The Complete Mystic Missal

The complete series of The Mystic Missal Newsletter, from 2001 to 2011.
Includes the teacher biographies and system descriptions, Tricks and Traps, Commentaries, and Comic Philosophy.

Bob Fergeson

The Complete Mystic Missal

In 2001, Bob Fergeson began publishing a spiritual newsletter, The Mystic Missal. First published as an email, then later on a website as well, this informative newsletter gave beginning seekers a foothold on the spiritual path. Starting with a description and commentary of a spiritual teacher or system, it also held an informative and related essay, spiritual tips called Tricks and Traps, and a bit of Comic Philosophy. He continued to share what he had found on the spiritual path through The Mystic Missal until 2011.

Now the entire collection of ‘missals’ is available in book form. Easy to read and understand, it continues to give newcomers a clear path through today's maze of spiritual teachings.

Copyright 2025 by Robert M. Fergeson.

Dates listed at the end of each newsletter are the approximate date of first publication

Contents

.....1
The Complete Mystic Missal.....2
Contents.....4
Eckhart Tolle.....7
Knots upon Knots.....8
John Wren-Lewis.....10
Forgetting.....10
Nisargadatta.....13
Pride and Fear, the Curse of Alienation.....14
Meister Eckhart.....16
True Direction.....17
Roy Masters.....19
Where Are You Headed?.....20
Castaneda.....22
Words... or Experience?.....23
J. Krishnamurti.....26
Accident, Sublimation, Transformation.....27
Carl Jung.....29
The Trap of Projection.....30
Insight.....32
"As Above, So Below".....33
Colin Wilson.....36
Working for Inspiration.....37
St. John of the Cross.....40
The Fountain.....41
Who Do You Love?.....42
Jacob Boehme.....45
The Mechanics of Dreaming.....47
Zen.....50
Fact and Fantasy.....51
Tibetan Book of the Dead.....54
What Have We Lost?.....55
Franklin Merrell-Wolff.....58
The Shifting Image of Identity.....59
Energy Conservation and Transmutation.....63
Spiritual Ecology.....65
Ramakrishna.....68
The Inward Journey.....70
Cloud of Unknowing.....74
Why Work?.....76
John of Ruysbroeck.....79
Our State of Mind: The Ring that Binds.....81
Tricks and Traps 1.....84
Blavatsky.....87
Losing One's Head for Nothing: The True Adventure.....89
Containing Tension.....94
The Gnostics.....98
The Gap of Time.....100
Cathars.....103
Movie Madness.....105
U.G. Krishnamurti.....108
The Hi-Jacking of Thought: The Paradox of Fear and Death.....110
Suzanne Segal.....114
Obvious or Oblivious?.....116

Franz Hartmann 119
Why Don't We Get It? 122
William Blake 126
St. Nicholas and Jehoshua 132
The Paradox of Change 134
Perennial Philosophy 137
On Direction 139
Tao Te Ching and Lao Tzu 143
Observing Our Afflictions 145
Advaita 149
Earnest Seeker or Sleepy Dreamer? 151
Tricks and Traps 154
The Trap of Compensation 157
Enneagram 161
That Which Is Not 164
Richard Rose 167
The Dividing Mind 169
I Ching, or Book of Changes 172
Thinking and Receiving 174
Prayer 177
The Prayer of Looking 179
Spiritual Retreat 181
A Double Edged Sword 183
Maurice Nicoll 187
12 Concise Super Wisdoms by Nicoll 188
Working Within 189
Ouspensky 193
Grounding 195
Gurdjieff 198
Fisherman, Hiker, Driver: Who Am I? 199
William Samuel 202
Intelligent Spontaneity 203
Douglas Harding 207
A Formula for Self-Discovery 209
Joseph Sadony 212
The Ties That Bind 215
Wei Wu Wei 218
Success Through Failure? 219
Benoit 222
Something for Nothing 224
Art 227
We're All One 229
J.G. Bennett 232
Double Trouble 234
Boethius and Marcus Aurelius 237
No-Mind: A Trilogy 239
Padre Pio 243
Pride or Love? 244
Shakers/Quakers 247
The Love of Tail Chasing 249
Maharishi 251
Fear of Effort 253
Dialogue 255
Identification 257
Dreams and Journaling 260
On Nostalgia and Desire 262
12 Step Program 264

Finding a Teacher 266
Puer Aeternus 269
What Do You Love? 270
Tension 273
Containing Tension 274
The Listening Attention 277
The Gumb 279
Rumi 283
An Intuitive Approach 285
Paracelsus 288
On Learning to Listen 290
Jim Burns 293
A Formula for Self-Discovery 296

Eckhart Tolle

This month's Missal features a modern day mystic, Eckhart Tolle. Tolle's main message is one of becoming free from one's identity with the mind, and instead becoming one with our true Self, which he refers to as 'Being'. This is accomplished through staying present in the Now, and removing the need to be in time, either the past or future. This fixation on time, especially 'psychological time' is the cause of our needless suffering. Our identification with our painful memories, or fear of the future, creates within us a 'pain-body', which is called up through our habitual reactions. Tolle tells us that only through staying in the present, and Being, can we be free of our mind and its misery, and access the power of Now.

His website gives the following biography: " He was born in Germany where he spent the first 13 years of his life. After graduating from the University of London, he was a research scholar and supervisor at Cambridge University. At the age of 29 a profound spiritual transformation virtually dissolved his old identity and radically changed the course of his life. The next few years were devoted to understanding, integrating and deepening that transformation, which marked the beginning of an intense inward journey. Eckhart is not aligned with any particular religion or tradition. In his teaching, he conveys a simple yet profound message with the timeless and uncomplicated clarity of the ancient spiritual masters: there is a way out of suffering and into peace."

In his book, The Power of Now, he details his system of finding release from the mind in time, and talks of various 'portals' through which we can access our true Being, in the Now. I find his book to be very accessible, though somewhat repetitive and New Agey. It is written in a question and answer type format, the material taken from numerous lectures and talks.
Tolle gives much material on the ways and means to stay in the present, and avoid the trap of the mind in time, but offers little on how he himself found this.

"The reason why some people love to engage in dangerous activities, such as mountain climbing, car racing, and so on, although they may not be aware of it, is that it forces them into the Now - that intensely alive state that is free of time, free of problems, free of thinking, free of the burden of the personality. Slipping away from the present moment even for a second may mean death. Unfortunately, they come to depend on a particular activity to be in that state. But you don't need to climb the north face of the Eiger. You can enter that state now."

" All negativity is caused by an accumulation of psychological time and denial of the present. Unease, anxiety, tension, stress, worry - all forms of fear - are caused by too much future, and not enough presence. Guilt, regret, resentment, grievances, sadness, bitterness, and all forms of unforgiveness are caused by too much past, and not enough presence."

" The whole essence of Zen consists in walking along the razor's edge of Now - to be so utterly, so completely present that no problem, no suffering, nothing that is not who you are in your essence, can survive in you. In the Now, in the absence of time, all your problems dissolve. Suffering needs time; it cannot survive in the Now."

All quotes from *The Power of Now*, by Eckhart Tolle

Commentary

Knots upon Knots

I've noticed a similarity in how knots of energy are built and maintained in the mind, and the ways simple knots are tied in rope. Let's take a look at the square knot and the mind, and compare these two processes. Feel free to take a shoelace or piece of twine and follow along.

A square knot starts out as two separate pieces, a simple duality, which end up being joined as one. Similarly, the mind of a child starts out as a blank matrix, in duality, which ends up as a very complicated, but single binding unit. There are two parts to this process of becoming bound into the dual world: the initial percepts, and the compensating reactions. Starting with this pair of opposites, the entire mind, or personality, is built.

When the first part of the knot is tied, we have two different ends, one layed on top of the other. In the photo, the blue strand is first layed over the black. When a strong emotional percept is imprinted on the mind we have, say, the black strand . When the next percept, or reaction, comes in, we have the blue strand laid across the black. A pattern is being formed. There's still not much tension here, the mind is still relatively simple and relaxed, but a fundamental change has occurred. A knot has been tied, the awareness bound into duality, and the initial freedom lost. A tension has been created that must be compensated. This compensation is necessary for the continued formation and balancing of the mind's pattern, or manifestation. The mind is continually drawn outward in this fashion. Since the purpose of nature is to create minds that are complicated enough for self-survival, and the mind and its dimension are dual in nature, the compensation is not to return to freedom, but to lead the mind further and further into duality. A balancing, opposite tension must be found, a compensation, which will further tie the knot and bind the awareness.

If we look at how the second half of the square knot is formed, we may see a clue as to how this compensation process works. The blue strand again wraps over the black, but from the other direction. This insures a good, working knot, one that will not pull loose under pressure. An opposing tension is needed to compensate for the original knot. Left balances right, up compensates down, black-white, life-death, good-bad, etc. The entire mind system is built up in this manner, getting so complex that the original knots are long buried under the Gordian Knot of personality and habit, which is taken to be our very being. In psychology, a mind that has good, working compensations is said to be healthy. The mind will operate under strain without coming unraveled.

The down side to this is, is that a healthy mind has no reason to question itself. Here we see the value of trauma and suffering, if self-knowledge and freedom is our goal. To find the truth about ourselves may entail a good bit of unraveling. Through these initial steps of self-discovery we may find we are seemingly but mechanical behavior

patterns, knots upon knots. Tying new and better knots may make us better robots, but not until we go back beyond duality, beyond knots and patterns of mind, will we perhaps see the blank field of our simple awareness, our true being.
Men such as Eckhart Tolle have given us the map to escape from the suffering of the mind and its endless knots, but we must make the journey and return to Being ourselves.

Bob Fergeson

" The dawn breaks because another day and night have died,
but the sky was there through all." - Richard Rose

Quotes -

- " What do you need problems for? The mind unconsciously loves problems because they give you an identity of sorts. This is normal, and it is insane.
- A great deal of what people say, think, or do is actually motivated by fear, which of course is always linked with having your focus on the future and being out of touch with the Now. As there are no problems in the Now, there is no fear either." - Eckhart Tolle
- " That which people take to be their self, their identity, their very being, is itself only an experience -- witnessed by something anterior to that identity, which is completely impersonal and which is the only real being." -Bob Cergol
- " Spend time alone: From a few minutes a day to weeks-long isolations. This is a time to evaluate what you have accomplished and where you want to go. It is a time of intense concentration, intense looking within. When alone, it is easier to realize that we are the sole judge of our life and what matters is that we find the thing which settles our soul. A person may camp out, get a cheap motel room, go to a retreat center, or even hide out in their own room." -Shawn Nevins
- " I do believe one ought to face facts. If you don't they get behind you and may become terrors, nightmares, giants, horrors. As long as one faces them one is top dog." - Katherine Mansfield -
- " Free thinkers are generally those who never think at all."- Laurence Sterne

07/01/01

John Wren-Lewis

This month's Missal features the down under mystic, John Wren-Lewis. His is a remarkable story, one of a scholarly skeptic who was suddenly transformed as the result of a near-death experience from being poisoned on a bus in Thailand. It is refreshing because he was never a "spiritual " person before the transformation, and had a mistrust for all things mystical. His story helps us to know that a permanent spiritual transformation is not limited to those of any particular discipline, and is everyone's birthright, whether religious or not. Upon awakening in a hospital bed, he felt "as if I'd emerged freshly made (complete with all the memories that constitute my personal identity) from a vast blackness that was somehow radiant, a kind of infinitely concentrated aliveness or "pure consciousness" that had no separation within it, and therefore no space or time." This state continues up until the present day, some 18 years later.
His previous mistrust of all things mystical has vanished, but he doesn't consider the main spiritual systems to be of much value because "they all get bogged down in their own basic idea of a 'path', which inevitably suggests that 'higher consciousness' is a goal to be achieved, *thereby reinforcing that very preoccupation with one's personal future which is the cause of all the trouble."*

" My impression is that my personal consciousness was actually "snuffed out" (the root meaning, according to some scholars, of the word "nirvana") and then recreated by a kind of focusing-down from the infinite eternity of that radiant dark pure consciousness. An old nursery rhyme conveys it better than any high philosophy:

Where did you come from, baby dear ?
Out of Everywhere into here. "

- John Wren-Lewis

Commentary

Forgetting

In Dan Sutera's article on John Wren-Lewis, a very important point is brought up, that of forgetting. This problem of forgetting gets little mention is most esoteric circles. Wren-Lewis tells us of two forms that this forgetting of ourselves can take. The first he calls a "slipout" and is caused by focusing the attention on and through the mind. Usually this does not lead to a complete forgetting, but occasionally he forgets "eternity" and the slipout occurs. The return occurs when he remembers the "Dazzling Dark" and returns to the "correct "seeing, or eternity consciousness. This forgetting is relatively minor, as long as the attention, or value, placed on the mind is minimal. The second forgetting, that he refers to as "screening", is much more severe in that it is a complete loss of the Dazzling Dark, his own dark night of the soul. This has occurred rarely and comes from intense stress. Let's take a look at these two types of forgetting and see how they occur in daily life.

G.I. Gurdjieef remarked that we need tools to remind us of ourselves, he called these 'alarm clocks'. Little mental mechanisms we can put into play to remind us of our aim to 'remember ourselves' or to reconnect to the Dazzling Dark. These alarm

clocks are necessarily of a personal nature, and serve to pull us back from the outward mind, reminding us to 'go within' once more. Sooner or later these alarms will lose their effectiveness by becoming habit patterns and will need to be changed. One of the best methods of remembering the need to staying awake is to take advantage of our fellow seekers. Nothing serves to remind us more of when we are slipping into the mechanical mind than a good shock from a friend or fellow group member. They may know us better than we know ourselves.

The more severe form of forgetting can be caused by becoming engrossed in the first until we have become so hypnotized by the problems and demands of the outward mind that we become wholly identified with its self-madness. Wren-Lewis refers to this madness as "some kind of inflation or hyperactivity of the psychological survival-system." The ego/mind becomes wholly concerned with its own personal brand of self-survival and we no longer have any freedom of attention. We have lost the ability to go within and listen to the Dark. At this point, Grace and surrender may be our only hope. Again, our fellows can help us see the pattern of ego-infatuation and help us to relax and turn the inner head back towards its source.

One of the best alarm clocks we can have is to remind ourselves of the three lines of spiritual work, as taught by Gurdjieef/Ouspensky. These simple reminders can help us to remember that we are not alone in our struggle, that there is help to break the spell of the outer-directed mind.

Bob Fergeson

The Three Lines of Work:

1: Work on Oneself. How do you work on yourself in day-to-day life? How do you try to see yourself, go within, meditate, etc., while going about the business of everyday life?
2: Working with Others: What are your thoughts about ladder work? Do you have a teacher, and are you helping someone? Can you remember and perhaps relate to the seeker you were, say, five or ten years ago? How would you help that person if you met them today? What will be your legacy to them?
3: Working for the Sake of the Work:. How do think you could be useful to the Work, in your present situation? Does this interest you, and what do you feel about it? Do you think the Work needs to be preserved and passed on, and how could you help with this?

Quotes -

- " The main point I want to make here, however, is that perhaps the most extraordinary feature of eternity consciousness is that it doesn't feel extraordinary at all. It feels quintessentially natural that personal consciousness should be aware of its own Ground, while my first fifty-nine years of so-called "normal" consciousness, in ignorance of that Ground, now seem like a kind of waking dream. It was as if I'd been entranced from birth into a collective nightmare of separate individuals struggling in an alien universe for survival, satisfaction and significance.
- Finite life is a continual instant-by-instant voyaging out from the "eternal Home" into the time process to discover new "productions of time" for eternity to love as they arise and pass away." - John Wren-Lewis -

- " Eternity is in love with the productions of time.
- Everything possible to be believed is an image of truth." -William Blake-
- "Look upon the world as empty," the Buddha replied. "This is the way to overcome death. Cease thinking of yourself as an entity that really exists. If you look on the world in this way you will never be seen by the king of death."
- "Love is indescribable and unconditional. I could tell you a thousand things that it is not, but not one that it is." - Duke Ellington -
- "The man who makes no mistakes does not usually make anything." - Edward John Phelps -
- "Wisdom is born, stupidity is learned." - Russian proverb-
- " When I was a young man I vowed never to marry until I found the ideal woman. Well, I found her - but, alas, she was waiting for the perfect man." - Robert Schuman

10/1/01

Nisargadatta

This month's Missal takes a look at Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj, an Indian guru of this century. His is an unusual case in that he had no spiritual training until he was in his thirties, when he was introduced to his future guru through a friend. This was the turning point in his life, as he progressed rapidly from Maruti, shop-keeper and cigarette seller, to the cigarette-smoking jnani [Self-realized individual], teacher and saint from Bombay, Nisargadatta Maharaj.
He ascribes this rapid transformation to his complete faith and trust in his guru - "through faith in my teacher and obedience to his words, I realized my true being...". He spent the last decades of his life making himself available to anyone who wished to find the Truth, passing on in 1981.
His teaching style pulled no punches. He continually turned the questioner back on himself, prodding him to go within and see for himself what IS. He advised focusing on the feeling 'I am', which brings one back to the start of consciousness, and from there to go beyond all thought.
In the modern spiritual classic, I AM THAT (Acorn Press), Nisargadatta is seen in the classic student/teacher format, patiently and forcefully leading the student to question his deepest beliefs, to go beyond the mind directly to the Self.

Questioner: I am not well. I feel rather weak. What am I to do?
Maharaj: Who is unwell, you or the body?
Q: My body, of course.
M: Yesterday you felt well. What felt well?
Q: The body.
M: You were glad when the body was well and you are sad when the body is unwell. Who is glad one day and sad the next?
Q: The mind.
M: And who knows the variable mind?
Q: The mind.
M: The mind is the knower. Who knows the knower?
Q: Does not the knower know itself?
M: The mind is discontinuous. Again and again it blanks out, like in sleep or swoon, or distraction. There must be something continuous to register discontinuity.
Q: The mind remembers. This stands for discontinuity.
M: Memory is always partial, unreliable and evanescent. It does not explain the strong sense of identity pervading consciousness, the sense of 'I am'. Find out what is at the root of it.
Q: However deeply I look, I find only the mind. Your words 'beyond the mind' give me no clue.
M: While looking with the mind, you cannot go beyond it. To go beyond, you must look away from the mind and its contents.
Q: In what direction am I to look?
M: All directions are within the mind! I am not asking you to look in any particular direction. Just look away from all that happens in your mind and bring it to the feeling 'I am'. The 'I am' is not a direction. It is the negation of all direction. Ultimately even the 'I am' will have to go, for you need not keep on asserting what is obvious. Bringing the mind to the feeling 'I am' merely helps in turning the mind away from everything else.
The real does not die, the unreal never lived.

Once you know that death happens to the body and not to you, you just watch your body falling off like a discarded garment. The real you is timeless and beyond birth and death. The body will survive as long as it is needed. It is not important that it should live long.
Questioner: Kindly tell us how you realized.
Maharaj: I met my guruu when I was 34 and realized by 37.
Q: What happened? What was the change?
M: Pleasure and pain lost their sway over me. I was free from desire and fear. I found myself full, needing nothing. I saw that in the ocean of pure awareness, on the surface of the universal consciousness, the numberless waves of the phenomenal worlds arise and subside beginninglessly and endlessly. As consciousness, they are all me, as events they are all mine. There is a mysterious power that looks after them. That power is awareness, Self, Life, God, whatever name you give it. It is the foundation, the ultimate support of all that is, just like gold is the basis for all gold jewelry. And it is so intimately ours!

"All moulding oneself to a pattern is a grievous waste of time." - Nisargadatta

Commentary

Pride and Fear, the Curse of Alienation

When one begins the process of looking at oneself, many hitherto unknown facets of personality begin to appear. At first we may wish to think the meditative process itself has created these behavior patterns, but soon enough we come to see that our previous state of sleep was greater than we wished to admit. If we keep at our practice long enough, we will begin to see that certain states of mind are behind the newly discovered patterns, and may be shocked to discover our true motives in day-to-day-life. When these facts come to light, the first reaction may be to sort the behaviors into good and bad categories, and then set ourselves to the grim task of removing the negative while accenting the good. In other words, the ego will start a campaign of behavior-modification meant to bring us closer to 'perfection'. Actually this is nothing new, having been going on since birth, but the new found level of awareness gives the ego a new sense of cleverness. It's going to outwit itself this time, for sure.

When we begin to see the underlying motivation for a negative pattern of behavior is, say, pride, we can hardly resist wanting to counter it by creating a projection of humility or altruism. If we are honest, we may see through this, but be left wondering if there is another solution. Renewed effort in the form of continued self-observation may take us to the next step. The pride itself could be just an effect, a compensation for an underlying state of fear. As we continue with our observing, we may come to wonder if there is ever an end to all this, if the root cause of our aberrant behavior can be found. If we persevere, we eventually come to the root cause of the fear, a feeling of alienation, the battle of the self with the not-self, the mistaken belief that we are a separate thing. This thing, or body/mind, lives in constant opposition with what it sees as other separate things. The universal has become lost in the particular and forgotten itself. This unnatural situation brings about the sense of anxiety and fear underlying most of our lives.

What now? Here we find ourselves head to head with our very sense of survival, where no ego effort can help. By looking within long enough, we may come to the

door of awareness, and with grace and luck, find ourselves beyond the mind. From this new awareness, we come to see the former belief in separateness to be, as John Wren-Lewis puts it, 'some kind of inflation or hyperactivity of the psychological survival-system'. We will also come to see the futility in putting new and improved patterns of behavior in compensation for any negative ones. The old Zen warning against putting a new head on top of the one we already have comes to mind.

All negative patterns of behavior can be traced back to the 'I am the body' idea, the feeling of alienation. Our natural state has no sense of separateness, for it contains all. Trying to fix an ego problem with an ego effort is doomed to failure, for as Wren-Lewis again states, 'the underlying universal consciousness, with its every-present-moment happiness, peace and wonder, gets shut out ". True peace can only come from our true self, or universal awareness. The body/mind will then continue to function, but in a sane manner, without the inflated ego-sense as master.

The effort of self-observation is the revealing of the false. Our true nature will remain, and as such, needs no modification. All we can do is to follow the old adage for crossing a busy road: look and listen. If we can see something, anything, it's not us. In this manner we can come to see we do not exist, yet Are, and Life can become a wonderful thing.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " When the mind is kept away from its preoccupations, it becomes quiet. If you do not disturb this quiet and stay in it, you find that it is permeated with a light and a love you have never known; and yet you recognize it at once as your own nature. Once you have passed through this experience, you will never be the same man again.
- Sex is an acquired habit. Go beyond. As long as your focus is on the body, you will remain in the clutches of food and sex, fear and death. Find yourself and be free."- Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj
- " Some things 'll scare you so bad, you'll hurt yourself." - Boots Cooper, age 8
- " I have always noticed that deeply and truly religious persons are fond of a joke, and I am suspicious of those who aren't." - Alfred North Whitehead
- " The world is divided into people who think they are right." - Anonymous
- " Do you know what listening is? I'm sure you don't know. People never listen. You only see through your own screen of concepts." - Dr. Vijai Shankar
- " People do not live in the present always, at one with it. They live at all kinds of and manners of distance from it, as difficult to measure as the course of planets. Fears and traumas make their journeys slanted, peripheral, uneven, evasive." - Anais Nin
- " The statistics on sanity are that one out of every four Americans is suffering from some form of mental illness. Think of your three best friends. If they're okay, then it's you." -- Rita Mae Brown

Meister Eckhart

This month's Missal features one of the great Christian mystics, Meister Eckhart. He was born Johannes Eckhart at Hochheim in Thringen, Germany, in 1260, and entered the Dominican order when he was 15. Later he occupied several high posts in the order in Germany. Eckhart also taught theology at the Universities of Paris and Cologne.

The depth and universality of Eckhart's teaching has drawn seekers of truth Christian and non-Christian alike. Eckhart's language and paradigm was that of the medieval church, but his message was his own. He continually leads the seeker back into himself, urging him to go within to find his own reality. He urges us to go beyond words and images to the truth within, to find God ourselves, on our own. He tells of the possibility of becoming one with God during our lifetime, and then perhaps of even passing beyond God to a 'still desert', a 'simple ground', the void from which all springs. His message was heretical for the times, leading him into trouble with the Papacy in his last days. He was last heard of traveling alone on foot to Rome to defend himself in person on the charges of heresy.

