is converted into an orientation toward the soul. Her sister Martha is the person whose mind is being cleansed and in whom several purifications are occurring. The descending light-power has partially neutralised the coiled kundalini serpent in the root chakra, thereby weakening the influence of karma. Martha can therefore serve from the soul. Martha represents the light-power in the 'ascending serpent.' The two sisters Martha and Mary have a brother, Lazarus, who also lives in their home. He, too, is a disciple of Jesus, the new soul. The veiled and intriguing story about the resurrection of Lazarus can now be placed in an entirely new light. This story is not mentioned in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, but only in chapter 11 of the Gospel of John – the most Gnostic gospel in the Bible – and chapter 56 of *The Gospel of the Holy Twelve*. Lazarus and his sisters Martha and Mary live in the village of Bethany, which means house of figs or house of misery and poverty. The fig tree is a symbol of initiation and awakening; 'misery and poverty' refer to the damaged state of the microcosm. They live in that house. And Jesus comes to visit them there.

Esoteric Christianity considers the Gospels to be symbolic representations of inner spiritual events. While Mary and Martha correspond to the gnostic energy flows in the two serpents to the right and the left of the spinal cord, their brother Lazarus symbolises the central serpent-fire column in the spinal cord. On the path of rebirth of the soul the vitality of the biological serpent-fire, which is naturally focused on self-preservation, diminishes. Therefore it is said that Lazarus is sick and dying. And if the new gnostic stream of power has been restored thanks to the work of Mary and Martha, the old consciousness fire has ultimately died. The endura has then taken place. The whole body has been purified and prepared to such a degree that the gnostic light-power can also become active in the spinal cord.

If the outer man thus initiates himself in the powers of the soul, the Other-One-within-him, then the old serpent fire will make way for a new serpent-fire as the central consciousness. The old serpent dies and a new serpent rises. Thus Lazarus is raised from the dead by Jesus, by the light of the soul. If the new threefold stream of the serpent fire has been restored, then the resurrection body can also be constructed. For it is a law of nature that a field of energy arises as a body around every current, in a way similar to light emanating from a light bulb. A new astral body originates from the new serpent-fire stream. It is the 'mantle of Love.'

This is the third mystery. The 'death' of the microcosm is overcome, undone, and the tomb is found empty. The original capabilities of the Man Adam-Eve become active again and through living experience the full depth of Christ's announcement is recognised and acknowledged: *"I am the resurrection and the life; he that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die."*

The Gospel of the Holy Twelve 56:10