There are many available translations of his sermons, and collections of his sayings. His work is very quotable and personable, beseeching us not to look for answers through some institution or person, but to look within to find our true being, our own source.

"Man's best chance of finding God is to look in the place where he left him. "

" No work is ever so properly begun or so well done, no man is ever so free and so certain in his actions, that he can afford to let his mind relax or go to sleep; but he ought with his twin powers, intellect and will, to be forever hoisting himself up and seizing, at the summit, his very best therein and guarding himself against evils of all kinds, subjective and objective; thus he never misses anything but is always making first-rate progress."

"God is always ready, but we are very unready; God is near to us,
but we are far from Him;
God is within, but we are without; God is at home, but we are strangers."

"The most powerful prayer, one well-nigh omnipotent, and the worthiest work of all is the outcome of a quiet mind. The quieter it is the more powerful, the worthier, the deeper, the more telling and more perfect the prayer is. To the quiet mind all things are possible. What is a quiet mind? A quiet mind is one which nothing weighs on, nothing worries, which free from ties and all self-seeking, is wholly merged into the will of God and dead as to its own. Such an one can do no deed however small but it is clothed with something of God's power and authority. It behoves us to pray hard so that all our mortal members with their powers - eyes, ears, heart, mouth, and all their senses - are turned in that direction, and we must never stop until we ourselves on the point of union with him we have in mind and are praying to, God namely."

"No person can in this life reach the point at which he is excused from outside works. What though one lead the contemplative life, one cannot altogether keep from flowing out and mingling in the life of action. Even as a man without a groat may still be generous in the will to give, whereas a man of means in giving nothing cannot be

called generous, so no one can have virtues without exercising virtue at the proper time and place. Hence those who lead the contemplative life and do no outward works are the most mistaken and all on the wrong tack. What I say is that he who lives the contemplative life may, nay he must, be absolutely free from outward works what time he is in act of contemplation but afterwards his duty lies in doing outward works; for none can live the contemplative life without a break, and active life bridges the gaps in the life of contemplation."

The Meister Eckhart Site: " Eckhart recognises that it is a harder and a nobler task to preserve detachment in a crowd than in a cell; the little daily sacrifices of family life are often a greater trial than self-imposed mortifications."

Commentary

True Direction

If we wish to find our Source, our True Self, then, as in looking for anything, we will need a direction. As Meister Eckhart admonishes, "if we wish to find God, we should look in the place we left him." We can only find that which is real if we look for what does not change and therefore is not projected from our own minds via memory. If we are possibly eternal, then we must have been before the body and before the brain, and even before our own mind. If God is eternal, and we are as him, then he was there before the mind, too. We left God by going into, and becoming identified with, the body/mind and its ever-changing flux. To find God, or our Source, we must therefore go back, not further out into the wilderness of the mind, the matrix of images. These images are secondary to the mind that creates and projects them, so how can we give them greater meaning than the mind, and even to our observing of them? What is required is a reversal, a retreat, a going within. This will naturally lead us to look in an inner direction, away from images drawn from the memory, and even the image-creating mind itself.

The one constant is that we can be aware of all of the above. This ever present awareness, which is constant and indefinable, is the only unchanging fact. The images can be made to have value which changes according to memory, circumstance, or an agenda of the ego, and as such are on a lower level than that which is aware of them. The fact of this is seen through the process of going within, by retreating from the images themselves, the image-making process and projection, the memory, and even any concept of an individual 'self '. To put our faith in any image, whether of an idea, personage, or institution, is to go out and away from the source. To turn towards the source and leave the images behind, is to turn within and find what remains when nothing remains but that which is aware. This 'still desert ' is frightening, for it means the death of the ego, which cannot live without an image from which to draw its existence. As long as we turn away from our Source, lost in the finite flux of images, how can we come to know we are the Unknown? Look fearlessly within; a timeless field of awareness that is everywhere and nowhere awaits.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " We are the cause of all our obstacles.
- “What is truth? Truth is something so noble that if God could turn aside from it, I could keep the truth and let God go.
- “It is a fair trade and an equal exchange: to the extent that you depart from things, thus far, no more and no less, God enters into you with all that is his, as far as you have stripped yourself of yourself in all things. It is here that you should begin, whatever the cost, for it is here that you will find true peace, and nowhere else." - Meister Eckhart
- " Did not Eckhart teach his disciples: 'All that God asks you most pressingly is to go out of yourself - and let God be God in you'? One could think that, in separating himself from creatures, the mystic leaves his brothers, humanity, behind. The same Eckhart affirms that, on the contrary, the mystic is marvelously present to them on the only level where he can truly reach them, that is in God." - Pope John Paul II
- " Religious experience is simply our awareness of communion with the Ultimate. Not only is the mystical core of religion inexhaustible, it is also ultimately unspeakable. The heart of all ritual is stillness; the heart of all teaching is silence." - David Steindl-Rast
- " Anything that pays the bills or works in the everyday world, including psychological systems, is never able to be rejected or seen for its errors. As long as you pay the bills, you have little chance of escaping your thought patterns. The average person has a set of succeeding habits designed to master the simple production of livelihood and never seriously questions life unless he has a disastrous defeat. " - Jim Burns
- " Real integrity stays in place whether the test is adversity or prosperity."- Charles Swindoll
- " Honesty is not something to flirt with. We must be married to it." - Anon

01/03/02

Roy Masters

The focus of this month's Missal is **Roy Masters**, an English born teacher, speaker and former hypnotist. He works through his organization, the Foundation of Human Understanding and has spoken on air via his radio talk show for almost forty years. He founded the Institute of Hypnosis in Texas in the early sixties and came to notice a strange thing. The problem he saw in most of his patients was that they were in fact already hypnotized, and simply needed to be de-hypnotized. He saw that this mass-hypnosis was a common state and the source of most of his patient's problems. He felt he had discovered a method of meditation and prayer that was very similar to an ancient Judeo-Christian method. He took this method and began spreading the knowledge via talk radio and numerous books.
The technique detailed by Roy Masters helps instruct you in the practice of becoming objective to your thoughts and feelings, which results in an awakened, natural flow of understanding, clarity of thought, and effortless action, while resolving emotional upset and worry. He saw how we have become identified with our thoughts and emotions through early childhood trauma and hypnosis, and worked to help bring people back to their own inner wisdom and peace.

"A person with a wrong intent gets caught up with everything in an unhealthy way. He becomes hypnotized by everything around him: music, religion, even this teaching. Before he knows what is happening to him, he's hooked. He begins to need the music, religion, people, and tapes more and more. He even interprets his helpless dependency on these things as "love" for them. His need he sees as "devotion," and the homage he yields up he begins to see as "largesse" that he is magnanimously handing down. He seizes on all things to feed his ego and protect his pride, and he is enslaved by all that he uses in this self-seeking way. The more dependent he becomes, the more he loses the ability to see anything objectively. He begins to live in a world of illusion, a world in which he can do no wrong. The excitement of the beautiful words, the beautiful music, the beautiful people, makes him oblivious to the fact that he is his same old unregenerate self—blundering through life, hurting others, needing more and more of what has captured him, from pot to people. " - Roy Masters

Of his many books, I've found **How to Survive Your Parents** to be his most direct and concise work. It pulls no punches in showing how a destructive family state of mind can be passed down from generation to generation without those involved being aware of the process, and why they are helpless to change.
His **Classic Meditation Tape** is a great help in breaking the hypnosis of everyday life, and coming to trust you own inner wisdom.

"My basic message is very simple: What's wrong with people is that we are not ourselves. Somehow, we have been conditioned to respond to the pressures of the environment, rather than to the original inner knowing that we came into the world with before we were traumatized. My materials will help you discover how to reconnect to the intuitive knowing in your heart, rather than responding to outside pressures hypnotically. Soon your mind and heart will no longer be troubled. You will learn to live the real meaning of the saying, "You shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall set you free."

Commentary

"Past performance dictates future performance." - anon

Where Are You Headed?

Do you think you will automatically go to a spiritual place after death? Will you have the drive and capacity to determine your fate and direction when the body/mind dissolves? Do you know yourself that well? What will you have for guidance? Or will the unconscious desires and fears of today, of which you may not be aware of or admit, control your fate?

After our death we may not find ourselves in Happy Heaven, as we might wish, but instead in a place formed by our true motivations, whether we were conscious of them or not. Instead of getting an eternity at The Warm-Fuzzies Fun Park, the more accurate scenario may be akin to when we fall asleep at night, letting go of our so-called conscious control and helplessly entering the world of dreams. This could be likened to the Tibetan concept of the bardo, with the experience of lucid dreaming (knowing we are dreaming while in a dream) thrown in to boot. In other words, if you can't wake up to Reality now, what makes you think you ever will? This dream world or bardo you may find yourself in would become the current dream or 'reality' in which you again act out your previously formed nature. Whether any of this is fact or fiction isn't the point. What is being asked is, do you know and trust yourself well enough to face death and what it might bring?

There is a lot of talk of lucid dreaming nowadays, but I have yet to hear of any of it reaching a valid point in terms of true self-definition. Anything we learn or experience in a dream, lucid or not, must be validated in waking life. We might be advised to wake up first from this present dream of life before playing about with states of ego-identification in our dreams. Acting out our fantasies in dream land in a so-called lucid state is not a true awakening, but simply extending into the dream realm our identification with the personality. Even though much of the talk about lucid dreaming is astute and intellectual, providing much theory and heady adventure, rarely does it touch on the big questions of our personal life and death, and even rarer does it take on the question of 'who' is dreaming

Years ago I learned how to practice lucid dreaming, thinking I would become a hero shaman, weaving magic while discovering deep secrets in the freedom of the dream world, wide awake. When I actually found myself in the dream world, wide awake, the first thought that came to me was "I can do anything I want, I'm awake in a dream!". I must explain that at this time I still believed I was in control of my thinking, that I had thoughts. It was only much later that I came to realize they had me, that all thought is projected upon us. The next thought I identified with was," Let's do all the things we can't do in regulated society, let the party begin!" I quickly created a fantasy sex partner and off we went, for a brief moment. The fun was rudely interrupted by the realization of how divided my consciousness had become. I was shocked that my true motivations, though unconscious, were not only carnal, but degraded. I was not the hero dream warrior I had imagined, but a depraved animal. I thankfully fell back 'asleep' in the ensuing turmoil of emotion. I dropped the experiments, for I realized I lacked the true self-knowledge and control that I had assumed I possessed. This was also accompanied by the intuition I was entering dangerous ground without adequate protection. This example may seem extreme, but it illustrates the point.

In the time that followed, I began instead a simple practice of dream interpretation, designed to help bring the unconscious world within up into the light of day. Thankfully, things were not really as bad in there as I had feared, but many unflattering facts and negative traits were uncovered and eventually faced in waking life. Much help was found in this endeavor, and I'm still grateful for being led back into truth from foolishness. Blindly following our animal nature and its promptings, whether in the dream world or out, only leads us through endless cycles of struggle and misery, desire and fear, with no true reckoning or resolution, forever and ever, amen. Real knowledge of the self is more valuable than any dream adventure, no matter whether we are 'awake' as our daytime ego in the dream or not. Sooner or later we will tire of the fantasy, and perhaps become curious of 'who' is experiencing these endless never-never lands.

True adventure is not in outward grandiose imaginings, whether in waking sleep or whatever, but rather in a steady inward movement, an uncovering of all that is hidden and false in ourselves. It is the greatest expedition we can make, for it leads to real peace, and true awakening. This precipitous moment of turning our attention around and looking within is worth more than any bardo of lucid fantasies, for it can lead to real Self-knowledge, to Who we really are. As G.I Gurdjieff said, *" Life is real only then, when I am".*

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " Many of your insights will take place spontaneously while you are busy at your work, doing some chore around the house, or even while you are sleeping."
- " If you are willing to realize that you cannot create your own virtues or changes; if you are willing to feel the pain of emptiness, helplessness, and inadequacy; if you are willing to wait, knowing that of yourself you can do nothing - then you will be facing Reality correctly. The reply to that stress of need is fulfillment." - Roy Masters
- " When I was young I learned that dreams were the source of all necessary information. "- Jim Burns
- " Once in a while you will stumble upon the truth but most of us manage to pick ourselves up and hurry along as if nothing had happened."--- Winston Churchill
- " The inability to enjoy being alone is the mark of cultural psychosis. There are basically two types of people in this world: those who enjoy being alone, and those who fear it. Those who fear it are your joiners and your drug addicts and your losers. They'll do anything to be accepted. " - Mr. Cranky

" If I really cared about what people thought of me, I would never leave my room."--- Anon

My wallpaper and I are fighting a duel to the death. One or the other of us has to go.- -- Oscar Wilde

Castaneda

The focus of this month's Missal is author **Carlos Castaneda**, and the sorcerer Don Juan. Castaneda burst upon the scene in the late sixties with his first book, The Teachings of Don Juan; A Yaqui Way of Knowledge. It came at the right moment, just as the sixties drug culture was turning heads to new possibilities. His early books contained the romantic tales and exploits of the Yaqui Indian, Don Juan Mateus, as he endeavored to introduce Castaneda to the world of sorcery. In the later books, the milieu of the Indian sorcery paradigm with its drugs and magic faded into the background, and the books became more of a vehicle for Don Juan's esoteric teachings. Where Castaneda found this knowledge, and if the figure of Don Juan ever really existed, is the subject of endless debate. He insisted right up until his death from liver cancer in 1997 that the books were factual accounts. This is admittedly hard to swallow, if one holds them up to any scrutiny. Even the physical descriptions of him and don Juan walking about the Sonoran desert in the heat of the day without so much as a drop of sweat make one wonder. He spoke of Don Juan finally leaving this world, of 'burning from within' and even taking his aging body with him. I have to question why a 70-80 year old would want to carry such baggage from this world to the next.
The main premise of the books is that we are blobs of luminous light, with a bright spot within called the 'assemblage point'. These luminous eggs are comprised of aware, glowing filaments which are accessed through this assemblage point and its movements. This movement across different luminous filaments translates as giving access to different 'worlds' or views. The sorcerer's task was to become adept at moving the assemblage point so as to put together different worlds for his enjoyment, and to escape eventual death in this one. Much is written in the books about how our assemblage point is stuck through social conditioning, and how to get it free, usually through shock, drugs, and tricks. Castaneda also includes many long-winded explanations of the sorcerer's path by Don Juan . The 'nagual', or sorcerer teacher, makes it his task to assist the 'spirit' in freeing the apprentices' assemblage point, enabling him to be transported into infinite new worlds. Little is said about 'who' is being transported.

" The sorcerers' idea is we are entombed by social upbringing, tricked into perceiving the world as a place of hard objects and finalities. We go to our graves denying we are magical beings; our agenda is to service the ego instead of the spirit. Before we know it, the battle is over - we die squalidly shackled to the self. "

Castaneda led a very secretive life, only giving brief public appearances in the middle 90's, along with his group of women apprentices he called the 'witches'. He was born somewhere in South America, and first appeared in the States as an anthropology student at UCLA. He earned his Masters and Doctorate there for his 'research' into the world of don Juan and his sorcery. He never offered any proof of this research, of Don Juan himself, or of even having spent much time in Mexico.
His later books do provide quite a wealth of esoteric knowledge, ranging from matters of the spirit, or the 'abstract', to the value of abstinence, or energy conservation. Castaneda himself never seems to have put this into a practical teaching he himself could pass on in person. Where the knowledge came from might never be known. If he himself used it to change his being, or if he had any success with it at all, might also never be known. He speaks of 'polishing our link with the spirit', in which he

implies a knowledge of going within, of connecting with the inner self. People will be wondering if he himself accomplished this for years to come. The women apprentices, or 'witches', that still carry on his business, claim to have met Don Juan and to be privy to his teaching, but mostly seem to do what Castaneda manifestly did best: make money. His books sold an astonishing eight million copies.

" The nagual is a nonentity - not a person. In place of the ego is something else, something very old. Something observant, detached - and infinitely less committed to the self. A man with an ego is driven by psychological desires. The nagual has none."

" We're just biological meat with bad habits and no energy."
- Castaneda

Tricks and Traps

Trick: Chase Your Attention! Have you ever been driving down the road, when you notice you've gone several miles but have no memory of it? Where were you? Who was driving? Is there really such a thing as a 'doer'? Next time, chase your attention as it wanders. Where are you, and what are you looking at? Play the game of noticing what you see, rather than becoming lost in the looker. Who's really watching who?
Trap: Armchair Travelers Grandiosity - How many times have you noticed others (and yourself!) talking confidently about something they have no real experience with. It's easy to live in the imagination, where there is no real resistance, and to 'think' we know things we don't. Don't go about the spiritual search from the 'safety' of a fantasy land. Armchair travelers reap words, not truth. We can hide in a dream or face our fears, acknowledge our inexperience, and pray we're taught what we need to know.

Commentary

"The great danger of the written and spoken word is that you will ingest conclusions without the pain of the growth.
You can't do it. It won't work." - Jim Burns

Words... or Experience?

When I graduated from high school and moved on to a large State University, I received an invaluable lesson in the difference between fact and fantasy, words and Presence. I had been good at the high school curriculum and had been led to believe by my teachers, friends, and proud mother that I was gifted and special, and would be so forever. I had as yet no real knowledge of myself, of what might be called 'being'. Most of my so-called smarts was made up of memorized facts, a large helping of pride, and an assumed self-confidence based entirely on praise. On entering the larger world of the university, I was soon force-fed the fact that it was all relative, and that an untested life, no matter how innerly enriched with fantasy, was not much of a life at all.

At about this same time, I encountered the books of Carlos Castaneda. I fell under the spell of his romantic tales of power. Along with several friends, I envisioned myself roaming the desert, wrapped in the fantasy world of allies, magic mushrooms

and friendly old sorcerers. We were still not even weaned from our mommies, but in our fantasy realm of no-resistance, of wishful dreaming, we were sure we could do at least as well as the bumbling Carlos, if Don Juan would just give us a chance. The months ahead proved to be educational in more ways than one. I flunked out of my first semester, and had to spend a year at a small community college to get my GPA back up. Through a new-found love of the mountains, and a few near disasters there, I also began to realize the difference between being a mountaineer, and dreaming you're one. I was beginning to get a taste of the mechanicalness of my being.

As the years passed, I lost more and more of the attachments to family and upbringing, though never without a shock, but still retained my infatuation with Castaneda's world of magic and freedom. It was not until I had the good fortune to meet a real Don Juan, a true 'nagual', that things changed. This master was no Indian, Mexican or Hindu, nor Buddhist or Shaman, but a West Virginia hillbilly named Richard Rose living a simple life in near anonymity. The difference between him and the don Juan of my fantasies was in his Presence. This man had power. It felt like I was sitting in a room with a live nuclear weapon. I learned more from this than in any and all of the books I'd ever read. I learned what true strength was, the nature of real magic, and that we truly don't learn from books or fantasies. We become through struggle, real experience, and grace. This West Virginia Zen master did not take it easy on me, or anyone who came seeking his help. Instead of just telling us unverifiable tales of power about his teacher through books or lectures, he turned us back on ourselves. We were forced to go within to find an answer. He was all too available and real, maddeningly so. I had found my don Juan, and he was turning me inside out. I was tested in ways I could never have imagined, ... and never got to spend a single night in the Mexican desert.

This man had also written books, but he was there to back them up. He made himself available to anyone with a sincere desire to 'discover the truth', as he put it, and never charged for his time. He had true being, and by seeing this in him, one could come to know what was possible for oneself, and how to find it. He put no stock in appearances or words, but in action and facts. I saw for the first time the difference between being aware of oneself, and of creating a fantasy and identifying with it.

The search for truth, the journey within, finding our link with the abstract: these are just words until we find the reality they speak of, for ourselves, in ourselves. To place the higher value on the trappings of the adventure and its backgrounds, no matter how exotic, will not get us to loosen our grip on illusion and fantasy. Find a teacher if you can, and don't run away after he throws the first punch. If he's worth finding, he'll raise the grain until you think you're losing your mind. If it was worth his finding you, you will.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- "Sexual intercourse is always a bestowal of awareness even though the bestowal may not be consolidated,... The emanations inside the cocoon of human beings don't know of intercourse for fun. If warriors want to have enough energy to see, they must become misers with their sexual energy.

- " That's what we are: apes with tin cups. So routinary, so weak. Masturbatory. We are sublime, but the insane ape lacks the energy to see - so the brain of the beast prevails. We're too busy holding onto Mommy's hand.
- " The recapitulation separates our commitment to the social order from our life force. The two are not inextricable. Once I was able to subtract the social being from my native energy, I could clearly see: I wasn't that "sexy". Most of us are frigid: all this sensuality is mental masturbation."
- " Your passion is to jump without either capriciousness or premeditation to cut someone else's chains." - Carlos Castaneda
- " Any life, no matter how long and complex it may be, is made up of a single moment - the moment in which a man finds out, once and for all, who he is. " - Jorge Luis Borges
- " Of all the liars in the world, sometimes the worst are your own fears." - Rudyard Kipling
- " The important thing is not to stop questioning." - Albert Einstein

A man in love is not complete until he is married. Then he is finished.
--- Anon

All the problems we face in the United States today can be traced to an unenlightened immigration policy on the part of the American Indian. --- Pat Paulsen

7/31/02

J. Krishnamurti

The focus of this month's Missal is J. Krishnamurti, an Indian teacher, writer and lecturer of the twentieth century. **Jiddu Krishnamurti** was born to a pious middle-class family in 1895 in the rural town of Madanapalle in south India. He was `discovered' in his boyhood by Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater of the Theosophical Society, who proclaimed that he was the World Teacher that the Theosophists had been longing for. Jiddu and his brother were cared for from then on by the Theosophists. Krishnamurti was groomed to be the leader of the Order of the Star, the organization created for him by Leadbeater and Besant. Upon reaching a more mature age, Krishnamurti left the Theosophists and their Order, and dissociated himself from all organized religions and ideologies. He underwent certain mystical experiences that brought about a deep transformation and gave him a new vision of life, one of his own. He devoted the rest of his life to relating this understanding to those around him.
He soon attracted a large following and helpful benefactors, enabling his to devote himself full-time to his teaching and lecturing. He had several Foundations formed in India, Britain and California, where he gave talks to enormous outdoor gatherings. He continued to talk and write for many years until his death in 1986.

"Friend, do not concern yourself with who I am; you will never know. I do not want you to accept anything I say. I do not want anything from any of you; I do not desire popularity; I do not want your flattery, your following. Because I am in love with life, I do not want anything. These questions are not of very great importance; what is of importance is the fact that you obey and allow your judgement to be perverted by authority. Your judgement, your mind, your affection, your life are being perverted by things which have no value, and herein lies sorrow."
- J. Krishnamurti Early Talks, 1930

His message was simple, one of quiet self-inquiry, and he had no method you could call a system. He encouraged what he called 'dialogue', which is a form of group discussion in which self-honesty and inquiry are used to better see one's own mind. His following today remains quite large and well organized with the Foundations still active.

"Beauty is not something put together by man. Beauty is when there is complete self-abandonment, a total relinquishing of the self, the "me", with all its aches and loneliness, with all its despairs, anxieties, and fears. Then you will live in this world as a human being." - J. Krishnamurti

Tricks and Traps

Trick: Many of us, on having a freeing realization, are prone to use this newfound freedom and energy in a less than intelligent manner. We may rationalize that the search is now over, so why not have some fun? We take this newly released supply of energy and hand it back over to the animal-body as a blank check. The animal-body, and ego, have succeeded in tricking us into handing back the very energy we worked so hard to free. They are able to get away with this because we confuse awareness and intelligence with a strong mind and body, and think a cocky,

positive ego is a sign of spiritual strength. We have driven the demon from the house, swept it clean, and in our new found pride at our success, allowed him to return with seven of his friends, all of which are named "I".

Trap: One of the most common traps is that of complacency. We reach a plateau in our life, often through hard work, where we are somewhat financially safe and have a relatively secure position in life. This is called in self-help world, The Comfort Zone. We hear that earnestness is the prime necessity for progress along the spiritual path, and while our intuition may tell us this is true, we find we have no burning drive, or time. Our funds are all tapped, so to speak, and we have no room for the Work in our comfort. How does one break out of this trap? Honesty in self-knowledge. Ask yourself, what do you really want? Then, why are you not going about getting it? What's stopping you, or are you living by habit alone, safe in sleep? Are you trapped by circumstance, or by your own lack of clarity as to your true desire?

Commentary

Accident, Sublimation, Transformation

The events of childhood do not pass, but repeat themselves like seasons of the year. - Eleanor Farjeon

I was in the midst of a crowd of people, when I realized that everyone's lives were just accidents. No one was in control of themselves. I became very out of it, just like on LSD. I then realized that the answer was sublimation, then transformation. Accident, sublimation, transformation. These three steps were the key. - Bob Fergeson

Accident: Let's take a look at the above quotes and see how they can provide a road map for self-knowledge. Many of us have had the experience or shock of realizing that the patterns and coping mechanisms of childhood are still with us and active, perhaps long after they are needed. As Eleanor Farjeon points out, these events, and their emotional reaction patterns, are still in us, dictating our behavior year after year. If we take the time to observe our day-to-day patterns with a bit of objectivity, over time we may see that we are mechanical, a robot. We may even realize that any reaction we have to change our mechanical pattern is also mechanical, just another reaction to a reaction. This realization can put us into quite a quandary, and is death to certain egos. The removal of these egos is paramount to progress, for they will never admit the need for real change.

Sublimation: We will become frustrated with this apparent paradox, and hopefully take our search more inwards. How can we find something in us that is not of the world of accident, something which is not just an endless chain of thought begetting thought? The next quote, taken from an old journal, provides the clue. We must refine our machine, for as we are, we are not capable of moving beyond the mechanics of associative thought. Here we move into the realm of sublimation. Our limited energy must be withdrawn from the associative world of behavior, saved and used for other purposes than the accidental world of desire and fear. This sublimation is akin to a refinement of our observation and thinking processes. We turn inwards and begin to look for the motivations of our actions, to question why we think as we do. We no longer can believe in the ego's story of " I did this because 'I' wanted to ". Try as we might, we cannot find this 'I' we put so much faith in earlier. And thus, through

sublimating our energy through the questioning process, we have transformed our thinking and observing.
Transformation: This new level of of observation, one of seeing the patterns of our self and their mechanicalness, is still within the realm of the thinking mind, even though it brings a certain relief from the former sense-based thinking. If we are honest and keep on observing, driven by the still ever-present restlessness, we may come to the realization that we will never find anything Real in the mind, with the mind. If we are lucky, this realization may bring periods when we drop the whole game and become quiet. Here, another quandary with its trauma is necessary, for another set of egos must be dropped. Knowing that all thought is reactive and one step behind the present moment, we may begin to just listen, to observe without reaction. In this quiet, listening mind, something Real has the possibility of entering.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " Surely thinking is a reaction. If I ask you a question, you respond to it - you respond according to your memory, to your prejudices, to your upbringing, to the climate, to the whole background of your conditioning; you reply accordingly, you think accordingly. The centre of this background is the 'me' in the process of action. So long as that background is not understood, so long as that thought process, that self which creates the problem, is not understood and put an end to, we are bound to have conflict, within and without, in thought, in emotion, in action.
- " Thought is old and can never discover the new. When thought realizes that it cannot do anything, then thought itself comes to an end. Therefore there is a breaking through of the limitation of consciousness.

- " When I want t understand, I look at something, I don't have to think about it - I look at it." - J. Krishnamurti
- " You can't think and hit the ball at the same time. "- Yogi Berra
- " Everyone invents himself or herself. Not one of us, as we are mechanically in life, has his or her centre of gravity in Real I. We have it in False Personality, in Imaginary 'I', in a fiction of ourselves that we have to keep going. As long as you are identified with False Personality, no transformation of yourself can take place." - Maurice Nicoll
- " Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work. " - Thomas Edison
- " The mind won't allow you to be in the moment...ever." - Vicki Woodyard

9/01/02

Carl Jung

The focus of this month's Missal is Carl Jung, the famous psychoanalyst. Jung was born in 1875 in a small village in Switzerland. He went on to study medicine in university and while working under the famous neurologist Krafft-Ebing, he chose psychiatry as his career. He met Sigmund Freud in Vienna in 1907. Jung's fame is second only to Freud's in the brief history of psychoanalysis. He and Freud worked closely for several years, but eventually split on the role of sexuality in neuroses. Jung went on to develop his own theories, which he called 'analytical psychology.' Jung is also famous for his concept of the 'collective unconscious', a realm shared by all human minds. He died in 1961 in Zurich, after a long and varied life.
Jung divided the human psyche into three parts: the ego, or conscious mind; the personal unconscious, or what is usually thought of as the unconscious mind; and the collective unconscious, the common unconscious mind of all humanity, which contained what he called archetypes. Jung taught that the ego could not directly experience this vast unknown, but could only see it through these archetypes. Common archetypes include the anima(for males) and animus(for females) which are the figure of the opposite sex which can link us to the collective unconscious, and can be either positive and ideal imago figures, or negative and nasty. The archetype of the ego is usually seen as the hero figure, while that of the shadow, a dark sinister one. The shadow is the unaccepted side of us, which we repress and refuse to admit, thus enabling it to cause all manner of trouble to us and our associates. Jung called the part of us that we accept and project, the persona.

"When people say I am wise, or a sage, I cannot accept it. A man once dipped a hatful of water from a stream. What did that amount to? I am not that stream. I am at the stream, but I do nothing. Other people are at the same stream, but most of them find they have to do something with it. I do nothing. I never think that I am the one who must see to it that cherries grow on stalks. I stand and behold, admiring what nature can do."

He gave us much through his insight and work, such as the explanation of meaningful coincidence he called synchronicity, a working theory of dream interpretation and a lifetime of work exploring the underlying commonality in all religions. He not only wrote, but sculpted and drew the visions he received from the collective unconscious.

"It is, moreover, only in the state of complete abandonment and loneliness that we experience the helpful powers of our own natures."

He categorized the ways in which we deal with the world into four 'functions': thinking, feeling, intuitive and sensing. One of these is dominant or 'superior' and the default manner in which we react to the environment, while one is mostly undeveloped and 'inferior'. Jung said that to develop all four equally, as well as consciously separating from the forces of the unconscious, led to 'individuation', in which a person had brought all parts and functions in himself into full consciousness. This brought into being what he called the 'transcendent function', the one capable of seeing the other four. The goal of life, according to Jung, was to realize the 'self', the archetype of wholeness. Here, all opposites were reconciled, and since tension and its energy where no longer present, life was no longer necessary, our mission of learning having been fulfilled

"I am an orphan, alone; nevertheless I am found everywhere. I am one, but opposed to myself. I am youth and old man at one and the same time. I have known neither father nor mother, because I have had to be fetched out of the deep like a fish, or fell like a white stone from heaven. In woods and mountains I roam, but I am hidden in the innermost soul of man. I am mortal for everyone, yet I am not touched by the cycle of aeons."

Tricks and Traps

Trick: If a repeating negative thought, such as an illusive pain or fear, has you frustrated as to its cause or value, put it to the test by shining an objective light on it. Reveal the thought or symptom to someone, thereby taking positive action and taking it out of the shadows. Have a frank talk with a friend you trust, go to a good doctor, write a letter to someone. Get it out in the open and see what happens. Let the light of consciousness in and see if the knot melts.
Trap: Visualizing the thought of 'now' and projecting it to the exclusion of all other thoughts, and believing this to be the actual present moment, or 'being in the now'. This mistaking of a projected memory for the 'now' simply leads to frustration as it soon collapses and leaves one worse than before, forcing a new round of projection as the circle of mind, memory, and imagination continues to spin.

Commentary

"The mind has the ability to create, better than the ability to accurately witness. With the ability to create comes the ability to delude the self." - Richard Rose

The Trap of Projection

I remember my first real encounter with the trap of projection, when I was a struggling alcoholic trying desperately to become sane and sober. I had spent months believing that my problems were based in others only, and if they would just leave me alone, I would be just fine. I also bought into the projection of place being a cause, in that I thought if I could move to another town, I would be free of the restraints of my negative state of mind. The saying, "Wherever you go, there you are", hit like a ton of bricks when I changed towns, jobs, and friends several times and things went from bad to worse. It slowly became apparent that the problem was in me, not outside in place or person. The projecting of our problems on the environment and others, thinking that if you could just be away from your current environment and associates, things would be better, is just projecting the blame away from our infallible, self-righteous ego. I was not facing the fact that our being creates our life, and to change our life, we must change.

We can also project positive, but likewise unconscious, aspects of ourselves onto others. This can be seen first as an admiration or jealousy of a facet in the other person. Later, we may come to see the same attribute in ourselves, and realize that something inside was simply trying to draw our attention to it. I can remember having a vivid first impression of someone as being 'capable'. Later, after working with them for several months, I came to see that this was something I admired about them, and wished for myself, but my ego, again, couldn't imagine it as possible. It went against

the current belief-system. I needed to see it in action in the other person before I would accept it as something possible for me. The experience of it in the other led to it's manifesting in myself, after I had come to see it was not an impossible, or even impractical, thing for a normal human to have.

The same thing happened when I first met a spiritual teacher, and felt his inner strength. I at first believed this to be something only he could possibly possess. Years later, I came to see the same inner light in several of my fellow seekers as well as myself. It had been something I wouldn't have accepted, therefore unconsciously refused to cultivate, and had to be seen first in another before it could become manifest in me.

This trap of projection is mainly one of thinking, rather than observing. The thoughts we believe, whether our own or those perhaps projected into our heads from sources that may or may not have our best interests in mind, we take to be valid and 'us'. By learning to observe our thoughts rather than mechanically react on them only, can lead to a new level of being, one in which everything is possible, even our own becoming.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " A concept is not a carrier of life"
- "Accident and superstition manifest the will of God."
- " To the psychotherapist, an old man who cannot bid farewell to life appears as feeble and sickly as the young man who is afraid to embrace it. "
- " Whoever carries over into the afternoon the law of the morning... must pay for doing so with damage to his or her soul".
- " When you come to think about it, nothing has any meaning, for when there was nobody to think, there was nobody to interpret what happened." -Carl Jung
- " One can partly foretell what a puer aeternus will look like and how he will feel. He is merely the archetype of the eternal-youth god, and therefore he has all the features of the god: he has a nostalgic longing for death; he thinks of himself as being something special; he is the one sensitive being among all the other tough sheep. He will have a problem with an aggressive, destructive shadow which he will not want to live and generally projects, and so on. There is nothing special about him whatsoever. The worse the identification with the youthful god, the less individual the person, although he himself feels so special." - Marie-Louise von Franz
- " We possess an interior sense which is in connection with the whole of the universe, and which might be considered as an extension of sight. We possess the faculty of sensing in the universal harmony the connection between events and beings with our own conservation. . . . The communication of the will rests upon a kind of convention between two wills, which might be called being in rapport." - Franz Mesmer
- " The Truth requires action."--- Mason Weaver
- " I have nothing to say and I'm saying it." --- John Cage

10/3/02

Insight

This month's Missal takes a look at three Pathway's to Insight. First, we'll take a look at what some have called the first step into the mind, dreams, and their interpretation. Then, we'll take a return look at a psychological system of finding insight through free association with Jim Burns. Last, we'll look at a way of receiving insight from within through the Listening Attention.

In the bustle of everyday life, we can find ourselves overwhelmed with information and demands, both material and emotional, which tend to take up all of our time and energy. The intuitive wisdom within cannot find an outlet to the ego-consciousness in this storm of thinking reaction. Dreams are a way to let this interior wisdom shine through. The interior self is constantly trying to get our attention, and dreams are a great way to begin letting this wisdom through. A profound spiritual realization requires a still, clear mind. Dreams can show us what clouds our vision, and help us begin to clear the field. For information on starting a active dream study, see the links below.

Careful study of our dreams, and the characters which inhabit them, can show us much about the elusive workings of the ego. We can see the different roles we play in life acted out in our dreams, using the forms of familiar persons from our day-to-day life, and begin to see the trick of how we project our own unconscious ego-patterns onto others. To see this in dreams is a first step, but only when we begin to see in real life how there are no 'individuals', including ourselves, but merely the many 'egos' of the Universal Mind, will we begin to see our own true nature, and awaken from the dream of life.

" While men are dreaming, they do not perceive that it is a dream. Some will even have a dream in a dream, and only when they awake do they know it was all a dream. And so, when the Great Awakening comes upon us, shall we know this life to be a dream. Fools believe themselves to be awake now." - Chaung-tzu

Last month's Missal introduced a modern day teacher, Jim Burns, and his book, At Home With The Inner Self. Jim's method of receiving insight came to include dreams and free association. He often remarks that he never learned anything from books, but learned to receive directly, from the source within.

If you're being bothered by something, I've found that if you let your body run the show, just laying horizontal, that all the things that wander around in your mind will drift off. You'll start getting a feeling that an important thought is coming. As soon as this happens, you know you're on the road home. The pain diminishes and you start realizing what is disturbing you. Learning this technique is like learning a new language. Ideas will come to you and eventually one will come that really hits the gong about problems you are facing. The thing that is hard about it, when you're first attempting it, is to realize that you're searching for something you presently have no answer to. It is hard to realize that you are putting effort into putting something where there is now nothing, as far as consciousness is concerned. I came upon this method instinctively. This, meditation and dreams is where I've learned everything, I never learned anything from a book.

"When you begin to have experiences of the information from within, you learn how perfectly attuned the inner mind is to your immediate and momentary circumstances. The fountainhead lies totally within. All we discuss here pertains to the methods and particulars that are involved in uncovering the wellhead."- Jim Burns

"You will not know what mental troubles are until you have risen above the mind dimension. The mind cannot analyze the mind with the mind." - Richard Rose

In searching for our true self, we come to see that the reactive mind is not a reliable reference for truth. We see we have been searching for truth with what amounts to a mechanical reaction-pattern, trying to find something real which lies beyond that pattern. All information is instantly qualified by our own perception apparatus according to our past, our genetics, and our unconscious inherited beliefs. The silent witness or true observer, is lost behind this endless mind chatter and 'self' knowledge. A true attention, or seeing, free of the individual mind, would be better for our search. What would this be like? Can we find it, in ourselves? Is there a way of seeing beyond the individual ego, and to reconnect with the Universal?

The silent passage to the inner world is always with us, it does not need to be formed, just found, but we may need years of preparation to see it. A great deal of self-analysis, ' work on one-self ', is usually needed in order to get beyond the ego and its belief that the mind and worded thoughts will lead us to the Real. A lifetime of learned behaviors, emotional blocks, fears, self-doubts, and wishful thinking need to cleared away. We must reach a point where we can slip behind our compensatory thinking patterns long enough to let something real get through. All repressed emotional material and debilitating drains on our energy must be dealt with, too. We will need all our strength to face the unknown, alone and unarmed. - Bob Fergeson

Tricks and Traps

Trick: Trust yourself, not your reactions: Even though we may find ourselves agreeing with books and believing in teachers, something in us made the decision to do this, and Something else is behind that, watching. Instead of blindly identifying with our reactions as us, look for what made the decision. Who's behind the reaction? Take a step within, and listen.
Trap: Placing faith in information, rather than understanding: We may have valuable insights from dreams, books, and teachers, though possibly forming and catering to an ego around them. Realize, in your waking day-to-day life, what you've seen in dreams and books. Relate the intellectual information to the associated pattern in everyday life. This is the test of whether the information has turned to true understanding, rather than ego-fantasy.

Commentary

"As Above, So Below"

A common mistake we often make when first learning to interpret our dreams, is to take every dream character as the actual person in waking life; that Uncle Joe in the

dream is the Uncle Joe in day-to-day life. We overlook the possibility that it could be a facet of our personality simply taking a familiar form as part of the inner self's attempt to get its point across. As we come to be able to take things in our dreams on a more personal level, we may begin to see how our ego identification moves from one character to another in the dream, and how at times we seem to be a disembodied observer watching the play. This is a big step into understanding the tricks of the mind. A much bigger step, a true leap, is to see how the same game is being played out in waking life, how we move from one character to another while going about our day, and never notice it. We prefer to think we are one, and that this 'person' is a continuous consciousness from moment to moment. To come upon this realization of our reactive mechanical nature, while awake and in dreams, brings us to the pressing need of finding the true observer, rather than taking it for granted.
The world of dreams and that of waking life are similar in make up, being created by the same mind. In each world, we are not permitted to doubt that world's validity, until some shock casts doubt on the whole scene. This shock, or ego-death, can take many forms in dreams and waking life, but its main purpose is to show us the nature of our mind and our identification with its creations, if we are so inclined. The loss of a job or loved one, coming face to face with our inability to control our lives, the shock of realizing our lack of understanding or honesty in even simple matters: any of these can cause the mind to stop, and perhaps for the first time, seriously doubt its previous infallibility. We may realize that any personality facet we place our 'self' in, is liable to be lost, whether in dreamland or without. If we happen to put serious thought into what this implies, we may see that the Law of Progression would indicate that no matter how many or how tall we build our castles in the sands of the mind, they are all liable to vanish and die. Even the stars and heavens will pass. What then, do we do?

The answer is much simpler than we think, and closer than the hat on our head. In all the above process of identification and subsequent loss, something was aware of the whole game. Behind the created patterns of mind and dream, something was watching, unidentified and silent, for how else could there be continuity? If we can remember our dreams while awake, and perhaps vice-versa, then something universal, rather than individual, must be present. To learn to observe our own mind, rather than identify with it, can bring us closer to this Universal Something behind all thought and dream. Study your dreams and study your life, each from its own perspective, and the other. Find That which sees them both. Look within the background for what holds the games in place, the screen behind the moving ghosts of mind and dream.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " You learn sooner or later that you are not running the show and that if you relax, the show runs better, Things will happen better if you just relax; many things are under control in many respects. You quit and things happen, you let the door open, you stop the obstruction, you eliminate the ego. The ego is one of the biggest obstructions to the achievement of anything." - Richard Rose
- " Once upon a time, I, Chaung-tzu, dreamed I was a butterfly, fluttering hither and thither, to all intents and purposes a butterfly. I was conscious only of following my fancies as a butterfly, and was unconscious of my individuality as a

butterfly. Suddenly I was awakened, and there I lay myself again. Now I do not know whether I was a man dreaming I was a butterfly, or whether I am a butterfly now dreaming that I am a man."- Chaung-tzu

- " Truth may be experienced, but it cannot be intellectualized. This is one of the great traps that contain and hold so many sincere seekers; life is not an intellectual journey! " - Michael Roads
- " The things you refuse to meet today always come back at you later on, usually under circumstances which make the decision twice as difficult as it originally was." --- Eleanor Roosevelt
- " I remember thinking I just want more. This isn't it. Fame is not the goal. Money is not the goal. To be able to know how to get peace of mind, how to be happy, is something you don't just stumble across. You've got to search for it." - George Harrison
- " Discipline is just choosing between what you want now and what you want most." --- Anon

Comic Philosophy

Inside every older person is a younger person - wondering what the hell happened.
--- Cora Harvey Armstrong

The most likely way for the world to be destroyed, most experts agree, is by accident. That's where we come in; we're computer professionals. We cause accidents.
--- Nathaniel Borenstein

1/3/03

Colin Wilson

This month's Missal takes a look at Colin Wilson, a prolific writer and contemporary thinker. Wilson was born in England in 1931, and had his first and biggest success with the publication of The Outsider in 1956 when he was 24. After this initial success he was able to settle down to a life of research and writing that continues to the present day, having published over eighty books. He has remarked that he has simply written the same book eighty times, since the general theme remains the same: that of man's capacity to have "key experiences", and how to have this experience more often.
He " *began to believe that peak experiences were brought about when reality is grasped by the mind rather than by the automatic responses which get us through everyday life."* This roughly corresponds to Gurdjieff's idea of the robot, that the robot was living our lives, turning them into nothing but habit, leading to frustration and boredom, as we could no longer experience life except through this robot 'self'.

" My first expression of my sense of revolt at the universal self-delusion was an essay on 'Superiority', written when I was twelve. I still have this essay. It argues that all men are completely enmeshed in self-delusion, and that the universal motive that underlies all human conduct is the need of the individual to feel himself 'superior', to deny the obvious fact that he is a mere insect among billions of other insects. " -
From Voyage to a Beginning: An Autobiography

After he had received some measure of entree into the scientific community, he began corresponding with Abraham Maslow, whose ideas were similar. Wilson saw that healthy, motivated people reported having peak experiences more often, that they had the capacity to see things with a sense of wonder.

"All of his research and literary work has had one primary goal: to test the limits and possibilities of human consciousness. As Wilson himself has said, everything he has done can be reduced to one simple mystery: when a child being reared in Christendom wakes up on Christmas morning, why does the world seem so much more vibrant and exciting, more "real," to the child than it usually does during the remaining 364 days of the year? And, even more to the point, why isn't this the way we feel all the time? " quote by John Morgan

His idea that man can live in this state of peak experience more and more, possibly full time, permeates his books and novels, along with his ideas of why we are not in this peak state more often. His idea of the enemy to the evolved state of consciousness is cynicism, the giving in to hopelessness and despair. He offers no easy way out, and contends that each must find his own path to freedom, through exertion of the will. The individual must come to see, and escape from, the common hypnotic delusion of society, and find his own way to a clearer understanding of his place in life, and of his possibilities for personal evolution.
In many of his books, such as *The Mind Parasites* and *The Space Vampires*, he casts this life-thwarting force in a sinister form, which lies within the mind of man. These forces are not seen as evil, but rather as entities which siphon off man's highest energies, the very energies that could transform him into a being capable of higher levels of intuition, understanding, and being.

It is not their intention to destroy, ... Their intention is to feed for as long as possible on the tremendous energies generated by the evolutionary struggle. Their purpose, therefore, is to prevent man from discovering the worlds inside himself, to keep his attention directed outwards. What would man be like if he could destroy these vampires, or drive them away? The first result would certainly be a tremendous sense of mental relief, a vanishing oppression, a surge of energy and optimism. Then man's energies would turn inward. He would discover that he has many 'selves', and that his higher 'selves' are what his ancestors would have called gods.

- Colin Wilson, *The Mind Parasites*

Among his many works is the classic reference on the world of mysticism, *The Occult,* plus biographies of such mystics as Ouspensky, Crowley, and Hesse. While he may not have found "enlightenment", his struggles within himself and with society have born fruit, especially through his tireless efforts to communicate his understanding to others like himself.

Tricks and Traps

Trick: the ability to resist. When faced with the opportunity(temptation) to act in a manner against our own best interest, we can feel helpless in the crucial moment before the decision to resist or act. Asking ourselves "Why?" can give us the time we need to regain our wits while the force of the temptation passes.

Trap: refusing to leave the nest, the fear of flying. To successfully engage in any true adventure, such as the quest for self-definition, we must be willing to take risks, to change. If we are not willing to trust our intuition through action, we may find ourselves rationalizing many traps as safe havens, when really we have just fooled ourselves as to our real intentions.

" I can resist everything except temptation."--- Oscar Wilde

Commentary

Working for Inspiration

To begin and end a life of spiritual seeking, there is much to be done. While at the end of our search we may realize that there was nothing being done and all is as it should be, while we are struggling in the morass of ego and illusion, we would do well to have a strategy. This plan should be based on the experience of those who have gone before us, as well as the hints from our own intuition, tempered by clear reasoning.

As Colin Wilson points out, there are things we can do to encourage our personal evolution, and things which hinder it. While the goal may be to become All, there are hidden assets in the many we can call into manifestation to improve our chances for becoming that All. There are also forces inside us that wish to maintain the status quo of ego and illusion, and will defend their daily portion of our valuable energy.

Let's take a look at how we can improve our odds at taking a step within, into the world of our mind and beyond. The journey within can be broken down into three

steps, which are simultaneous and interdependent: intention, or aim; clearing the field; and the saving and transmutation of energy.

- Intention: We must have the proper desire: an unrelenting, conscious intention to know the truth. We cannot create or fake this, but can only discover it within us, and then help it to grow. Our main intentions may be ones we refuse to accept. This must be seen before any spiritual aspirations can be successful. A few months of regular group work in an ashram setting will show one which intentions are dominant. If the desire for self-definition is found, this aim will guide us in all we do, reminding us of what we truly want, and how to get it. An honest commitment to oneself must then be made, clearly and openly. Then we forget it, concentrating on the endeavors of the moment. The inner self will then be called to help, without undo interference from the ego.

- Clearing the Field : We can have only one main aim. Whatever is draining our energy without result must be cleared away. We need to know ourselves, to be watchful and wary. Many unconscious motivations, ambitions, fears and desires may be sidetracking our energy and time. These must be seen and admitted, so as to bring them into our awareness. The pitfalls of projection, transference, circumstance, heredity, and environment must be fully recognized and brought up into full consciousness, also. The machine must be cleaned, operating smoothly under our conscious control. As Wilson pointed out, when the robot is in charge, life loses its wonder and magic, and the inner resources are lost. We develop the intuition through the higher energy we save (as seen below), thus enabling us to discern what voices or habits are useful in our search, and which are against our best interests.

- The saving and transmuting of energy : In any project or large endeavor, much time and energy is needed. Given that our resources as individuals are limited, perhaps fixed, we must use this energy quantum to the best advantage. We can't have too many irons in the fire, too many ambitions or habits that require constant funding. The precious energy we have must be saved and redirected to the prime intention, of knowing our truth. The cleaning of the machine and our life's patterns, will give us this funding. Now that some of our energy is being freed from worldly pursuits, we can learn to direct it upward, through our aim. We hold our intention clearly in our mind, which is to learn to observe our self, and allow the attention to turn inward, and listen. This newly released energy will also help to develop the intuition, as we are forced to rely on it more and more, thus drawing the saved energy to its development. Then, we act on what insight we receive, thus becoming a vector. If we do not act on, and therefore acknowledge, our inspiration, it may not return. It is not there for mere intellectual pleasure, or to pump up some vain ego. The intuition must be transferred into action, even if that action is only to incorporate it into our thinking, to bring it into full consciousness. If we use it for profit or selfish motives, it may also vanish. It wishes to act through us, rather than for us. Allow it to manifest, and it will grow.

This may sound like a lot of work, and it is. To find the truth about oneself and the universe is not a small thing, though it's as close as the hair on your head. If you find you cannot live without knowing who is living, then get to work.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " All values are ultimately mystical."
- " Everyday consciousness is a liar."
- " I'd make tremendous efforts to push myself up to a level of optimism. I'd do it in the evenings by reading poetry, thinking, writing in my journals, then I'd go back to the school the next day and blaaahhh, right down to the bottom again. This was the feeling of The Mind Parasites -- there's something that waits until you've got lots of energy and just sucks you dry like a vampire. "
- " I realized suddenly that you can achieve states of control, provided that you put yourself in a crisis situation. And that's why throughout The Outsider I keep saying the outsider's salvation lies in extremes." - Colin Wilson
- " The individual who wishes to embark on a truly conscious life must do so alone, and not fall victim to the endless parades of "knowers." The individual who has a sense of detachment from the norms of his or her society must not fall prey to cynicism or hero-worship, but instead use this sense of alienation as the starting point for values and myths of one's own invention, the true "outsider" of which Wilson speaks." - John Morgan
- " Man is incredibly fatheaded. He believes he's in control, but the truth is he's just a robot in a dream -- a puppet whose strings are pulled by intelligences he can't see."- Richard Rose
- " Heaven on Earth is a choice you must make, not a place we must find." --- Dr. Wayne Dyer
- " Security is an illusion. Life is either a daring adventure or it is nothing at all." --- Helen Keller
- " Stop talking and thinking, and there is nothing you will not be able to know. " - Seng Ts'an

02/03

St. John of the Cross

This month's Missal takes a look at the Mystical Doctor, St. John of the Cross. Juan de Yepes was born in the Castile region of Spain in 1542 to a poor family. His father died soon after, leaving Juan and his family in dire straits. He spent his youth working in a hospital, and begging alms in the streets. When he was twenty-one, he took his vows as a Carmelite friar. He studied at the University of Salamanca for four years, during which time he made the acquaintance of Teresa de Jesus, a decisive turning point in his life.

Teresa, later known as Teresa de Avila, was involved in reforming the Carmelite order, turning it back to its roots of prayer and contemplation and the road to mystical union, and away from the power and privileges church officials had come to enjoy. In 1568, Juan took vows in the new order of Discalced (meaning 'barefoot', in reference to their vows of poverty) Carmelites, changing his name to Juan de la Cruz.

The efforts of St. John and Teresa to reform the Carmelite order, and their founding of simple monasteries and convents dedicated to pure worship, made them many powerful enemies in the Church. In 1577, St. John was kidnapped and sent to a prison in Toledo, where he was tortured and kept in a tiny unlit cell, too small for him even to stand. The frequent whippings left his shoulders crippled for the rest of his life. After months of solitude and suffering, he experienced a mystical release, his cell filling with light. It was soon after the time of this mystical revelation that he began to write his poems of love and union. A kind jailer provided him with paper and pen, and he wrote many of his greatest poems while imprisoned. In 1578 he escaped, scaling the walls "with the help of the Blessed Virgin", and fled to a hermitage in Andulsia, El Calvario. Here he finished many of his poems, and forever fixed his fate as a great mystical poet.

He spent the next years in service to the Order, traveling about Spain, until the political climate in the Church again turned. He was stripped of all office, and in failing health, sent to a convent in Ubeda where he was refused treatment by the local Prior for fever and ulcers eating away his legs. He died there in 1591, revered by the towns folk as a saint. He was not canonized by the Church until 1726.

I came into the unknown
and stayed there unknowing,
rising beyond all science.
I did not know the door
but when I found the way,
unknowing where I was,
I learned enormous things,
but what I felt I cannot say,
for I remained unknowing,
rising beyond all science.
- *from* I came Into the Unknown

St. John's poems use the metaphor of the lover and the Beloved, speaking of the longing the soul has for union with God. He writes often of the "Dark Night of the Soul ", the title of perhaps his most famous poem, and of suffering as a path to freedom and union.

Below is one of his poems, The Fountain, and a few of his Sayings of Light and Love:

The Fountain

How well I know that flowing spring
in black of night.

The eternal fountain is unseen.
How well I know where she has been
in black of night.

I do not know her origin.
None. Yet in her all things begin
in black of night.

I know that nothing is so fair
and earth and firmament drink there
in black of night.

I know that none can wade inside
to find her bright bottomless tide
in black of night.

Her shining never has a blur;
I know that all light comes from her
in black of night.

I know here streams converge and swell
and nourish people, skies and hell
in black of night.

The stream whose birth is in this source
I know has gigantic force
in black of night.

The stream from but these two proceeds
yet neither one, I know, precedes
in black of night.

The eternal fountain is unseen
in living bread that gives us being
in black of night.

She calls on all mankind to start
to drink her water, though in dark,
for black is night.

O living fountain that I crave,
in bread of life I see her flame
in black of night.

Sayings of Light and Love:

- Consider that God reigns only in the peaceful and disinterested soul.
- Do not rejoice in temporal prosperity, since you do not know if it gives you assurance of eternal life.
- The soul that walks in love neither tires others nor grows tired.
- There are souls that wallow in the mire like animals, and there are others that soar like birds, which purify and cleanse themselves in the air.
- Be silent concerning what God may have given you and recall that saying of the bride: " My secret for myself ".
- Strive to preserve your heart in peace; let no event of this world disturb it; reflect that all must come to an end.
- Anyone who does things lukewarmly is close to falling.

Commentary

Who Do You Love?

" We can be aware of our Source of Being . The illusions of the mind may hold our love for a time, but to love Love itself, we must turn within. The soul's longing for its true Home is the guide to finding this Love. Follow the lover of the Beloved back upstream to your Source." - St. John

In the search for our true Source of Being, or what might be called 'God', we would do well to use the proper part of ourselves. In other words, what is searching will determine what is found. The above quote gives us a clue as what not to use. The 'customary self', robot ,or 'personality', are selves formed by life, as a reaction to that life, and will die when that life ends. If our goal is to find the real, it would further us to use the most real part of ourselves as the searcher. Gurdjieff referred to this problem using the terms of 'essence' and 'personality'. The essence, or 'soul', refers to that part of us which is immortal, and was there before this life, and will be there after. " I do not know her origin. None. Yet in her all things begin" is one way St. John describes this. Personality is the reaction program and pattern formed by life, and is only capable of seeing that life. For this self, the realm within is just a blank, an emptiness, which it disregards and refuses to cross.

St. John uses the term 'soul' for essence, and the word 'creature' for the life-created reaction pattern or personality. His poetry and sayings tell us the story of the soul's love for the Beloved, the essence's longing for its divine state, being lost in the world of form. He advises us to leave the parts of us that long for the world in favor of that which longs for God. These are not idle words, written to amaze or entertain, but a clue as to how to carry our search past the limits of the world of form, and what we must become in order to venture into the formless.

Using the mind to seek that which lies beyond it is a trap we all fall into. We have lost contact with our souls, and puffed up with the pride of our personality, we vainly insist on using the learned formulas we have been unconsciously taught by life to attempt to enter the realm beyond thought. Let's look at another method, which will carry us perhaps a bit farther, beyond the path of logic and reason as it vanishes in the Unknown. Think of a scene of beauty or wonder you once saw, that had a profound effect upon you. Most of us have had this experience, one in which we are breathless,

and the awe renders us speechless and quiets the mind. This feeling/perception was not just a thought-reaction, but had something of the eternal in it, ... remember? What part of you was this, that could remember the feeling of eternity, something beyond the mundane, and linked you directly to it? How can you find this soul within, hidden in the heart? Look within for it in the course of everyday life, and let it help you find your way back, back within through the formless realm to your Source, your true Being.

This essence within, this soul of longing, is not of much use in getting through the workday, paying the bills, or worrying about your taxes, but when you find you can no longer find total interest in life only, and begin to wonder what is really up, it then once again comes to have meaning. Let the personality or customary self deal with the things it was created for, but do not let it become your only guide in matters of the spirit. It will only lead you farther into the death-dream of life and its creatures. Find what you truly love, that can love Love Itself, and let that be your guide through the dark night. The soul comes into its own once the mind dies, and then the words of St. John burst with meaning : "All things of the Maker forgotten - but not Him; exploration within, and loving the Lover."

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " There are three signs of inner recollection: first, a lack of satisfaction in passing things; second, a liking for solitude and silence, and an attentiveness to all that is more perfect; third, the considerations, meditations and acts that formerly helped the soul now hinder it.
- Deny your desires and you will find what your heart longs for. For how do you know if any desire of yours is according to God?
- A bird caught in birdlime has a twofold task: It must free itself and cleanse itself. And by satisfying their appetites, people suffer in a twofold way: They must detach themselves and, after being detached, clean themselves of what has clung to them.
- See that you do not interfere in the affairs of others, nor even allow them to pass through your memory; for perhaps you will be unable to accomplish your own task. - Speak little and do not meddle in matters about which you are not asked." - St. John of the Cross
- " True observation must be carried on from a superior dimension. The mind cannot be studied with the mind. It must be observed from some point, outside of, and yet superior to the mind. " - Richard Rose
- " Allow the Source of Being to maintain contact with you: ignore the impressions and opinions of your customary self. If this self were of value in your search, it would have found realization for you. But all it can do is to depend upon others. "- Amin Suhrawardi
- " A slave is also a person who waits for someone else to set him free." - Anon

Comic Philosophy

Multi-tasking - Screwing everything up simultaneously. --- Anon

A lie gets halfway around the world before the truth has a chance to get its pants on. -
-- Sir Winston Churchill

3/03/03

Jacob Boehme

This month's Missal takes a look at the German mystic, **Jacob Boehme**. Sometimes given the title of 'The God-Taught Philosopher', Boehme was born in the year 1575, at Alt Seidenburg near Goerlitz, Germany. He was the son of poor country folk, and in his youth herded the cattle of his family. He was fortunate in being sent to school, where he learned to read and write. Being small in frame, unable to do heavy work, he was apprenticed to a shoe-maker, a trade that he was to follow for much of his life. Even in his youth, he had the gift of entering into heightened states of consciousness, and had several visions, including one in which a stranger told him of his future as a great man, and to be careful and prepare himself. He took this advice to heart and practiced patience, piety, and simplicity of thought and purpose.
This paid off for the young Boehme, in that as a young man he experienced an ecstatic state in which he was surrounded by the light of the Spirit for seven days. He also at this time became a master shoemaker, and was married in 1594 to the woman who bore him four sons during thirty years of marriage.
In 1600, he experienced another divine illumination, which enabled him to see into the heart of all things, even when going about his normal day. In 1610, another illumination took place unifying the previous visions, and inspiring Boehme to write down what he saw. In 1612 he wrote his first book, Aurora, which caused the local church authorities to ban him from further writing. Boehme soon gathered a small but loyal following, and refrained from writing for several years. Finally, the Spirit broke forth again, and he wrote once more with a passion. In 1623 his book "The Way to Christ" was published, and once again his writing inflamed the local clergy against him. He was banished from Goerlitz again, but was allowed to return shortly before his death in 1624. He died with his wife and sons present, his last words being, " Now I shall enter paradise".

My writings are only for those who are willing to receive the truth in a simple and childlike state of mind, for it is they who are to possess the kingdom of God. I have written only for those that seek; to the cunning and worldly-wise I have nothing to say.
- Jacob Boehme

Boehme's philosophy teaches that all manifestation arises from the primordial Abyss, the Ungrund, and then develops through orders of manifestation to eventual self-realization. Manifestation, with its duality, suffering and separation, was necessary, he wrote, because this was the only way God could come to know Himself, which was His desire. "God Himself does not know what He is". Much like Blake, Boehme saw the necessity of opposition, or tension, in the process of creation. The polar opposites were what brought the Void into manifestation. Without this tension of the opposites, there was only the Ungrund, which was not aware of itself.

" Whosoever finds (Love), finds Nothing and All Things; that is also certain and true. But how finds he Nothing? Why, I will tell thee how. He that findeth it, findeth a Supernatural Supersensual Abyss, which hath no Ground or Byss to stand on, and where there is no Place to dwell in; and he findeth also Nothing is like unto it, and therefore it may fitly be compared to Nothing; for it is deeper than any Thing, and is as Nothing with Respect to All Things, forasmuch as it is not comprehensible by any of them. And because it is Nothing respectively, it is therefore free from All Things;

and is that only Good, which a Man cannot express or utter what it is; there being Nothing to which it may be compared, to express it by."

Boehme speaks often of man's ability to directly experience God in himself. He tells us that the obstacle to this is our own self-will, and that if we would cast this aside, we would come once again into direct contact with our Source.

Disciple: *Sir, how may I come to the Supersensual Life, so that I may see God, and hear God speak?*

Master: *Son, when thou canst throw thyself into That, where no Creature dwelleth, though it be but for a Moment, then thou hearest what God speaketh.*

Disciple: *Is that where no Creature dwelleth near at hand; or is it afar off?*

Master: *It is in thee. And if thou canst, my Son, for a while but cease from all thy thinking and willing, then thou shalt hear the unspeakable Words of God.*

Disciple: *How can I hear Him speak, when I stand still from thinking and willing?*

Master: *When thou standest still from the thinking of self, and the willing of self; "When both thy intellect and will are quiet, and passive to the Impressions of the Eternal Word and Spirit; and when thy Soul is winged up, and above that which is temporal, the outward Senses, and the Imagination being locked up by holy Abstraction," then the Eternal Hearing, Seeing, and Speaking will be revealed in thee; and so God heareth 'and seeth through thee,' being now the Organ of His Spirit; and so God speaketh in thee, and whispereth to thy Spirit, and thy Spirit heareth His Voice. Blessed art thou therefore if that thou canst stand still from Self-thinking and Self-willing, and canst stop the Wheel of thy Imagination and Senses forasmuch as hereby thou mayest arrive at length to see the great Salvation of God being made capable of all Manner of Divine Sensations and Heavenly Communications. Since it is nought indeed but thine own Hearing and Willing that do hinder thee, so that thou dost not see and hear God.*

Disciple: *But wherewith shall I hear and see God, forasmuch as He is above Nature and Creature?*

Master: *Son, when thou art quiet and silent, then art thou as God was before Nature and Creature; thou art that which God then was; thou art that whereof He made thy Nature and Creature: then thou hearest and seest even with that wherewith God Himself saw and heard in thee, before ever thine own Willing or thine own Seeing began.*

Boehme's works can be difficult reading, and his style somewhat inaccessible to the modern reader not familiar with the terms of Theosophy, and the works of Paracelsus and the Hermetic traditions. What is clear, is his burning spirit and concern for his fellow man, and the truth he reveals in his writings.

"O dear children, look in what a dungeon we are lying, in what lodging we are, for we have been captured by the spirit of the outward world; it is our life, for it

nourishes and brings us up, it rules in our marrow and bones, in our flesh and blood, it has made our flesh earthly, and now death has us." - Jacob Boehme

Tricks and Traps

Trick: alarm clocks. In the course of the busy day, we all 'fall asleep'. While awake, self-aware, we can build little reminders to wake us up when these moments of 'waking sleep' come upon us. Think of the most hectic time of your day or week. Make a mental note to yourself, that the next time this period of identification comes around, you will simply wake up in it. Don't be surprised if you feel the tremendous energy you're spending to create these times of stress.
Trap: thinking that habits are reasonable, possessed of intelligence. If we find ourselves repeating habits we think we've conquered, it could be because we think we have convinced the habit to leave with our superior reasoning. It doesn't work. Habits are a force, and mechanical. As such, they don't give a hoot about our tightly reasoned thinking, they just want to manifest. Niceness and reasonableness count for little in the arena of energy.

Commentary

Disciple: But how shall I comprehend this Ungrund (this naked Ground of the Soul, void of all Self)?
Master: If thou goest about to comprehend it, then it will fly away from thee; but if thou dost surrender thyself wholly up to it, then it will abide with thee, and become the Life of thy Life, and be natural to thee." - Jacob Boehme

The Mechanics of Dreaming

As spiritual seekers, we should become at least as aware of how we are built inside, as we are of our anatomy. Our mind and its workings should be as familiar as the wiggling toes on our feet. Sadly, this is seldom the case. Let's take a look within our machine and see what's really happening in the inner realm of thought and feeling.

To start, let's perform a simple experiment. Ask yourself the question, "How do I feel?". Then, take a good look at what happens, inside. You may answer in different ways, in the positive or negative, and then perhaps wonder if you're right or wrong. This is all not going to help, no matter the answer, and is what most of us do, seekers or not. Instead, try looking a little deeper, and quicker, at what really happened. When the question is first asked, a strange thing occurs. The mind projects an image of what it currently believes "I" to be. It holds this image up in the attention, so that the feeling center can get a good look at it. This feeling or emotional center then has a reaction to this image of "I", of what you take yourself to be, at the current time and circumstance. Then another strange thing occurs. The mind that created the initial image modifies it according to the emotional signal it receives from the feeling center. (If you're feeling-oriented, the process could be reversed, with the feeling reaction noticed first, then the projected image.) This brings us to the question of where did the mind get the original image it projected? It was just the most current version of this created image, brought on by the endless and fully automatic cycle of thought causing feeling, causing more thoughts. From this, we can see the importance of discovering our own dominant moods, chief features and states of mind, which all fuel and mold

the above process of creating an "I" which we then identify with. We unquestioningly believe in this "I", till death do us part.

Now we have to back up a bit and get into this business of identification, and the observer. Most of us are predominately identified with either feeling or thinking, and our main sense of "I" is in one of these functions or the other. The weaker of these is usually negated, and the brunt of much abuse by the ego centered in the dominant function. The trick is to bring both of the functions into full consciousness, and to get behind them. To observe them rather than just identify. To unconsciously identify with the mechanical reactions going on in the mind is to stay asleep, believing in the dream we're unconsciously creating, which is based on the previous dream, ad infinitum. Direct contact with the inner self or higher power is impossible when this chain of mechanical reaction is running rampant. Not a good way to live, if you think about it.

Let's ask the question again, and see what happens. "How do I feel?". Be quick. You have to be awake and watching before the process gets moving. Can you see the image you project of who you think you are? Now, watch the feeling center have a reaction to this image. Then the resulting modification or acceptance is applied to this image of "I". If you try this in a very relaxed state, free from stress or worry, desire and fear, you may get lucky and see nothing. You may see nothing but an attention or awareness which looks within the quiet mind, sees nothing but silence, and then looks to the now silent feeling center, and sees nothing. No reaction, because there is no unquestioned belief causing the mind to project an image, which you then identify as "you". Now, wait until you are under stress or in a bad mood, or excited and feeling good about yourself, and ask the question again. The feeling center will be sending out a constant emotional signal to the mind, which will be obliging enough to create the appropriate image. Teamwork at its best, eh? Both of these reactions, the image-making apparatus and the feeling reaction, are mind. But where are you in all of this?

The impartial observer is not found by simply denying one half of the mind-team, and thus claiming the death, or victory, of one's ego because you have ceased to have emotions; or to think you have stopped thinking, and entered 'no-mind'. Such sophistry will soon enough be put to the test. The solution lies in the trap of identification, in the misplacement of the "I". Lead the attention farther and farther within, until you have fallen behind your self, behind the mind. In this back of beyond lies Nothing, Boehme's Ungrund, pure Silence. From then on the images and emotional reactions of the mind will be seen as simply as one sees those wiggling toes.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " I write for no other purpose than that man may learn how to know himself.
- Love... transcends all that human Sense and Reason can reach to.
- If ... thy Will ... could break off itself for one Hour, or even but for one half Hour, from all Creatures, and plunge itself into That where no Creature is, or can be, presently it would be penetrated and clothed upon with the supreme Splendour of the Divine Glory.
- Let the Hands or the Head be at Labour, thy Heart ought nevertheless to rest in God. God is a Spirit; dwell in the Spirit, work in the Spirit, pray in the Spirit, and

do every Thing in the Spirit; for remember thou also art a Spirit, and thereby created in the Image of God. " - Jacob Boehme

- " The truth of a matter will always haunt you, no matter how secret the hiding place." - Anon
- " To fear love is to fear life, and those who fear life are already three parts dead." - Bertrand Russell
- " If we all did the things we are capable of doing, we would literally astound ourselves." - Thomas Edison
- " I will not let the world make me crazy." - John Ferguson

Comic Philosophy

Computers will never replace good old-fashioned human stupidity. --- Anon

Whatever it is the government does, sensible Americans would prefer that the government do it to somebody else. --- P. J. O'Rourke

Lawyers, I suppose, were children once. --- Charles Lamb

3/30/03

Zen

This month's Missal examines the ancient art of **Ch'an**, commonly known as Zen. Ch'an originated in India with the esoteric teaching of the Buddha, possibly even before. It was carried to China by the larger than life figure of Bodhidharma around 450 AD. Bodhidharma is also reputed to have started the Shoalin Temple, and created the martial art of Kung Fu. After Bodhidharma came his student, Hui K'o, who was succeeded by Seng-Ts'an, Tao-hsin, Hung-jen, and then Hui-neng. Ch'an reached its height with these Grand Masters or Patriarchs of Ch'an, from whom we have some of the purest teachings. During this period it was known as Buddha mind, only becoming referred to as ch'an later. By the time it migrated to Japan, at about 1200 AD., it had become associated with sitting meditation, and became known as zen (the Japanese pronunciation of ch'an).

Giving a working definition of zen or ch'an is difficult, for it deals with looking at one's own nature, which is the one thing we take most for granted. Some say it is a relentless questioning of oneself, or perhaps a direct seeing of oneself; using the mind to examine the mind, until only the seeing is left. One thing ch'an is not, is a religion based on ritual, involving mere intellectual discourse, though many followers of modern day zen take refuge in this form of distraction.

Little is factually known of Bodhidharma, or where the few writings attributed to him actually came from, but his story illustrates the dynamic earnestness necessary for the realization of the Truth about oneself. He is purported to have sailed the then arduous journey to China from India to bring the teaching of the Buddha to the East, and later, to have walked back to India overland. He sat in meditation near the Shaolin Temple, staring at the wall of a cave for years, determined to find his Source. The following four precepts, or pillars of zen, are attributed to him, and show the necessity of finding one's own truth, inside oneself, with no reliance on religion, formality or priesthood:

The Four Pillars of Zen:

1. A special transmission outside of the scriptures.
2. No dependence upon words or letters.
3. Direct pointing at the soul of man.
4. Seeing into one's own nature and the attainment of Buddhahood.

The lives of the Zen patriarchs contain the teaching stories of men who pulled no punches in finding their truth, and in teaching their students. Their often irreverent attitude was used as a teaching technique, which was also transmitted with punches, blows and humiliations; anything to hit the student with the necessary shock at the appropriate time to kill the ego/mind, and bring the student to the brink of realization. Though few of them taught under the banner of zen, many of the past centuries greatest teachers also used this technique of a system of shocks to bring the student to the brink. Richard Rose, Nisargadatta Maharaj, Gurdjieff, and others, never catered to their students ego's, but kept them under a system of tension and shocks. The zen saying that liberation comes from killing the mind, is not a joke or exaggeration, and not accomplished through comfort, ritual, and the ego of the intellect.

Many people are afraid to empty their minds lest they may plunge into the Void. They do not know that their own Mind is the void. The ignorant [seekers] eschew phenomena but not thought; the wise [seekers] eschew thought but not phenomena.
- Huang Po

Ch'an emphasizes finding reality or nirvana within, as our own true nature, through a relentless questioning of one's own mind, until one is reconnected with inner wisdom directly. A direct experience of one's own nature through an intuitive comprehension, rather than a belief in deductive knowledge heard from without.

The all-discerning wisdom sees things intuitively, without going through the process of reasoning. Being infatuated by sense objects, and thereby shutting themselves off from their own light, all sentient beings, tormented by outer circumstances and inner vexations, act voluntarily as slaves to their own desires. - Hui-neng

Ch'an is not for the faint of heart, or those seeking an easy way out of life, but is for those who can't rest until they know what and who they are. The books and web sites listed below give a good feel for zen, but nothing substitutes for the experience of a zen teacher's sword of discernment aimed directly at one's own head.

Buddha is Sanskrit for what you call aware, miraculously aware. Responding, arching your brows blinking your eyes, moving your hands and feet, its all your miraculously aware nature. And this nature is the mind. And the mind is the Buddha. And the Buddha is the path. And the path is Zen. But the word Zen is one that remains a puzzle to both mortals and sages. Seeing your nature is Zen. Unless you see your nature, it's not Zen. - Bodhidharma

Tricks and Traps

Trap: rationalizing distraction as spiritual work. We may feel an ache in our hearts, or fear in our minds, and then find that this ache or fear is relieved or covered up by reading inspirational works such as Rumi and Ramana. We may even find relief from friends and teachers. Trouble is, years may go by and we find we are still running; looking for the latest 'in' book, looking for that group we heard about on the internet. If lucky, we may begin to see that no amount of reading or socializing will ever really fill us, or give us that perfect hiding place. This realization could bring us to the following trick:

Trick: Facing the Unknown. Next time you feel an ache in your heart, or fear or inhibition rising from the depths, try facing it. Instead of running for your favorite 'spiritual' remedy, calmly look at the pain or fear, in a listening or questioning manner. Instead of panic and distraction, ask yourself 'Why?'.

Commentary

Fact and Fantasy

" Zen is 'walk, don't wobble'." - Richard Rose

Many of us go through life enamored of ourselves to the point of not really knowing where we are headed or why. We refuse to question our decisions in any meaningful way, and only after a severe shock or trauma will we ever admit we may not have been what we thought. One of the dominant features of many seekers of truth

is a feeling of superiority which tends to blind the student to his own true life pattern. In other words, we live in our heads, safely hidden from the facts of our real existence.

If we are lucky enough to be clobbered into wakefulness and the truth of our life through trauma or necessity, (I have no interest in speaking to those who are convinced they are 'ripe souls', needing only to wait in idleness for their coming release), we may find we have been blind to something Richard Rose called our "fact-status". For example, when I first entered university, I was so convinced of my own superiority that I never thought of cracking a book, never bothered to show up for class, or take notice of the declining state of my health and mind. After flunking out my first semester, becoming hooked on drugs, and letting my teeth nearly rot, I was forced to re-evaluate my thinking. My fact-status could no longer be ignored, no matter how far I hid in inner fantasy.

The above pattern of self-conflict, while a bit extreme, illustrates the gap between our false image of ourselves and our fact-status. We are continually knocked off balance by this conflict, and instead of facing the truth about ourselves and acting accordingly, many of us simply regroup, re-invent, and continue to live 'as if ' the story in our heads were true. The ego refuses to see anything wrong about itself, thus denying that which asserts otherwise, fact or not. We continue to be lulled asleep. Falling off the log into the stream of unconsciousness, we are shocked awake and climb back up, only to succumb again to the ego's song of distraction and desire, wobble off balance, and again take the plunge. This continued stumbling between ego-fantasy and the shock of the facts eats up our time and energy. We can keep up the game when we are young, for awhile, but sooner or later we tire, become isolated, defensive, and begin to crystallize. Any hope of finding something beyond the ego fades, as the ego becomes all.

The above may sound hopeless. But balance can be obtained if we persevere, learning from our mistakes and those who have gone before us. Rose called the process of using what uses us, 'milk from thorns'. By recognizing the ability of our own mind to delude itself, we can hopefully set up a system of checks and balances to insure that our idea of ourselves is, at least, somewhat related to the facts. This fact-checking can be brought about in many ways: through honest friends and family, co-workers and colleagues. Another one is intuition, learning to listen to the small voice within. Most importantly, we can become more aware by learning to be honest in truly observing ourselves. This use of self-observation, which might be called the opposite of rationalization, is spoken of by every serious system of finding spiritual truth.

Now, there are some of us who say, 'why bother with observing myself, when the great teachers recommend inquiring directly within for the absolute?'. To find the truth, or absolute, one needs to be a true vector of inquiry. The above examples of how we are not this true vector, or stable inquirer, show the myriad paths of fantasy in which we become entangled. Let us not presuppose ourselves to be something we are manifestly not. A quick check of our fact-status will show us how we are ready, willing and able to be distracted from inner inquiry at the drop of a hat or wink of an eye. Learning to walk a straight line, upright and somewhat mentally sober, would be a good first step. Developing one-pointedness of mind first, we then turn this beam upon ourselves, now knowing the difference between fact and self-created fiction. We are beginning to have a sense of balance through wielding the sword of discernment.

By developing and using this power of discrimination on our own minds, we come to see how and where the ability to fool ourselves originates. We come to know our minds, and thus become objective or anterior to them. Through this process of

separation from our former 'self ', and through a growing acceptance of our fact-status(things as they are), we find we have been practicing what may be called a practical form of self-inquiry combined with surrender, and have made real progress.

When we look back on the delusions we so readily accepted and projected, we have to laugh at ourselves and our previous stumblings about. The value of this progress is not in that we have found reality, but in that we have become better able to discern the real from the unreal, and thus have increased our odds of knowing reality if we ever do happen to bump into it. In the words of Richard Rose, "We must desire the Truth, and have a capacity for it else we could not receive it even if it came to us by accident. " By learning to walk, not wobble, we keep from continually falling off the log of discernment before we get to the other shore. We become painfully aware of the games we insist on playing, and the fears we harbor, and realize we might not desire the truth about ourselves as much as we thought. We begin to see our true inner motivations, hereto unconscious, and thus have the beginning possibility of real self-inquiry through a stable mind, and real surrender through acceptance of truth.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " Zen is an Eastern system which takes into account that much (but not all) of the game is already fixed, and that is is a good idea to see things as they are rather than try to change things which cannot be changed.
- " When you question any consciousness, it will have to answer you or leave. That's the Zen technique for everything.
- " I found that Zen indicates a method of approaching the mind directly with the mind,... "- Richard Rose
- " All my friends tell me I actually exist, and by an act of faith I've come to believe them."- Chris Fry
- " All miseries derive from not being able to sit quietly in a room alone." - Pascal
- " The attainment of enlightenment from ego’s point of view is extreme death. "- Chogyam Trungpa

Comic Philosophy

Q: What does a Zen monk say to a hot dog stand vendor?
A: Make me one with everything.
Q: What does the vendor say when the monk asks for change for his twenty dollar bill?
A: Change comes from within.

Reality is nothing but a collective hunch. - Lily Tomlin

I hate to advocate drugs, alcohol, violence or insanity to anyone, but they've always worked for me.- Hunter Thompson

06/03/03

Tibetan Book of the Dead

The Tibetan Book of the Dead, or Bardo Thodol, is the subject of this month's Missal. This ancient text, The Great Liberation through Hearing in the Bardo, was composed by Padmasambhava in the eight century A.D., an Indian guru who was one of the first to bring the teaching of the Buddha to the land of Tibet. Padmasambhava buried the text, along with others, to safeguard them and insure their eventual recovery at the appropriate time. They were later recovered by Karma Ling-pa, and used continually since then as a means of reminding the deceased of their spiritual training, and to guide them through the realms of the bardo of afterlife to ensure liberation, rather than rebirth.
The main tenets of the Bardo Thodol are that once we are deceased, all the thoughts and actions of our previous life become objective to us as projections of our own mind. If we are not aware of the true nature of these karmic projections, and take them for being a true 'reality', we will be driven through the bardo's dimensions until we eventually come down to rebirth through entrance into the womb. By reading the text of the Book of the Dead to the recently deceased, the departed can be reminded of the true nature of the visions of the after-death bardos, and instead merge into the Light, or luminosity of Mind, and thus achieve Liberation.
The term bardo means gap, or in-between, thus the bardo is a realm between our life in this body and being born into the next. It can also mean any state of mind we are caught in, in this life as well. Our dreams can be thought of as a bardo realm, as can any complete environment of desire and fear, such as our work-place, or family life.

The Bardo Thodol is read beside the body of the deceased to help guide them through the realms of their own mind-projections as they wander through the now objectified thought-forms they created while living, in hopes of reminding them that all they see and experience is their own mind, and not an objective reality. The texts say that the after-death journey is one of ever-increasing chaos, and that the best hope for Liberation comes in the first stages, when the Luminosity of the Absolute is seen most readily. As one wanders through the visions of the thought-forms created by their actions here in this life, desire for and fear of these visions can lead the wanderer ever farther a field, until they are driven to seek refuge in a womb, and rebirth. The Bardo Thodol gives explicit instruction on avoiding being caught in any of the bardo's realms, of heavens or hells, and of how to avoid entering the womb and rebirth.
To profit from a text such as the Tibetan Book of the Dead, one must take it to heart and put its teachings into action, now, in this life. The basic teaching of the Bardo Thodol is that what we call 'reality', and even our sense of 'I', is nothing more than the creation of our mind, with which we become completely identified. This created knot of identification, or ego, which we call 'us' or 'me', is convinced that it is a body, a thing, in a real world, surrounded by other things. The nature of our finite mind and its ability to be mesmerized by its own creations is the trap we fall into, in this life, and the bardo plane. While dreaming, we do not doubt the reality of the dream. The same applies to the waking moment, and whatever place we find ourselves later, after death. Transfixed by the images and moods we create and see before us, we forget our true Being as Awareness, undifferentiated Light, without subject or object.

"The realization of Reality, according to the Bardo Thodol, is wholly dependent upon expurgating from the mind all error, all false belief, and arriving at a state in which Maya no longer controls. Once the mind becomes freed from all karmic obscuration,

from the supreme heresy that phenomenal appearances - in heavens, hells, or worlds - are real, then there dawns Right Knowledge; all forms merge into that which is non-form, all phenomena into that which is beyond phenomena, all Ignorance is dissipated by the Light of Truth, personality ceases, individualized being and sorrow are at an end, mind and matter are known to be identical, the mundane consciousness becomes the supramundane, and, one with the Dharma Kaya, the pilgrim reaches the Goal. "
- W.Y. Evans-Wentz

Whatever thoughts and actions, moods and states of mind we create and live in, in this world, that is what we will find in the next, be it the after-death bardo, our dreams in sleep each night, or the imaginings brought on by desire and fear in the waking world of tomorrow. Tomorrow is the creation of what we do and believe in today. We cannot hope for someone or something else to judge us, and send us to our just reward, but must come to see our own true nature in this life, now.
The Tibetan Book of the Dead can be taken as a highly intuitive guide to our own psychological make-up, and a hint at what lies ahead if we do not turn within and begin to question our own mind.

"We are what we think. All that we are arises from our thoughts. With our thoughts we make the world." - Buddha

Tricks and Traps

Trap: complete hypnotic identification with the current character in our life-drama. For every situation we encounter in life, we create a fitting character, and become identified with 'it', calling it "I". We do not see the change that occurs in our 'self' when the situation changes, as we switch our sense of "I" into the new character, or ego. The mind blurs or hides this change-over, creating a seemingly seamless flow through the many egos and their parts in our personal drama.
Trick: creation of an observing "I". To break the spell of the mind and its reaction-creations, an impartial point of reference is needed, an unattached observer. This "I" does not take sides, is not a judging or naming function, but simply an aware link between the many other "I's" which lead us around by our nose everyday, and night. The trick within this trick, is that we are already this pure "I", but have lost touch with our Selves through identification. Through the 'creation' of an observing "I", we get a glimpse of something greater, of possibility, a taste of our natural freedom.

Commentary

What Have We Lost?

" When Freud coined the phrase that the ego was 'the true seat of anxiety', he was giving voice to a very true and profound intuition. " - C. G. Jung, Psychological Commentary, Tibetan Book of the Dead

We come into this life complete unto Ourselves. Helpless in body and mind, and a bit forgetful perhaps, but still possessing faith in our Self-sufficiency. As we begin to look around us at the fascinating play of form and feeling, we slowly begin to lose our innocent Self-absorption, and begin to be seduced into the present dimension. We can't help it, being terribly naive, and still somewhat innocent (though carrying an

unconscious package deep inside, the basis for our arrival here in the bardo of life). This regretfully changes, as we are soon permeated with an unseen fog-like state of mind we inherit from our newly chosen home environment. Constantly battered by moods and emotions we do not understand, and cannot question, we find ourselves facing a daily onslaught of conflict and stress, followed by relief and pleasure, all designed to hook our attention in the outer world. The unconscious tendencies we have waiting patiently inside, soon enough find their counterparts in the willing environment. Our mind is eventually set in concrete by the pattern of action-reaction with the world as we have encountered it, leaving little freedom of movement. We become hopelessly outer-oriented. With every passing year, the pattern becomes more fixed, and we ourselves more convinced that the solution lies in more of the same. More control, more action-reaction, more identification, until we finally conquer and become master of the very environment that made us, or so we think. As someone once pointed out, this a good working definition of insanity. But here we are.

We have become hypnotized by the world. Our mind, and the minds of those who taught us from birth, have convinced us that we are an individual, a separate 'thing' in a world of separated things. This sooner or later creates the unquestioned, complete identification with this illusory 'thing', this knot between the sentient Self and the world. This knot is called ego, nebulous at best, though it calls itself "I". Because we have transferred our very sense of being into something unreal, that must be continually created and enforced, we feel an underlying anxiety, a longing for something, something stable and inherently self-sufficient. We, as ego, mistakenly transform this anxiety into a hope and belief in fear and desire, and turn again and again to the world for the solution to our own mind-made problem. The Tibetan Book of the Dead gives us a hint at how serious this transference of meaning from the real to the unreal can be. Death of the body may not break the spell. Even in our dreams and fantasies, we are continually wandering, looking for safety and fulfillment in ego-building and unquestioned belief in our desires and fears. We have lost our Selves, and can only react to the creations of our own now desperate minds.

As we continue through life, becoming more and more engrossed, our thoughts and actions reinforce themselves and the driving forces behind them, leaving less and less chance for any meaningful change. Just as in the world of the after-death Bardos, where at every step of the way the mind becomes more and more sensually oriented, more and more emotionally strident and confused, where in desperation, the wanderer eventually returns to life and the world of bodies and things in order to manifest its unconscious fears and desires, so is it also in this life. We wander from one game of desire to another, encouraged by success and pleasure, and driven by fear and our growing anxiety: the carrot and the stick that deny us any rest. We become obsessed with our health and possessions, and when faced with death, will do anything for even one more week of existence. We continue to turn towards life, bodies, and emotional highs and lows, making the same mistakes over and over, never guessing that the solution lies within, not in the manic, repetitious attempt to control the outer environment.

The world is change. Any hiding place or fortification we crawl into, or pleasure palace we build, will fail us, someday. All form is subject to this never-ceasing change. Only in the Formless can we find the road Home. This wandering from bardo to bardo, dream to dream, gives no peace or true understanding. The true cure for our anxiety and longing is the death of the ego, not the body. We have lost our connection to our Inner Self, not some thing, or some needed control over things. Instead, with non-attachment and great attention, look at the world, at the little life you think you

love and hate so much, and at your anxious fear of it, at your coming death. Question everything, especially your self. Then, hopefully this dream of existence will be seen for what it is; a never-ending play of form upon emotion, a wandering through desire and fear that never ceases. Turn your attention back to your Source, to the Love within, and find peace for the wanderer, the lost traveler in the endless bardos of life, death, and dreams.

Bob Fergeson

Do you know, brother, that you are a prince? A son of Adam.
And that the witch of Kabul, who holds you with her color and her perfume, is the world?
Say the words, I take refuge with the Lord of the Daybreak.
Avoid the hot breathing that keeps you tied to her. She breathes on knots
and no one can unknot them.
That's why the prophets came.
Look for those whose breath is cool. When they breathe on knots, they loosen.
You must marry your soul.That wedding is the way. Union with the world is sickness.

- Rumi

Quotes -

- " There is no death - because there is nothing to die. But we don't accept this because we want this identity to live - to be real. Accepting that there is nothing to die is acknowledging that the "we" we take as us is not - and the reality of that, we perceive as death! " - Bob Cergol
- " God does not redeem the personal man by death. He redeems Himself by freeing Himself from the personality of man." - Franz Hartmann
- " Man is the Frankenstein of God. " - Richard Rose
- " If I lived a billion years more, in my body or yours, there's not a single experience on earth that could ever be as good as being dead. Nothing." - Dr. Dianne Morrissey
- " After the first glass you see things as you wish they were. After the second, you see things as they are not. Finally you see things as they really are, and that is the most horrible thing in the world." - Oscar Wilde on the effects of absinthe.
- " Spending time alone is a very spiritual thing for me. Sometimes I compare it to going to church. " - Aron Ralston

Comic Philosophy

"It's not that I'm afraid to die. I just don't want to be there when it happens."
- Woody Allen

"They say such nice things about people at funerals that it makes me sad to realize that I'm going to miss mine by just a few days." - Garrison Keillor

7/02/03

Franklin Merrell-Wolff

This month's Missal looks at a modern day mathematician and philosopher, Franklin Merrell-Wolff. Born in 1887, he was raised in California, the son of a clergyman. He graduated from Stanford University Phi Beta Kappa in 1911 with a major in mathematics, having also studied philosophy and psychology. He did graduate work at both Harvard and Stanford. While at Harvard in 1912, he attended a lecture by Vivekananda, an Indian guru, and became convinced that the spiritual search was the only task worthwhile. He left a teaching position in mathematics at Stanford soon after for the countryside of rural California, never to return to academia again.
He had heard from the Sufi sage, Hazrat Inayat Khan, that the spiritual center of any country was at its highest point, so he purchased a ranch near Mt. Whitney, being the highest peak in the lower 48. He spent a great deal of the following years mining for gold in the California hills, giving him much time for solitude and contemplation.
In 1922, he had his first premonitory "Recognition', that of "I am Atman", the discovery of his eternal nature as the Atman, or soul. He referred to his spiritual experiences not as such, but as Recognitions. The term Recognition through Identity was used to describe a different, direct way of knowing, beyond the usual reactive system of subject-object consciousness. His second premonitory Recognition was that of "I am Nirvana" rather than Nirvana being a place or separate dimension. The last of the premonitory Recognitions occurred within weeks of his Liberation, and was referred to as the understanding that "Substantiality is inversely proportional to ponderability", that theTranscendent was primary or more real than the world of appearance.
The first of Wolff's two fundamental Recognitions took place in August of 1936. He had been studying Shankara's teaching on liberation, and realized that it was not the finding of yet another object in consciousness, no matter how subtle, but a change in being, a becoming one with the Transcendent Consciousness. His second Fundamental Recognition came soon after as the result of realizing that he no longer had any reason to stay in existence, except to help lead others to the Recognitions also. This led him to the Recognition of the High Indifference, a state that was not dependent on either existence, or non-existence.

I was no more and God was no more, but only the Eternal which sustains all Gods and Selves.

Merrell-Wolff gave two favorable conditions which he felt were vital to success in the spiritual search: a desire for liberation, and a spiritual guru. The serious life-long commitment, coupled with a realized teacher, whether within and/or without, were indispensable helpers on the Path.

He also had a **list of Barriers to Recognition:**

The first being **Egoism***, which though it can bring greater power to the task of solving the problem, it gives unusual difficulty in rendering the microcosm fluidic.*
Somnambulism, *a tendency toward wakeful sleep, is a barrier through weakness rather than strength in the subject-object field, though this type is more accessible to induction, or transmission. Training in self-determination and a strengthening of the individuality is needed here.*

Sensuality, *being the opposite of spirituality, is next. All desire for sense-based pleasure(or pain), carries our attention in an outward direction, toward illusion and nothingness, away from the Source Within.*

False predication, *or the reversal of value, was the last. We fall into the error of projecting our own eternality onto the objects in consciousness, and place the illusory nature of objects onto our own awareness. We wonder how the universe evolved consciousness, when the correct question would be how did the universe come to be taken as real.*

Recognition *actually is a spontaneous induction out of Spirit Itself. Man's personal effort merely removes barriers in his nature that inhibit this spontaneous induction.*

Awakening *is re-integration for the individual consciousness of the inseparable parts that have been, apparently, divided. Thus, this Awakening does genuinely destroy the universe, in the sense of Its being a power over the Awakened Man. The latter, after the Awakening, may focus attention upon and act within the relative universe at will, but the significance of his doing so is precisely that of entering a dream and consciously playing a part in it.*

Though having being married twice, he is said to have been a lifelong celibate. This would go far in explaining his astute mathematical prowess coupled with a sharpened intuition, which together guided him on the Path to Liberation. Wolff lived on his ranch in the shadow of Mt. Whitney, and continued giving his Sunday morning lectures through 1985, when he passed on at the age of 98.
I highly recommend reading Wolff's book, Experience and Philosophy.

For the fully Realized Man, Sangsara or the illusive universe is without value. This is very difficult for the egoist man to understand, and so the latter may be led to question the value of the Awakening. The Realized Man largely ignores those values which still seem important to the unawakened. - Franklin Merrell-Wolff

All quotes taken from Franklin Merrell-Wolff's *Experience and Philosophy*

Tricks and Traps

Trap: Bigger is Better. The all too common trap of sensual thinking applied to spiritual matters. That Nirvana or the Kingdom of Heaven is just being really, really high for a really long time.

Trick: What Goes Up, Must Come Down. If being exceedingly high is your definition of Nirvana, you'll sooner or later find your corresponding version of Hell. Instead, develop a trustworthy memory, learn to listen, and observe your self. Try being aware, in the moment, of your motivations, your experiences, your very reasons for living. Learn to wield the sword of discrimination, rather than squirming about inside the oven of pleasure and pain. Haven't you cooked enough?

Commentary

The Shifting Image of Identity

" When two subatomic particles where one is the negation of the other, such as positron and electron, are brought into conjunction, the result is mutual destruction--

in their place a flash of radiation that spreads indefinitely throughout space. So also is the effect of the mutual cancellation of all dichotomies of experience and thought. The flash of radiation that spreads indefinitely through space is the symbol of the Enlightened Consciousness. To achieve the mutual cancellation is to effect the Mystic Death, and this requires faith and courage. " - Franklin Merrell-Wolff

As we go through life, and the path of spiritual seeking, we find we have many ups and down. Upon closer examination, this emotional roller coaster is seen as being caused by identifying with a succession of images, which tend to cancel and replace each other in our never-ending quest for a secure identity. We completely identify with a pleasing image, say that of being a sincere seeker of truth, only to have the facts show otherwise. This can lead us into a negative state, and to fall back for security on a previous image, possibly even a negative one. Since any image is better than none, we will even cling to ones of self-pity and loathing if need be. Anything other than facing the self-less void of no-image. Soon, our energy may recover, we may get a lucky break, feed on flattery and hope, and then identify with an image creatively based on the new, positive circumstances. As life goes on, the circle of identification with the ever-changing parade of images continues. If we are lucky, we will tire enough of this zero-sum game to perhaps pause,... and begin to question the entire process.

Wolff speaks often of the subject-object consciousness, the Transcendent Consciousness, and the difference between them. Let's take a look at the subject-object realm and see if we can relate it to the above predicament. We first get into this mess of needing a self-created image to identify with, when we are first brain-washed into believing that the world, or mind-created images, are the reality, and our own awareness, an illusion. Wolff calls this 'false predication'. This happens before we are wise enough and strong enough to resist, even though we may know better. Soon the magic spell of hypnotic conditioning has done its work, and we are hopelessly dependent on mind-created images, or objects, for our very sense of being. We even create a subject-image we call "I"(ego) which we soon become so taken with, and let it so close to our hearts, that we forget our real Self, and come to completely believe in this "thing" we call "me". The false universe of the subject-object consciousness is thus brought to a level of value far and above that of its Creator.

Since this false universe is based upon a false premise, it must be continually re-created. As the actions of life are played out, we must continually re-act to them, life being change and flux. The action dictates the form of the reaction, thus the subject (ego) is continually being modified by the object (world, inner or outer). Soon enough, the action-reaction pattern is taken to be "my life", and even "me". We become so engrossed with this pattern that we believe we are actually seeing a real, stable reality we call the world, from the likewise stable point of our 'self'. We never notice that this 'self' is a continually changing reaction-pattern wholly dependent on circumstance,... until something goes wrong.

Most of us are unlucky enough to put off questioning the dream of life until tragedy and trauma interrupt. Some, such as Merrel-Wolff, had an in-born intuition waiting to speak when conditions were ripe. For those of us who need a more forceful wake-up call, the realm of action-reaction must provide. Once we receive this blow to the head, called by some the "first conscious shock", we begin to question our previous belief-system. We may come to hear from others who have been down the road before us, that there is another way of looking, a clearer, more direct method of seeing. We may get the feeling, reinforced with strange facts, that the world is

somehow the reverse of what it appears, that things are somehow "backwards". Our guides may hint that we have been fooled by experts, and have now become experts at fooling ourselves.

If we are lucky enough to meet teachers such as Franklin, we may pick up something valuable from them, an induction, not on the level of our usual perception. We may come to feel as if an inner light has appeared, an inner gong has sounded, and a part of ourselves that we had long forgotten has awoken. We are thereafter, never the same. We have become aware, though perhaps dimly, of the Transcendent. There is now the realization of the possibility of reconnecting to the Transcendent Identity we have lost. We now turn our attention Within, and perhaps find that we are Eternal, and that this Soul we Are and ever have been, is directly connected, via a Current, to Its Indefinable Source. It may take the commitment and work of a lifetime, but we have come to know there is no other task worthy of our time. If we persevere, we may make the jump from subject-object consciousness to the Great Space, the Infinite Capacity, where subject and object cancel each other out, and we Recognize our Self as having no boundary, free of the chains of subject-object, the endless suffering in the shifting sands of identity-as-image.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " I cannot too strongly emphasize the fact that Recognition is not a natural result of simple growth or expansion in the subject-object field. It is an act of Transcendence, whereby a Man Awakens to find that, instead of being finite, He is an Infinite Being, has always been so, and always will be so."
- " The average man can imagine a heaven or hell built upon the subject-object pattern where life is more intense, whether in a pleasureable or painful sense, but the truly Emancipated Life is beyond his comprehension. A subject-object world experienced after physical death as a highly blissful state is not Liberation."- Franklin Merrell-Wolff
- " There are no limits to either time or distance, except as man himself may make them. I have but to touch the wind to know these things." - Hal Borland
- " What this power is I cannot say; all I know is that it exists and it becomes available only when a man is in that state of mind in which he knows exactly what he wants and is fully determined not to quit until he finds it. " - Alexander Graham Bell
- "Equality, Superiority, and Inferiority are all dangerous traps that the Ego-mind uses to enslave us in separation, pain and discontent and to distract us from the Eternal and Liberating Flow of Divine Truth and Love. Assess not, compare not! Just be fully present and still, and let the Universe bless you abundantly with Peace and Eternal Love." - Ernest Fokoue

Comic Philosophy

All my life I wanted to be something -
now I see that I should have been more specific... - Anon

I don't want to achieve immortality through my work; I want to achieve immortality through not dying. - Woody Allen

08/02/03

Energy Conservation and Transmutation

This month's Missal looks at the art of Energy Conservation and Transmutation. One of the most ancient, valuable, and misunderstood means to spiritual attainment, the saving and transmuting of our vital energy is a readily available aid on our spiritual path. Many teachers and schools through the ages have practiced and taught this art, all teaching a similar practice based on human energy and its possible uses for spiritual advancement. The basis for this teaching is that man, as he is, has only so much energy at his disposal, and that if this energy is wasted, he has little or nothing left for his spiritual practice. The solution is not in looking about for additional sources, but in conserving and redirecting that which one has. If all of the energy we spend on distraction, needless pleasure, compensation, negative emotions and worry were spent instead on real inquiry into our nature, we would save years of time and effort.
There are three main avenues by which our energy is spent, and from which it can be saved. The first is the simple re-organization of our daily life and its habits. We waste an enormous amount of time and energy in distraction, emotional compensation, and in desperately trying to have more "fun". The roots of these habits could be deep, and much digging may be in order to find the causes, and the truth behind them.

The same could be said about the second channel of waste, our addiction to negative emotions. Any one who has been through a twelve-step program can testify to the dangers of resentment. Much of our so-called love and hate, likes and dislikes, fears, desires, and emotional 'needs' are merely negative reactions driven by unconscious negative factors. The energy waste is profound. Carl Jung's work on what he called the 'shadow' reveals much of how this energy is redirected and lost in negative ways.

The last and perhaps most powerful of the energies lost is that of the creative force that comes to us for procreation. When this force, powerful enough to create another human being, is wasted unconsciously and needlessly, we loose a tremendous energy, and perhaps some of our valuable innocence, too.

Gurdjieff had a system of categorizing energy, using the symbols of the periodic table of elements. His teaching was that the higher energies were needed to awaken the latent forces or 'higher centers' in us. By wasting these energies and other forces through negative emotions such as anger and resentment, we lost whatever chance at contact we could have had to higher centers. We also have the chance at acquiring these higher energies directly from the receiving of impressions in a different way, by seeing things as they are, which is not possible when we are wrapped up in our usual negative emotional reaction patterns.

Energy is spent chiefly on unnecessary and unpleasant emotions, on the expectation of unpleasant things, possible and impossible, on bad moods, on unnecessary haste, nervousness, irritability, imagination, daydreaming, and so on. Energy is wasted on the wrong work of centers; on unnecessary tension of the muscles out of all proportion to the work produced; on perpetual chatter which absorbs an enormous amount of energy; on the 'interest' continually taken in things happening around us or to other people and having in fact no interest whatever; on the constant waste of the force of 'attention'; and so on, and so on. In beginning to struggle with all these

habitual sides of his life a man saves an enormous amount of energy, and with the help of this energy he can easily begin the work of self-study and self-perfection.
- G. I. Gurdjieff

Richard Rose also taught the value of saving and transmuting our vital force, through living a certain lifestyle conducive to higher thought and the development of the intuition. His book, Energy Transmutation, Between-ness and Transmission, is an examination of the role of tension in life, the creation and conservation of human energy, and the use of that energy for spiritual attainment. He also taught that one could store and transmit higher energy to others, in order to help them make a breakthrough. This is dependent on the receiver having no open, running taps, so to speak, through which the higher force might be drained.

We have to fatten up the head before we can chop it off -- have to do a lot of studying -- have to become virtuous. Conservation of energy results in using a body function to transmit the mind into discovery. - Richard Rose

One can liken the work of energy transmutation to that of a vital substance being placed under pressure. If the energy is saved, and the motivations are redirected to seeking the truth about oneself and the universe, as an intense mental effort, the energy is drawn by a siphon-like action up into the brain, where it is made available for mental and intuitive discovery. Thus, if we conserve the energy we have, and then transmute it through the tension of inquiry or questioning, we have converted the body/mind machine to one of seeking, rather than one of only survival-reaction.

" Don't you see there is a reason why chastity is insisted on in all monastic orders? Spiritual giants are produced only when the vow of chastity is observed. There is a connection between chastity and spirituality. The explanation is that through prayer and meditation the saints have transmuted the most vital force in the body into spiritual energy. The force so transmuted is called ojas, and it is stored up in the brain.“ - Vivekananda

The above methods of saving energy are not based on moral, political, or social considerations, but are practical in basis, and are as valid now as they were thousands of years ago. The aim of finding the lost connection to our Higher Self cannot be confused with being 'good', but with doing what works, to discover the Truth. Changing our lifestyle to save higher energy, so as to develop the reasoning and intuitive powers needed to find our way through the maze of illusion, is not an easy task. The work of becoming detached from our negative emotions, hypnotically-induced fears and desires, and misunderstandings of sex and power, will test the seeker, and perhaps reveal to him his true motivations. Then, he will have acquired a greater understanding of himself and his options, and perhaps rediscover his innocence and creative vitality.

" Sex is an acquired habit. Go beyond. As long as your focus is on the body, you will remain in the clutches of food and sex, fear and death. Find yourself and be free."
- Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj

The needs of nature and society take up all our vital force, until we perhaps see that there is another goal, one of inward discovery. If you find you feel there is more to

life than the body and its pleasure and pain, then conservation of one's energy becomes a practical tool. To travel into the Great Beyond, we will need power, power that has not been spent only on the illusion of bodily existence, but saved and transformed for our Becoming.

" Man is not going to find reality if he accepts that which the body tells him. You must be prepared to find that which is, not that which you wish to find, even if it is oblivion." - Richard Rose

Tricks and Traps

This month's Tricks and Traps has to do with the value of having an aim or direction to hold to, whatever the circumstance: Learning to walk a straight line, regardless of the mood of the dream.

Trick: Thinking with our feelings. We can become mesmerized by our current mood, whether elevated or depressed. Convinced that we are the mood, we make plans, decisions, and conclusions, based on our current level of energy, only to have the entire thing change as the energy level waxes and wanes, leading us into the

Trap of bodily existence: We take our very definition of who we really are, from our feeling of our body's moods, based on its current energy level. If we're tired and depressed, we plan and dream as tired, depressed beings; when we're high and mighty, so goes our thinking. The circle of circumstance turns and spins, and having no safe harbor or aim, so go we.

Commentary

Spiritual Ecology

Jesus said, "For the person who has something will be given more, so that he will have more than enough; but the person who has nothing will have taken away from him even the little he has." - Matthew 13:12

If we wish to advance spiritually, then we must take drastic steps beyond that which nature mechanically provides. We are not created as self-developing organisms in matters of the spirit, only in nature. We were born into the world as creatures of nature, bred to reproduce and provide a better environment or nest for yet more bodies, ad infinitum. But as individuals, we are not even recognized in the realm of nature, much less helped to a higher state of being. To fool ourselves into believing we are forever young, here to have only fun, never grow old, or become unhealthy, rot, and die stupid, is to throw away our chance to awake and recognize something of the spirit, as well as that of the body. Even as mind, we are limited, and can never know much that really matters in the short time and circumstance that nature allows. To become something more than a finite mind in a rotting pleasure house, we must take the highest energy this body/mind has, and invest it in the search for understanding. Higher energies are needed to stimulate higher thinking, and to generate even higher energies. To move beyond our limited natural state of mechanical pattern-reaction, to become an aware, alive intelligence, we will need to conserve and transmute what little energy we have.

The higher energies of understanding and spiritual discernment are found through conservation and transmutation. This is the true spiritual ecology. The saving of our

energy to be used for the greatest possibility is to save our resources for our inner potential, rather than spending it on base reactionary living, only. Our machine, this body and mind, must be free of toxic pollution, psychic parasites, irrational fears, and unquenchable desires that would use and abuse it for their own self-interests. If left to the devices of these forces of adversity, we can be likened to a man who is unable to stand, down on his hands and knees, lost in inner fantasy and dissipation, racked with fever and fear, hung over from his excesses. Only able to crawl at best, he cannot muster the energy needed to shake off the negative forces that keep him down. If he is to gain the strength and stability needed to stand and walk upright, in clear awareness of himself, he will need to gain sustenance from the best food available. This energy, saved and transmuted, can rid him of the fever that robs him of his potential spiritual strength and understanding. We only have so much energy on any given day. To spend it only on the realm of the body and the fantasies of mind, is to rob ourselves of our spiritual potential. Having only so much energy for living, if it is spent entirely on partying and pleasure, on fear and false security, then none is left over to put aside for the future. The spiritual search will be under-funded while we dream away in pleasure, fantasy, and suffering. As our time runs out, we spend even more energy blocking these facts from our own minds.

Our feeling causes much of our thinking. When we are tired, anxious, or hung over, the world becomes a cramped place, full of danger and bereft of possibility. When we regain our energy, through time and the body's ability to regenerate, we become lighter in mood, possibility returns, and we go in search of the next opportunity to spend the little energy we have saved. Family moods and inherited states of mind can also eat up much of our energy, leaving us in dank corners of the mind, with little purpose or ability to even think clearly. It is easier to see how this works in others. How many of you know someone who is chronically tired, in a bad mood, and perhaps ill health? The causes of this can sometimes be clearly seen from the outside. Perhaps the person never exercises the body even enough to metabolize their food. He doesn't get out from in front of the TV long enough to take in new impressions, refuses to go out with friends, overeats, drinks too much coffee and beer, smokes, and uses drugs. Their moods and states of mind are the product of being in energy-debt. This toxicity is born from a lack of energy caused by spending more than you take in. But he or she would rather think the reason for their negative state of mind is that the world just isn't giving them what they want. If only they had a break, could be given another chance, be a different person. The idea that changing their lifestyle could solve the problem, and give them a new potential, is never considered. A toxic body/mind cannot, on its own, initiate action leading to sanity and freedom.

Bondage or attachment means we are identified with the personality facet, which is using up our energy, thinking it is 'us'. If we are hypnotically identified with our current state, then we can hardly be expected to think in a less attached manner. Being in a constant state of ego-defense or offense doesn't leave any time or energy for searching out a path to a higher state of being. Every time we agree to the bad moods and their corresponding personalities, and think that they are us, we burn higher energies that could be used in gaining greater understanding of ourselves. All impressions coming to us from outside are of themselves neutral, and are taken according to the inner state of the receiver. If we are in a negative mood, all incoming perceptions tend to be taken negatively. If we are light in mood, they can be taken similarly. Only if we are awake and paying attention, with our mind quiet, can we actually have a chance at seeing what's what. This also saves energy, and tends to give the higher energies we have a chance to transmute into even higher states. Animal

reactions can only generate animal energy. Higher understanding comes from higher seeing. Our spiritual potential must be funded, to be actualized.

The path to Liberation is not found through getting more and more of what we think we want. It is found through clearer understanding of ourselves, brought about by a well functioning body/mind, capable of storing and transmuting energy, along with a well-defined aim or direction. The energy provides the funding for our search. The aim, brought about by our suffering, and longing for our true home, will provide the tension or pressure to transmute this energy into clearer understanding of ourselves. If enough energy and pressure are applied, we may find our very being is changed, and We are no longer in need, of anything. Take the little that you are given, and invest it in your future becoming. Apply the force of steady direction, inwards towards your Source, and stand the pain of withdrawal from your former 'selves'. Turn the water of your energy into the Wine of your Becoming.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " The kernel of true manhood is the ability to abandon sensual indulgences. -
- Little by little, wean yourself. This is the gist of what I have to say." - Rumi
- “Gurdjieff used to say that a man revealed himself most clearly in his reactions to sexuality and to money." - Kenneth Walker
- " Bear in mind that your flesh is weak and that no worldly thing can comfort or strengthen your spirit, for what is born of the world is world and what is born of the flesh is flesh. The good spirit is born only of the Spirit of God, who communicates himself neither through the world nor through the flesh. - St. John of the Cross
- " Lust is radically opposed to knowledge. How strange that one who is physically enfeebled and has reached the end of his life, is still eager for sensual enjoyment." - Sage Ashtavakra
- " Ever fed, never satisfied. Never fed, ever satisfied." - Yogananda on sex desire
- " We all do no end of feeling, and we mistake it for thinking. - Mark Twain
- " Innocence seldom utters outraged shrieks. Guilt does." - Whittaker Chambers

Comic Philosophy

Sex without love is an empty experience, but, as empty experiences go,
it's one of the best. - Woody Allen

As to marriage or celibacy, let a man take which course he will,
he will be sure to repent. - Socrates

In this world there are only two tragedies. One is not getting what one wants,
and the other is getting it. - Oscar Wilde

09/06/03

Ramakrishna

This month's Missal takes a look at two of the greatest Indian saints of recent times, **Ramakrishna**, and **Vivekananda**.
Sri Ramakrishna was born in 1836 in a small village outside Calcutta. Even as a young boy he was intensely religious, losing himself in rapture at the sites of beauty in nature, and taking on the characters of religious Hindu figures. His mystical trances became even more common as he grew older. He was given the job of keeper of a temple to the Goddess Kali when a young man, and he took the statue of the goddess to be her living form. His longing for her became so intense, that he pulled the ceremonial dagger from the statue and declared to kill himself if she did not reveal herself to him. Suddenly, " the blessed Mother revealed herself. The buildings with their different parts, the temple, and everything vanished from my sight, leaving no trace whatsoever, and in their stead I saw a limitless, infinite, effulgent Ocean of Consciousness. As far as the eye could see, the shining billows were madly rushing at me from all sides with a terrific noise, to swallow me up. I was caught in the rush and collapsed, unconscious … within me there was a steady flow of undiluted bliss, altogether new, and I felt the presence of the Divine Mother." The goddess stayed in constant contact with Ramakrishna from then on.
His seemingly mad behavior continued, causing his family to consult with holy women as to whether the madness was ordinary and cause for concern, or whether it was a "holy madness', and should be respected. The conclusion was the latter, and Ramakrishna began to gain respect from his family and neighbors, as his spiritual longing continued to grow.
Ramakrishna soon met a traveling ascetic by the name of Totapuri, who was an enlightened follower of the nondualist form of Vedanta philosophy, Advaita. After consulting with the goddess Kali, who admitted she had set up their meeting, he became Totapuri's disciple, and under his instruction, Ramakrishna experienced nirvikalpa samadhi after only one day of practice, something Totapuri had struggled to attain for over forty years.

Totapuri's Teaching on Advaitha

" Brahman is the only Reality, ever-pure, ever-illumined, ever-free, beyond the limits of time, space, and causation. Though apparently divided by names and forms through the inscrutable agency of Maya (illusion), that enchantress which makes the impossible possible, Brahman is really one and undivided. When a seeker is merged in the beautitude of Samadhi, he does not perceive time and space or name and form - the production of Maya. Whatever is within the domain of Maya is unreal; give it up. Dive deep in the search for Self and be firmly established in It through Samadhi. You will then find the world of name and form vanishing into nothing, and this puny ego merging into cosmic consciousness. "

Around this time, a following of disciples began to form around Ramakrishna, including his future successor, Vivekananda. Ramakrishna's enthusiastic manner of living and ease with which he entered into samadhi, made a great impression on all who came to see him. He did not care for the Hindu religious formality of the time, and was spontaneous and childlike in his life and teaching. He taught that a seeker should use whatever path presented itself to him, and follow it to its end, as all paths could lead to liberation, whether Hindu, Christian, Muslim, or Buddhist. He continued

to teach and be an inspiration, even through the illness of throat cancer, from which he died in 1886.

He who has attained God keeps only an appearance of ego... He becomes like a child...
He becomes as quickly detached from a thing as he becomes attached to it...
All persons are the same to a child. He has no feeling of high and low in regard to persons. So he doesn't discriminate about caste. The child doesn't know hate or what is holy or unholy. - Ramakrishna

Vivekananda, was similar in his desire to know the truth, but more intellectual in his temperament. While Ramakrishna was illiterate and inclined to flights of samadhi and ecstasy, Vivekananda was well educated and disciplined in his behavior. Born in 1863, Vivekananda was possessed of a strong analytical mind, steeped in scientific thought, and a good singer to boot. It was this that led him to meeting Ramakrishna at a neighboring devotees house, where he was asked to fill in as a singer for a devotional gathering. Prior to this, Vivekananda had begun asking questions such as "who is God?". He would ask of all religious people he met the question - "Have you seen God?" But so far, he had not met anyone who would answer him. His first impression of Ramakrishna was that "It was a most unusual kind of meeting. I could not understand the peculiar behavior of that mad, monomaniac Brahmin". He thought Ramakrishna's samadhi to be a form of hypnosis, the product of weak minds. But being inexplicably drawn to visit the saint once again, he put to him his question of "Sir, have you seen God?', to which Ramakrishna replied,"Yes, I see Him as clearly as one sees an apple over the palm, nay, even more intently! And not only this, you can also see Him". Then, as he went into samadhi, Ramakrishna touched Vivekananda with his right foot, and sent him into a state of intense mental disassociation, the room began to swirl, and Vivekananda came face to face with the fear of the death of his "I-ness", which he realized was the same as his own death. The experience went as quickly as it came, leaving Vivekananda shaken in his previous belief in his infallible control over his own mind.

He became an ardent disciple of Ramakrishna, spending many hours learning the wisdom of the sage, until Ramakrisha's passing. He then undertook the task of forming an order of monks, dedicated to passing on the teachings of Vedanta and Ramakrishna, thus the Ramakrishna Mission was formed. By 1888, Vivekananda became restless, and left the monastery for a life of wandering the Himalayas. His travels continued for several years, giving him a great understanding of the conditions and burdens of the common man. He began to see that science and religion need not be antagonistic to each other, and that the western mind may bear fruit if the seeds of Truth were planted. In 1893 he was invited to represent Hinduism at the first World Parliament of Religions in Chicago. Here, his ability to communicate the validity of the spiritual search came into flower. He stayed in the West off and on for several years, giving talks in America and Europe. During one of these talks, a young man, Franklin Merrell-Wolff, then a student of mathematics, became convinced that the spiritual path was the only one worth following, and began his search in earnest. He gained Realization some twenty years later, after an intense life of inner study.

- Vivekananda on Concentration -

The mind takes up various objects, runs into all sorts of things. That is the lower state. There is a higher state of the mind, when it takes up one subject, and excludes all others, of which Samadhi is the result. We should put our mind on things; they should not draw our minds to them. We are usually forced to concentrate. Our minds are forced to become fixed upon different things by an attraction in them which we cannot resist. To control the mind, to place it just where we want it, requires special training. It cannot be done in any other way. In the study of religion the control of the mind is absolutely necessary. We have to turn the mind back upon itself in this study. Concentration is the essence of all knowledge; nothing can be done without it. Ninety per cent of thought force is wasted by the ordinary human being, and therefore he is constantly committing blunders; the trained man or mind never makes a mistake.

Vivekananda spent much of the next decade teaching in the west, spreading the message of Ramakrishna and Vedanta, and teaching that all religions were a valid path for the sincere seeker. He spent his last years in India helping the Ramakrishna Mission. It is told that on the day before his death, he informed his fellow monks that he would be leaving on the morrow. The next day, in 1902, he bid farewell, and left the body.

Commentary

The Inward Journey

"If a man clings tenaciously to truth he ultimately realizes God. Without this regard for truth he gradually loses everything. If by chance I say that I will go to the pine-grove, I must go there even if there is no further need of it, lest I lose my attachment to truth. " - Ramakrishna

To begin on a journey to ultimate Truth, we would be wise to begin by learning to find the truth in little things. If we are to find the Truth about ourselves, of which we must first admit we know nothing, we start by observing the truth in the everyday events of our day-to-day lives. Now we may say, "I don't have time for that, I'm going straight for the Big Truth, and let the small stuff sort itself out later". The mistake in this thinking may be not obvious, but it is crucial that we understand it. It is the ego which makes such statements, and the ego does not, by definition, know or understand Truth. The thief is not going to turn out a policeman to catch himself. To avoid the trap of endlessly fooling ourselves through trusting our Becoming to our least reliable part, we must take measures to insure our direction will be the right one, and our path straight and narrow. This is found by going for the truth in the little things.

As Ramakrishna says, if we are to find the God within, we will do so through clinging to the truth in all matters. This fights the hold of the ego by gradually exposing the small but prevalent untruths we are so fond of. The ego loves to have us running about, looking for that Future Pie in the Sky, while here on earth, in the present, we are deluding ourselves as to our present situation, and its underlying motivations. The ego, or mind, is quite capable of tricking us through rationalization, procrastinating, and over-intellectualization into actually looking away from the truth,

about anything. This way the mind keeps its power, is self-sustaining, surviving as Head Honcho, while proudly proclaiming to be the guide in the Quest for Ultimate Truth. Any time we have a problem, resistance, question, or doubt, no matter how small, we would do well to look for the truth behind it, and let the ego be damned. This makes us into a force or vector, and counters the stranglehold of the associative mind.

This path of the reverse vector, of backing away from untruth, will take courage and calm, for we will see the truth of that which we have spent a lifetime hiding from: our 'self '. A way to get this self out in the open, and thus separate from it, is to watch our thoughts and feelings with detachment. This is not as easy as it sounds. Most of us identify with and act out our thoughts, and especially our feelings, and are thus, in a way, oblivious to them.

Any time we feel an ache or pain rising from within, if we see it as being a cause for behavior, we can use this opportunity to examine how these feelings cause our thinking, and form us psychologically. Whenever a thought or feeling comes that is cause for trouble, just look at it. Sit with it until you see its causes, until you understand it, and see its truth. If instead, we immediately start thinking or analyzing, we can be led down the road of meaningless associations. Guided by the ego, which is avoiding the truth at all costs, we are spun away from the problem into intellectual solutions and the curing of symptoms. We also make a mistake, being obsessed with fixing and tweaking our own personality with the personality, if we carry this into trying to help others. By giving advice, by judging, and by dismissing their problems and struggles as irrelevant because their problems are not as ours, we reinforce our own ego as truth, and thus rob our fellows as well as ourselves of the chance for grace or inner wisdom. This means we are not listening to them, because we don't know yet know how to listen to ourselves. This rooting out of untruths is done, first and foremost, inside our own head and heart. If we find we are focusing on our neighbor's problems, and proclaim to be fighting for the truth, we do them a grave injustice. As Rumi says, "I honor those who try to rid themselves of any lying, who empty the self and have only clear being there." By looking at the faults of our neighbor and ignoring our own, thinking we are without ambition and falsehood, we form a dangerous pattern of self-delusion by engaging in a form of egoistic trickery. If instead, we sit patiently with our faults and problems, and are strong enough to watch and listen, then we have the possibility of receiving help, rather than creating mischief. This receiving, or listening, gives us answers from within, in direct response to the need. This requires time, patience, courage, and the placing of value on something other than the reactive mind or robot.

Now this business of becoming a vector towards Truth is very tricky. As ego, we are liable to be guided by pride and fear as much as by common sense and intuition. Being identified with the ego as us, we cannot trust ourselves to set the course, alone. We must let the Truth within guide us to Itself. Now, this may sound like a paradox, and it is, but it is also not impossible. The practical path in following this, is the aiming of our vector in a reverse direction. We find the truth about the small things, and thus slowly back away from the small untruths. In this manner we gradually establish a true direction, away from the world without and its governing egos, and back within towards that which is manifestly more truthful. In other words, if we allow the ego and its survival mechanisms to guide us, it will lead us to having a better and better ego, but will not carry us to that which Is. The building and maintenance of the ego/mind is a zero-sum game, given eventual old age and death; it

can't last. We cannot take the path of only getting better and better, faced with our given end. We must take the harder road to final Being, or the Truth.

Now we come to the subject of motivation, as well as discrimination. The farther we travel within, the more seemingly bleak the landscape. The ego will balk when it sees the coming silence. It will grasp at whatever 'spiritual truths' it might have picked up along the way, hoping to stop the inward plunge to what it knows is its own destruction. Our commitment and vector will be sorely challenged. Many are the temptations and excuses we will encounter, giving us ample opportunity to stop. Soon, the mind can no longer see anything ahead but seeming dark silence, and will long to retreat to the safety of words and teachers, paths and practice. Your inward momentum, your love of Truth, built up through years of wielding the sword of discrimination, will still be there to guide you, even when life disappears and only silence remains... but your ego will not. Who will you trust?

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " People speak of doing good to the world. Is the world such a small thing? And who are you, pray, to do good to the world? First realize God, see Him by means of spiritual discipline. If He imparts power, then you can do good to others, otherwise not.
- " God doesn't appear easily in the heart of a man who feels himself to be his own master. But God can be seen the moment His grace descends. One can see God only if He turns His light toward His own face." - Ramakrishna
- " Stand as a rock; you are indestructible. You are the Self (atman), the God of the universe.
- We see that the apparent contradictions and perplexities in every religion mark but different stages of growth. The end of all religions is the realizing of God in the soul. That is the one universal religion.
- A man may be the greatest philosopher in the world but a child in religion. When a man has developed a high state of spirituality he can understand that the kingdom of heaven is within him." - Vivekananda
- " People who are sensible about love are incapable of it." - Douglas Yates
- " A person needs a little madness, or else they never dare cut the rope and be free." - Kazantzakis
- " When we remember that we are all mad, the mysteries disappear and life stands explained." - Mark Twain
- " Do I contradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself, (I am large, I contain multitudes.)" - Walt Whitman

Comic Philosophy

Some people are like Slinkies - they're not really good for anything, but you can't help smiling when you see one tumble down the stairs. - Anon

Look at him now, poor fellow. That's what a dose of reality does for you. Never touch the stuff myself, you understand. Find it gets in the way of the hallucinations.
- Alan Moore

One day I shall burst my bud of calm and blossom into hysteria. - Christopher Fry

10/09/03

Cloud of Unknowing

This Month's Missal takes a look at the author of The Cloud of Unknowing. An unknown medieval mystic of 14th century England, he is also believed to the author of The Epistle of Privy Counsel and The Epistle of Prayer. Written around the year 1375, The Cloud of Unknowing was written as a letter of advice to a young novice just setting out on the path of contemplation. The author, believed to have been a country parson, writes in a personal, direct style, hoping to share his knowledge of contemplation with the young would-be monk. The Epistle of Privy Counsel is this same teacher, some years later, giving further instruction and encouragement to the same novice.
While this little book may be simple, short, and direct, it is not lacking in substance, laying out the path of apophatic(without images) mysticism in clear terms. It might be called a hand-book for going within, once one gets past the religious language and terminology of the time.
The theme of the Cloud of Unknowing is of turning one's attention within, away from the mind and its objects. The attention is turned inward upon itself, and since it is now focused on nothing the mind can understand, sees only a 'cloud of unknowing', a seeming nothingness. For most seekers, this can be frustrating, if not impossible, for it gives no immediate reward, or even an object or image for their mind to grasp. To simply aim one's attention at its own source is to look back up the ray of one's awareness, where the mind and ego cannot go. This also takes the attention off of the body and its desires and fears, along with the senses and outer environment.

For when you first begin to undertake it, all that you find is a darkness, a sort of cloud of unknowing; you cannot tell what it is, except that you experience in your will a simple reaching out to God [a naked intent unto God]. This darkness and cloud is always between you and your God, no matter what you do, and it prevents you from seeing him clearly by the light of understanding in your reason, and from experiencing him in sweetness of love in your affection.
You are to smite upon that thick cloud of unknowing with a sharp dart of longing love.
- ... no man can think of God himself. Therefore, it is my wish to leave everything that I can think of and choose for my love the thing that I cannot think. Because he can certainly be loved, but not thought. He can be taken and held by love but not by thought. - Cloud of Unknowing

The author tells his charge that there are two kinds of students in the religious life: the active and the contemplative. The active type are the ones engaged in church life, in charity and spreading the word, and in maintaining the structure of the church. The contemplative's are those who are involved only in the inner task of becoming one with God. He is interested in teaching the young disciple this art of contemplation, to which he believes the young man has been called. Much is said of this difference between the active and contemplative life, and of the signs one can use in confirming whether one is called to move up from the active to the contemplative.
He places much emphasis on correctly understanding the task of contemplation, and in not confusing it with the work of the active life. He tells of the dangers of misunderstanding such key words as "up", and "in", and how not to confuse them with the actions of the body, or even the mind, but of understanding how they are meant for the placing of the attention or longing, the soul's desire rather than the ego's. This is just as important today, for an obsession with thought or feeling induced bliss

and ecstasy do not lead one directly to one's source, and can be the cause of much misunderstanding and misery later on; only the awareness can find Itself.

I would have you be neither outside yourself, above yourself, nor behind, nor on one side or the other. "Where then," you will say, "am I to be? According to your reckoning, nowhere!" Now indeed you speak well, for it is there that I would have you. Because nowhere bodily is everywhere spiritually. Take good care, then, that your spiritual exercise is nowhere bodily. Leave aside this everywhere and this everything, in exchange for this nowhere and this nothing. Never mind at all if your senses have no understanding of this nothing; Who is he that calls it nothing? It is surely our outward man, not our inward. Our inward man calls it All.
(paraphrased, from Cloud of Unknowing)

The same author gives us a translation of Dionysious' Mystical Teaching, also written by an unknown author from perhaps the late fifth or early sixth century. Until this translation was made public, the work of Dionysius had been available only to the educated religious elite.

" Dionysius is the most important ancient voice advocating an apophatic mysticism. Apophatic is a Greek word meaning "without images." An apophatic mysticism, therefore, is an approach to the interior life that seeks to find the Holy at a level deeper (or higher) than any physical thing -- or even beyond any word or mental image." - Carl McColman

The gift of The Cloud is its simple message of going beyond the mind. We cannot find our Source, or "God", by thinking, or through worded thought, but only through what it calls love or longing. This may be called a vector, a direction we follow through our intuition, even after we have gone beyond our mind. It leads us into an uncharted realm, a cloud of unknowing in the back of beyond, where we lose our 'self'. If we continue into this Great Unknown, guided by this longing, perhaps we will meet our Self, and find we have been there all along.

For whoever hears or reads about all this, and thinks that it is fundamentally an activity of the mind, and proceeds then to work it all out along these lines, is on quite the wrong track. He manufactures an experience that is neither spiritual or physical. He is dangerously misled and in real peril. - Cloud of Unknowing

Tricks and Traps

Trap: Claiming true knowledge of and allegiance to the words of a spiritual teacher (preferably one who's not currently present) to the point of not trusting or placing value on your own judgment and intuition. Thus, we take ourselves out of the game and remain safely buried in ignorance and fantasy.

Trick: Trusting yourself: Through having the courage to learn from experience, we give the Inner Self the chance to further our education, using life and circumstance as its classroom.

Commentary

Why Work?

" The challenge is to persist in this work till the secret meaning is secret no longer, but obvious. Thus encouraged let's get down to work at once." - Douglas Harding

" The ego is one of the biggest obstructions to the achievement of anything." - Richard Rose

Much is being said of late of the value of work or practice in spiritual awakening. Proponents on both sides of the argument can agree on only one thing: that there is something to attain above and beyond the normal state of ego-attachment and its resultant misery. But should we work and strive towards this goal? Or should we simply take the path of least resistance, and hearing that we are already enlightened but just don't know it, make effortlessness our path? The confusion that springs from this seeming disagreement is illusory, as is the problem itself. The solution is in the definition of work, and of what is being worked on. Let's take a look at this from both sides, and see if we can come to a better understanding.

First, let's look at what does not constitute spiritual work, but is nevertheless practice for many. Herein lies the trap of what is called compensation, or ego-survival. As infants, we are relatively innocent, clear, so to speak, and have not yet learned the games of compromise we will later deem necessary for our survival in society. We have many excellent teachers waiting to begin our education in life, consisting of parents, teachers, siblings, relatives, and any other looming figure who has not done any real work on themselves. Soon, they have convinced us that not only do we exist, but we are a thing, defined not only by what is inside our hide, but also by what others tell us we are, and even by what they think. We are kept guessing at this ever-changing definition, never getting it quite right, but under the relentless pressure of society, we are taught we must keep at it. Eventually, with the onset of puberty and sex, we are hopelessly trapped in a box of our own belief, which must be continually re-created and maintained for our very survival, or so we have been led to believe.

This process of compromise and outright degradation, forces us to create what is commonly called "the unconscious". This functions as a trash receptacle in which every thought and feeling which does not fit the acquired pattern is sent: 'out of sight, out of mind'. These articles of 'garbage' are not destroyed, but kept in limbo, and some may be very much alive and active, though we cannot let ourselves be aware of this. A few examples: it could be that a person has a state of mind, inherited, that he must be successful and 'better than', though he may not even be of average intelligence and lacks worldly ambition. He cannot let himself see this contradiction, for it would threaten his very sense of individuality. Any event that would point out the facts of the matter, must be put out of sight. Another may have acquired an ideal which runs counter to nature and desire, and which boosts the person's ego by giving them virtues they may not really possess. When the person acts or thinks contrary to the assumed pattern, it cannot be allowed into the light of day, but must be repressed. We all have a near infinite variety of these beliefs, which we insist on as fact, though the facts about ourselves is something we know precious little about.

Now we are getting close to seeing what can happen when we decide that 'work on ourselves' is simply more of the above self-deception. We may see that we are built of

contradictions, many of which are dualities of unconscious actions or beliefs with their conscious compensations. We may decide that the solution is in reinforcing or strengthening these compensations, while hiding their causes. We then label this as 'spiritual work'. Many are the traps that lie in this pit of deceit. What if we are attracted to a Guru simply because we still unconsciously crave Daddies' approval? What will we do, as far as practice is concerned, if the Guru sees this, and refuses the game? What if we are driven to spiritual work by inner anxiety, and succeed in finding just the right compensation in a prescribed method of distraction(meditation), become 'peaceful', and all striving stops, far short of the Goal?

All of the above is simply the ego desperately trying to survive, regardless of the facts. True practice is that which helps us to see our tricks of self-delusion, and thus reveals our sense of individuality, not reinforces it. We have filled our hearts with garbage, and cannot allow ourselves to admit it. We may have now become that which we despised at a much earlier age, and can no longer even recognize ourselves. A method of real work would be one that helps us to not only face these errors, but one which helps us rid our soul of its burden of false identity. Our very sense of existing as a thing, i.e. the ego, must be dealt with, not reinforced. Here is where true effort and practice comes into play. As we are, we are not capable of recognizing the simple truths about our 'self', much less that of the Truth of our Self, as we really are.

Cleaning the machine, or ridding ourselves of the acquired patterns and beliefs that bind us in self-deception, endless compensation and stagnation, is true work. We must begin to face our fact-status, and lose the false 'self's' that keep us asleep. We hear often from the teachers of old that a quiet mind is key to spiritual attainment. This is not simply the projecting of one thought or a pattern of thoughts to drown out the raging turmoil that may lie within. The possibility of Becoming starts with a quiet mind, which in turn is the result of facing this buried turmoil, of facing our buried conscience, and relieving ourselves of the unconscious and its contents by bringing them up into the Light of our own Mind.

Spiritual work does not lie in the building up of the ego. That is the job of life and society. Given this, those are right who insist we must simply listen to the silence, and all will be done. The work is in ridding ourselves of that which is false, and returning to our innocence, " as little children". By this, those who would have us work, are right. Can you truly say you are beyond ego, the false-self, and have nothing to do but wait for the Light of the Self to illuminate you? If not, and you admit that life has had an effect on your mind and soul, then practice.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " In itself, humility is nothing else but a true knowledge and awareness of oneself as one really is."
- " You will ask me how to destroy this stark awareness of your own existence. For you are thinking that if it were destroyed all other difficulties would vanish, too. And you would be right."
- " Therefore, if I am able to give a vital and wholehearted attention to this spiritual activity within my soul, I can then view my eating and drinking, my sleep and conversation and so on with comparative indifference. I would rather acquire a right discretion in these matters by such indifference, than by giving them my

close attention, and weighing carefully all their pros and cons. Let men say what they will: experience teaches." - from The Cloud of Unknowing

- " Into this supreme and dazzling darkness we pray that we may come, that by not seeing and not knowing we may see and know him who is beyond all seeing and knowing through this very act of not seeing or knowing; and at this supreme peak of being, by dismissing all things that are, that we may praise him who is himself above all. " - Dionysius
- " Because every thought enters the heart in the form of a mental image of some sensible object, the blessed light of the Divinity will illumine the heart only when the heart is completely empty of everything and so free from all form. Indeed, this light reveals itself to the pure intellect in the measure to which the intellect is purged of all concepts." - St. Hesychios the Priest
- " To revolve in the circle of one's laziness is simply death. When we realize crisis is in the nature of the universe and is not some person's fault, we begin to grow up." - Maurice Nicoll
- " Whether one has natural talent or not, any learning period requires the willingness to suffer uncertainty and embarrassment. " - Gail Sheehy
- " One may understand the cosmos, but never the ego; the self is more distant than any star." - G. K. Chesterton
-

Comic Philosophy

"How can I believe in God when just last week I got my tongue caught in the roller of an electric typewriter?"
- Woody Allen

" Remember, there's a big difference between kneeling down and bending over."
- Frank Zappa

11/12/03

John of Ruysbroeck

This month's Missal takes a look at the Flemish medieval mystic, John of Ruysbroeck. Born in Belgium in 1293 in the village of Ruysbroeck, little is known of him until he ran away from home at the age of eleven. He went to Brussels to live with his uncle, Jan Hinckaert, the canon of the Cathedral of St Gudule. Raised by Hinckaert and another priest, Francis van Coudenberg, he was taught the contemplative life in the Church and Cathedral, learning of prayer and good works. He became a priest in 1317, and remained in the cathedral in Brussels until he was fifty, in 1343.

During this period, Ruysbroeck began his transformation into what he later called a "God-seeing man". He took issue with those who hid in the life of religion, saying that men should be active in life as well as turning inward to God. He also took issue with what he viewed as the false teachings of certain mystics of the day, who taught that man himself was divine, and thus no effort or discipline was needed. These sects taught that an inner blankness or emptiness was our foundation, thus no connection to anything higher was possible, and no inner Truth was to be found, thus anything goes. Based on his own experience of the inner journey, he wrote in defense of what he saw as the true path, one of discipline and discrimination, founded on a simple, moral life, and that the emptiness of the other so-called mystics was actually a loss of connection with the Inner Truth.

Knowledge of ourselves teaches us whence we come, where we are and whither we are going. We come from God and we are in exile; and it is because our potency of affection lends towards God that we are aware of this state of exile.
- John of Ruysbroeck

At the age of fifty, Ruysbroeck, along with Coudenberg and Hinckaert, grew tired of the pressure and distractions of cathedral life and moved to the old hermitage of Groenendael, or the Green Valley, in the forest of Soignes. Here, he wrote his major works, including The Adornment of the Spiritual Marriage, The Sparkling Stone, and The Book of the Supreme Truth. Tradition tells us that he would only write when inspired to do so by the Holy Ghost, and would walk through the woods to sit under a favorite tree when he felt the inspiration was at hand. One story speaks of a group of brothers, worried at his long absence, finding him at last under the tree in the glen, wrapped in a brilliant aura of Divine Light. He lived at Groenendael for the rest of his days, passing away in 1381 at the age of 88.

When love has carried us above all things ... we receive in peace the Incomprehensible Light, enfolding us and penetrating us. What is this Light, if it be not a contemplation of the Infinite, and an intuition of Eternity? We behold that which we are, and we are that which we behold; because our being, without losing anything of its own personality, is united with the Divine Truth. - John of Ruysbroeck

Ruysbroeck teaches that the truly spiritual, or ghostly, man has three stages in the contemplative life, each reaching progressively higher and more inward than the last. This growth is marked by the stages of the Active, Interior, and Superessential Life, called in The Sparkling Stone by the old names of the state of Servant, Friend, and Son. The progression is marked by the increasingly inward movement of the soul. The active man is still involved primarily with good works, while the superessential man

is almost completely turned within towards the Divine Light. This journey within is based upon an orderly and reasoned view of the universe, giving the necessary foundation for the intuitive glance, "a simple staring ", to ascend beyond reason and concepts into ultimate truth. Ultimate truth, Ruysbroeck says, is not accessible to the human reason: "the What-ness of God" we can never know.

"Behold! by each of these images, I show forth to God-seeing men their being and their exercise, but none else can understand them. For the contemplative life cannot be taught. But where the Eternal Truth reveals Itself within the spirit all that is needful is taught and learnt.
For when we go out in love beyond and above all things, and die to all observation in ignorance and in darkness, then we are wrought and transformed through the Eternal Word, Who is the Image of the Father. In this idleness of our spirit, we receive the Incomprehensible Light, which enwraps us and penetrates us, as the air is penetrated by the light of the sun. And this Light is nothing else than a fathomless staring and seeing. What we are, that we behold; and what we behold, that we are: for our thought, our life, and our being are uplifted in simplicity, and made one with the Truth which is God. And therefore in this simple staring we are one life and one spirit with God: and this I call a contemplative life."

He teaches that truth is found by an ever-diminishing attachment to images. The less we are attached to any image, whether spiritual or not, the more we come to turn inward to the formless union with the Divine. We begin this turning within first by governing our actions, by living a healthy, moral life. Then, inwardly free of the distractions and attachment of outward life, we are free to turn within towards silence and the voice of intuition.

"If, further, this good man would become an inward and ghostly man, he needs must have three further things. The first is a heart unencumbered with images; the second is spiritual freedom in his desires, the third is the feeling of inward union with God."

His writings are in the medieval language of a priest of the Catholic Church, and can be hard to sift through to get to the universal truth of which he speaks, but it is well worth the effort. He outlines the path of the contemplative in much the same way as the author of The Cloud of Unknowing.

"My words are strange, but those who love will understand."
- John of Ruysbroeck

Tricks and Traps

Trap: Being identified with our present mood, brought on by our current energy level. This tricky trap may be described in the following manner: We become drained, perhaps through stress, work and worry, or too much fun, and our bodily energy level drops. We 'feel bad'. Soon, we fall into the following cycle of tricks:
Trick of the negative mood: thinking we are that which is tired, we become increasingly identified with the ensuing mood of negativity. Everything looks glim, and nothing we do can turn out right. If only, but if, and I can't become our mantras,

and soon we are seeing the past and future through a filter of negativity. This quickly leads to the
Trick of losing our sense of humor, especially about ourselves. Everything becomes personal and we think the entire universe is conspiring to keep us from what we want. Our defensiveness may pay off, if we retreat enough to catch our breath, regain some vitality, and, feeling the energy supply replenished, rush headlong into the
Trick of the positive mood: thinking that we are invincible, for our energy supply is back, and we can't wait to spend it. Dreams are planned, tasks set forth, and our past is now remembered as one of a wealth of accomplishment, setting the stage for our gloriously productive future. Off we go, only to sooner or later run out of gas, again, become frazzled, and return to the first trick mentioned above. If we are lucky, we might wake up long enough to reflect on the cycle, and see the
Trick of being used as an impersonal energy source, much as an open bank account. Seeing we have nothing to do with all this, really, except being asleep and identified, we may decide to be more careful with our vitality and sense of 'I', thus gaining a bit of freedom and energy to look further at what's really happening inside the world we all call 'me'.

Commentary

Our State of Mind: The Ring that Binds

We all go through life maintaining our belief system, or state of mind, to the point of controlling everything in sight, so as to keep the ego of body and mind alive and well. This will hold even in the face of death, for we would rather be right than admit our error and live with it. We also grant our fellow man this same hell, by forcing him to be as we, even if it means controlling his every action, all in order to keep our precious ego afloat. To grant ourselves freedom, eternal and infinite, we must do the same for everyone else, and leave the hypnotic ring of attachment to the ego of body and mind. Through the clear examination of our very 'selves', and those of our friends, we break the ring, and find freedom in simple awareness. This is how we become, and in so becoming, free ourselves from the chains of mind and ego.

Most of us base our relationships on unexamined belief systems, and see others as merely things to be manipulated, hypnotized, and brought into that system, as we were. We don't see each other as real, but as objects either in our belief system, and thus right and in the proper place in the systems hierarchy, or as threat-objects to the system, which must be changed or removed. Thus, people are either acceptable recruits for our personal state of mind, or are heretics and should be attacked. This is all to keep our ego afloat, for if we are to be right, our beliefs must be upheld by not only our own mind, but by everyone else's as well. Thus, we cannot question ourselves, which is the same as coming to know ourselves, for that would call the whole belief system into jeopardy.

Most states of mind involve the application of pressure to keep us running in the circle of body and mind. We feel a certain pressure, perhaps coming through the body, as a need for a certain pleasure. The mind is then used to rationalize the pressure-releasing act. The mind can also be the initial source of the pressure. We may have an irrational fear, never really questioned but now a habit, which the mind forces on the body causing it to perform irrational actions. These circular patterns of behavior and rationalization tie up our energy and direction, negating any real spiritual progress.

We are left trapped in a world of inner fantasy and imagination as concerns our inner journey, for the real motivations of our daily life are left to forces of direction other than our own. These forces then use us as agents to recruit our friends into whatever peculiar trap with which we have become enamored, creating another ring of attachment and descent.

How can we escape from this ring, this trap of identification with the dominant state of mind of our body-ego? Ruysbroeck points to the path to freedom, when he tells us of the differences between the Servants of God, His Friends, and His Sons. Each step along the inward path requires more and more objectivity to the very thing we know the least about: our very 'self '. The hidden must be revealed, whether we believe in it or not. Each step along the path from Servant to Son requires a lessening of attachment to objects, whether these objects are people, desires, fears, or our own manifestation as an apparent body/mind. The Servant deals in the world of objects, serving his conception of the higher good through the manipulation of these objects according to his beliefs. As these beliefs are questioned and called into the light of discrimination, the seeker becomes less attached to objects, and moves inward towards the formless. His progress is helped by those above him, the true spiritual Friends, who see clearer than he, and grant him the freedom to become as they.

One way to see the hidden but dominant state of mind that runs our life, is to observe how the trap of unconscious belief works in our friends. It is much easier to see the irrational habits, desires and fears in those around us, for it is not so threatening to our own ego. The mistakes, rationalizations and contradictory behavior of those familiar to us can be used as a door to our own mind. We may begin to see how our relationships are based on mutual neediness, in keeping similar states of mind afloat. If we are lucky, we may have the intuition that the imperfections in our friends are much the same as those hiding in us. This can be a frightening thought, for once we see clearly the traps of body and mind that snare our friends, we get the hint that we, too, are just as unconsciously snared.

By taking this simple step within, and realizing that we are asleep to our basic motivations and drives, we lessen their hold on us, and become less attached. Most attachments are dependent on a mental image, usually that of a state or object which we wish to possess, coupled with the ego's illusion that we are in control and know what we are doing. Through questioning our desire or fear of these mind-objects, we become a little freer, and self is a bit diminished.

In moving within, to a state of mind less attached to the systems of desire and fear, of energy loss and objects, we come to move in a straight line, rather than in the downward spiral of the blind leading the blind. From this straighter path leading within, we can also help those of similar bent. If we have no pressure forcing us to change the world of objects, having lost our attachment to them, we will no longer treat our friends as objects, and thus grant them the freedom to move within also. We may begin to get hints that they, too, are using us as examples of what states of mind can do, and are thus making progress through viewing our own particular displays of folly.

Through the seeing of 'self ' in our friends, we may gradually come to see 'self ' in ourselves. This 'fathomless staring and seeing' leads to the lessening of attachment to this 'self', and its eventual demise through a startling discovery. We come to see that there are no separate 'selves' or objects, including our own 'self ' or that of our friends, but only the Universal Awareness of Man.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " To comprehend and to understand God above all similitudes, as He is in Himself, is to be God with God, without intermediary, and without any otherness that can become a hindrance or an intermediary. Whosoever wishes to understand this must have died to himself, and must live in God, and must turn his gaze to the eternal light in the ground of his spirit, where the Hidden Truth reveals Itself without means.
- " If, further, this good man would become an inward and ghostly man, he needs must have three further things. The first is a heart unencumbered with images; the second is spiritual freedom in his desires, the third is the feeling of inward union with God." - John of Ruysbroeck
- " Everything you want is out there waiting for you to ask. Everything you want also wants you. But you have to take action to get it. " - Jack Canfield
- " They enter a turbulent darkness, who cultivate ignorance - a yet thicker darkness who are addicted to knowledge. " - Isha Upanishad
- " Anything that pays the bills or works in the everyday world, including psychological systems, is never able to be rejected or seen for its errors. As long as you pay the bills, you have little chance of escaping your thought patterns. The average person has a set of succeeding habits designed to master the simple production of livelihood and never seriously questions life unless he has a disastrous defeat. "- Jim Burns
- " Penetrating so many secrets, we cease to believe in the unknowable. But there it sits, nevertheless, calmly licking its chops." - H.L. Mencken

Comic Philosophy

"Programming today is a race between software engineers striving to build bigger and better idiot-proof programs, and the universe trying to produce bigger and better idiots. So far, the Universe is winning." - Rich Cook

"A computer lets you make more mistakes faster than any invention in human history - with the possible exceptions of handguns and tequila." - Mitch Ratcliffe

"Computers are useless, they can only give you answers." - Pablo Picasso

01/12/04

Tricks and Traps 1

Trap:Proclaiming our surrender to God's Will. With good intentions and naive ignorance, we may decide to 'surrender' our will to that of God's, and then, perhaps unconsciously, begin to create a divine Code of Conduct that matches our own personal interpretation of 'God's Will'. Thus, we build up our prideful ego by inventing a God and his 'will' that aligns with our own. (The personal will is recognized by it's judging of events, through its dual, reflexive nature.)
Trick: Willing the moment. By willing events, people, and whatever is in front of our face, i.e. the facts, we surrender our ideas of God and His Will, and instead accept the present moment, as it is presented to us. In this manner, our will becomes His. God's Will IS, it does not reflect upon Itself. But, wouldn't letting go of control result in disaster?
Trap: Fear of losing control. We may fear that the loss of personal will will bring about a loss of control and a downward spiral into negative action. This is the ego's trick of splitting itself into good and bad, and identifying with its good side, while relegating its bad qualities to the feared "not-self": the big bad unknown side of us we won't own. As long as the ego is in charge, this 'bad' side is active and 'in control' part of the time anyway; we just won't admit it.
Trick: Loss of 'self ' or ego is loss of fear. That which is afraid, is that which is unreal. How could God fear His own Will?

" I will also tell you a secret. We have to will one another: this is the beginning of conscious love." - Maurice Nicoll

Commentary

Principal and Paradox

“ Know thou thyself? Art thou the asker of the question or answerer of thine own question?
Thou art not the quest, and yet first must thou find thyself.
To be the quest, oh soul, thou must first be a seeker. To avoid action, thou must first determine for great action.
Peace to the wanderer. "
- Richard Rose

Through a lifetime of being led astray into the wilderness of temptation and frustration, our wandering attention has become hypnotized by the mind, motion and dissipation, to become only outward turned, and thus we have forgotten our Self. In our search for happiness and peace, longing to return to our former Home, we may hear that our true nature is always with us, that there is nowhere to go, nothing to become, for we already Are, and have always Been. Our vanity and pride may listen to such statements with relish, for it takes us off the hook of having to do any real work. While there is Truth is the principal that we Are, that nothing needs to be done, if we are only hearing this with the intellect, which may be governed by unconscious factors that hold sway over our energy, we will remain ignorant and asleep. Clinging to blind belief in principal is rationalization, not realization. We cannot, from a position of ignorance, insist that we have nothing to do, until we have realized the Self, in full awareness, and thus are safely Home. Declaring that we are above the fray

by believing there is nothing to do is a cop out, until we know for sure Who We Are. Until then, we must challenge and test our principals to see if they are just a cover for self-centered desire and fear.

The misuse of principal through our misguided intellect only serves to keep us from putting forth the effort necessary in finding our way back out of the dark underbrush we have been taught to love. It does not, in and of itself, lead us back out into the Light of Truth. This is a fool's creed, that of claiming that he is perfect in essence, and nothing is to be done. This could be an excuse to remain trapped in obsession and pride, so as to continue to wallow in the mud of our false 'self'. The rationalizing intellect uses the trick of claiming that the mind can never free itself from itself, in order to avoid any work or pain that might result from the person seeing the truth of his present state.

A definite shock is necessary to break the cycle of rationalization and let the truth of the matter slip past the ego, and stop our head. The head, or intellect, can be under the influence of other forces, such as laziness, pride, or negative emotional conviction states, and as such, cannot be trusted to make decisions concerning our essence-survival until we have traveled a little farther down the road. Here we run into the paradox: that we must work on the mind with the mind, even though we have heard, and have the intuition, that there is nothing that can be done with the mind, it being the problem. The acceptance of this paradox will free us from the tyranny of intellectual principal which may be under the influence of unconscious emotional states. Until these 'self ' sustaining states are brought up into the Light and observed, we must use clear reason and developed intuition to free us from this trap. The paradox cannot be explained away with the intellect. This would be exactly what principal claims should not be done: the mind working on the mind. The answer to the problem of paradox is not its removal, but its acceptance through a higher understanding beyond the finite mind. For this, the shock of seeing the mind and its mechanical nature in its entirety is paramount, and is brought about through the relentless task of scrutinizing the 'self' until the tension brought forth from truth and paradox produces the necessary shock.

This task of 'know thyself' is a tricky one, for here another trap presents itself: that of the intellect becoming lost in endless circles of self-analysis. What is needed is not analysis for its own sake or to bolster the ego in its pride and fear, but to free our energy and attention from the habitual learned reaction-patterns we have acquired through identification with the reaction-pattern itself. A point must come when we run head on into paradox, and discover we have become obsessed with chasing our own tail by becoming very clever at describing it. What is necessary is the shock of truly seeing our own mechanical nature, which finally frees our wandering attention from the mind and its restless motion. Once the attention is freed from the mind, it is able to listen and receive, rather than be mesmerized by interpretation and projection, only.

The solution to the apparent problem of principal and paradox is not the domination of one over the other, but their marriage in higher understanding. They are not mutually exclusive, but partners in a team that can free our trapped awareness from the pattern of mind-motion that holds us enthralled. Thus freed, this awareness can turn within, and perhaps come to see something more than thought, motion, and contradiction. We will know then that knowledge of principal need not interfere with right action, and that paradox is a guide to the Goal.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " By becoming a watcher of your self, you are engaging in serious spiritual work. You are not that which is observed. You are the observer. If you are truly curious and diligent, you will find you can observe your observing. Here you run into a roadblock -- the mind watching the mind.
- " I see no evidence of a system that leads to Truth -- only general guidelines. The rest depends on your honesty. Take heart, for all can find their way to honesty." - Shawn Nevins
- " When all effort collapses, the mind stops and temporary shelter is no longer needed.
- " The most awful thing that ever happened to you may be the best thing camouflaged." - Gary Harmon
- " Many are desperately trying to force reality to reveal itself, when they haven't yet discovered and seen as false the self they've taken a lifetime to create.
- " Our mind has an amazing ability to split itself. The effect of this on the seeker of self-knowledge is to lead him about in endless circles of egos, never getting a true look at himself. 'The world is divided into people who think they are right' also applies to the world inside our heads." - Bob Fergeson
- " Most do not succeed in reaching the goal simply because the goal is a state of Effortlessness. It is abiding in non-doing and doing can not lead to non-doing! Effortlessness can not be had through effort, but we can reach the goal easily and quickly through a daily practice of Effortlessness, and nothing will remain undone. "- Michael Connors
- " I feel that a sincere seeker who possessed the determination to find the Truth at any cost, suffering, or expenditure of energy, would most certainly find the Truth, if he followed the threefold path with an open mind. The part of the path which is hardest to realize is that dealing with the brotherhood or school.... This latter requires compatibility with a group of people and requires that we find a group that is doing something worthwhile." - Richard Rose

Comic Philosophy

" We must respect the other fellow's religion, but only in the sense and to the extent that we can respect his theory that his wife is beautiful and his children are smart." - H.L. Mencken

On going to war over religion: " You're basically killing each other to see who's got the better imaginary friend." - Rich Jeni

" Religion is a defense against the experience of God." - Carl Jung

03/12/04

Blavatsky

This month's Missal takes a look at **H.P. Blavatsky**. Born Helena Petrovna von Hahn in southern Russia in 1831, she led a fascinating and controversial life. She was the founder of the Theosophical Society, and one of the first westerners to enter Tibet. An exceptional child, very headstrong and willful, she was reported to possess strange powers from an early age. At the age of seventeen, on a dare from one of her servants, Helena married her namesake, General Blavatsky. The marriage was never consummated, and Helena soon escaped from the General and her family, and began her travels in what became known as her vagabond years. From 1848 to 1858 she traveled the world, though the details of her life during this period of adventure are rather vague. It was during this time, in 1851 in London, that she reported first meeting her Master, the mysterious Mahatma Morya, or M, as he was later called. Blavatsky had seen visions of him since her childhood. He told her of her future destiny, that of being an instrument of the Masters in bringing their message to the world. She had always exhibited boundless energy and impulsiveness, and now she also had guidance as to what to do with her life. She was soon to spend time with him and another of the Masters, Koot Hoomi, in Tibet and elsewhere, developing her occult powers.

... once that a student abandons the old trodden highway of routine, and enters upon the solitary path of independent thought - Godward - he is a Theosophist, an original thinker, a seeker after the eternal truth, with 'an inspiration of his own' to solve the universal problems. - H. P. Blavatsky

She spent several more years wandering through the lands of Tibet, the Far East, and Russia, before finally coming to America, where she met Colonel H. S. Olcott in 1874. The spiritualist craze was sweeping the country, and Blavatsky was determined to put the spirit of the times to good use. Through her and Colonel Olcott's efforts, the Theosophical Society was soon formed. The group was named after the ancient teaching known as Theosophy, the Wisdom concerning the Divine, which had been claimed to be the spiritual basis of other great movements of the past, from Neo-Platonism to Gnosticism. The Society's goal was to collect and diffuse a knowledge of the laws which govern the Universe. Madame Blavatsk was forming a philosophy based on the teachings of her Masters, hinging also on her own experience of the powers of a strong, clear mind, an inner grasp of the soul, and her almost overwhelming intuition.

Anxiety is the foe of knowledge;
like unto a veil it falls down before the soul's eye;
entertain it, and the veil only thicker grows;
cast it out, and the sun of truth may dissipate the cloudy veil.
- H. P. Blavatsky

Soon after, in 1877, she published her first great work, Isis Unveiled, a huge two volume book outlining the history, scope and development of the Occult Sciences. In 1879, her and Colonel Olcott moved to India, and set up the headquarters of the Theosophical Society near Bombay. After several years they moved to Adyar, Madras. During this time, much of the controversy that would follow Blavatsky throughout the rest of her life, began. She insisted that she was receiving her instructions from her

Masters via magically written letters which would somehow appear in a specially made case. Her longtime housekeepers, feeling slighted by Blavatsky, and later fired, told the press that the Master's letters were fakes, written by HPB herself. The firestorm of controversy hasn't settled to this day. The ensuing accusations of fraud and trickery had a negative impact on her health, and she lost much of her control of the Theosophical Society. (For both sides of the story, visit the links in the following section.) She soon left India, never to return, settling in Europe. In worsening health, she nevertheless began the work on her second masterpiece, The Secret Doctrine. Published in England in 1888, the first book of this two volume work is concerned mainly with the evolution of the Universe, while the second volume deals with the evolution of humanity. She died in 1891 in England, after a long illness, leaving an enormous amount of writing, and a legacy to match.

Learn that there is no cure for desire, no cure for love of reward, no cure for the misery of longing, save in the fixing of the sight and hearing on that which is invisible and soundless.
- H. P. Blavatsky

While her life was filled to the brim with experience and controversy, her ideals remained steady and of high character. She taught that virtue, compassion and friendship were necessary to any spiritual progress, and also believed in energy conservation and abstinence as tools on the path.

" Happy are those whose astral sense is not opened and who do not see all the terrible things that are about us. By a holy life there is a kind of aura developed which protects a man from them. All elementals and Dugpas are afraid of the Protean power. Its very presence seems to strike terror in them."
- H. P. Blavatsky

Her writings can be obtuse, overly intellectual, and of seeming irrelevance to those not interested in the occult sciences and religions of ages past, but their chief value may lie in the interest they stir. She can provide us with a starting point for further research into the mystery of ourselves, showing us that there is more to life than meets the eye, and that the true solution to our existence lies within, found through our perseverance, self-reliance, and sense of adventure.

No one else's opinion should be considered superior to the voice of one's own conscience. Let that conscience, therefore, develop to its highest degree, guide us in all the ordinary acts of life. As to the conduct of our inner life, let us concentrate our entire attention on the ideal we have set ourselves, and look beyond, without paying the slightest attention to the mud upon our feet ...Those who are capable of making this effort are the true Theosophists; all others are but members [of the Theosophical Society], more or less indifferent, and very often useless. - H. P. Blavatsky

Tricks and Traps

Trap: being mesmerized by motion. We became fascinated, and eventually identified, with motion. Our attention has been trained to follow the movement of the world, whether inner or outer, and thus we feel a background anxiety formed by the loss of contact with the still-point.

Trick: finding the still-point. If there is motion, there must be its opposite, stillness. This unmoving point of reference gives us the anchor we need to resist being pulled hither and thither by the constant motion of the world. When this silent still-point becomes our identity, we are free from the ups and downs of mind-motion, and become able to go further within. We then have the opportunity to be hit by the next koan:

Trap of the still-point: Now, we may find ourselves in a new, very subtle trap, that of being identified with the opposite of motion. We find we are moving between silence and noise, stillness and action, but never into what we really Are. If we can see the still-point, as well as the movement, we have a chance to pull the next

Trick: Triangulating between stillness and motion. If we can be both motion and stillness, through our identification, we are moving between these as end points on a baseline. This line, with motion and stillness as its ends, can now be seen from a point above and superior to it. Where does this leave you ?

Desire only that which is within you.
Desire only that which is beyond you.
Desire only that which is unattainable.
For within you is the light of the world -
the only light that can be shed upon the Path.
If you are unable to perceive it within you,
it is useless to look for it elsewhere.
It is beyond you, because when you reach it
you have lost yourself. - Blavatsky

Commentary

Losing One's Head for Nothing: The True Adventure

" Every child is seduced into taking part in our game of life. He loses direct-mind ability when he identifies with and participates in this dimension, and tries to manipulate it for his own petulant form of counter-seduction. " - Richard Rose.

Much is written about silence, no-mind and the void. But do we really desire to find them, much less become them? Are we willing to give up our ego-identity in the emotion-fueled game of life, to go beyond our character role in the ceaseless drama of action-reaction? The struggle to win the game of life, if we're lucky, is eventually seen as an endless circle, from which there is no true rest, and no real victory. To those who have had this intuition, hearing the faint call of the Voice of the Silence, the possibility of returning to our true home in the Unknown is no longer a fairy tale. But how? How do we make this journey that traverses a land without maps, a sea without charts? Let us look and see how the True Adventure might be likened to three stages of becoming, a journey from Nowhere to here, and back again.

" I do not feel obliged to believe that the same God who has endowed us with sense, reason, and intellect has intended us to forgo their use." - Galileo

" We have to fatten up the head before we can chop it off -- have to do a lot of studying -- have to become virtuous."

"The things that are holding you up personally are the negative things that have happened to you." - Richard Rose

" Energy is spent chiefly on unnecessary and unpleasant emotions, on the expectation of unpleasant things, possible and impossible, on bad moods, on unnecessary haste, nervousness, irritability, imagination, daydreaming, and so on. In beginning to struggle with all these habitual sides of his life a man saves an enormous amount of energy, and with the help of this energy he can easily begin the work of self-study and self-perfection. " - G. I. Gurdjieff

The First Stage: Becoming an Efficient Man-Machine. We must first become a good working machine, capable of interacting with the environment without the ego unduly interfering. In becoming free of obsession and fear, unbridled temptation and ambition, emotional turmoil, and habitual energy losses that tie us up in circles of dissipation that lead nowhere, we give ourselves possibility. From infancy to adulthood, we grow in body and mind, and slowly but surely become completely identified with the animal-man thus formed. All so-called psychological work is only to bring us to this point of being an efficient machine. This is still the first stage of life: the building of personality and the making of the healthy, moral, animal-man. If we think to shortcut around this stage, we risk making a big mistake. If our path through the everyday world of life has been blocked by a negative state of mind, forced on us through our environment, which keeps us from developing a healthy working ego, we may turn to 'spiritual' work in order to build the ego in a dream-world of no resistance. We think we are being spiritual, but are in reality copping out of the first stage by avoiding life and the proper functioning of the machine in its manifest capacity. By the discipline of energy conservation, we give our intuition a chance to ripen. Through the discipline of learning to reason, we free ourselves from the danger of placing our future in the hands of daydreams. A paradox for sure, but only through resistance and tension will the ego be properly formed, so as to assure its eventual complete destruction. Once we are capable of taking care of ourselves in society, having reached the level of good householder and truly completed the first stage, we have the real possibility of turning our attention to greater questions.

" Awakening begins when a man realizes that he is going nowhere and does not know where to go. " - G. I. Gurdjieff

" Anything that pays the bills or works in the everyday world, including psychological systems, is never able to be rejected or seen for its errors. As long as you pay the bills, you have little chance of escaping your thought patterns. The average person has a set of succeeding habits designed to master the simple production of livelihood and never seriously questions life unless he has a disastrous defeat. " - Jim Burns

" Learn that there is no cure for desire, no cure for love of reward, no cure for the misery of longing, save in the fixing of the sight and hearing on that which is invisible and soundless. " - H. P. Blavatsky

The Second Stage: Hitting the Brick Wall of Our Mechanicalness. The second stage is that of freeing the attention from the motion of the mind. This is usually brought about by a traumatic catastrophe, which starts our questioning of life itself and convinces us that it's a zero-sum game. We see without a shadow of a doubt that

there is no permanent solution in mechanical or behavioral change. We thus come to the realization that we have been hypnotized by motion: the circular, ceaseless motion of the mind. Our very attention, our "I", is caught in the game of following motion, whether this motion is in the apparent world of objects, in the inner world of thought, or even in the following of astute, complex trains of feelings, memory, and thought. This is still just the attention following the motion that is mind. The blessed catastrophe of having our head cracked wide open hasn't much chance of occurring if we have not engaged ourselves fully with the world and life in an attempt to assert our ego to its fullest in its bid for power, security and happiness.

Whether through luck, trauma, or an unbending intent to find the Truth, if the spell of the ego-mind is broken, we may catch a glimpse, in the clear calm of a quiet mind, that we are not a man after all, but that which sees, or contains, the attention itself. We can then allow our questioning or longing to turn this attention inward. This turning within as a last, desperate act comes only after we have died to any possibility of hope in the world of mind and motion. Having given up our misplaced faith in the dimension of motion, we learn to listen and observe rather than identify and mechanically react to the trains of thought and circumstance. Our previous work in the first stage has left us without any dissonant agenda to cloud our vision and interfere with our quest. Now, we can start looking within. Backing out of our personality, we begin trying to find something real, other than mind-motion and endless patterns of thought.

" True observation must be carried on from a superior dimension. The mind cannot be studied with the mind. It must be observed from some point outside of, and yet superior to the mind. " - Richard Rose

" True perception is true knowledge. Perception is the capacity of the soul; it is the sight of the higher intelligence whose vision never errs. And that can be best exercised in true serenity of mind, as Mahatma K.H. observes: "it is upon the serene and placid surface of the unruffled mind that visions gathered from the invisible, find a representation in the visible world." In short - as the Hindu allegory has it - "It is in the dead of night that Krishna is born." "Self-knowledge of this kind is unattainable by what men usually call "self-analysis." Reasoning or any brain process does not reach it; for it is the awakening to consciousness of the Divine nature of man. To obtain this knowledge is a greater achievement than to command the elements or to know the future. " - H. P. Blavatsky

The Third Stage: Turning Within. Now we come to the final stage of our journey. We find we have become what can be called a ' listening attention' or simple awareness. When we first turn this attention within, we find Nothing, the Unknown. We may feel that this great, mysterious 'nothing' is more alive or real than the apparent world-projection, and possibly its source. Turning this passive attention outward, we see that what we once called the world was mainly an overlay of mind-projection on a now relatively simple scene. There are no longer what we used to call 'objects', including what we once called our 'self '. Our lost ability to know directly returns, by-passing the fading reflective mechanism of the thinking mind. We have given up on the manipulation of motion and have come to rest in a silent, aware space we find to be our Self. We now look upon the world as a reflection of this Self, and are not drawn into its motion or seek to steer its direction, for there is no longer a 'self ' to interfere. We can now see the truth in the saying, "Home is Where the Heart Is".

While we have a hand (a pair of them) in the mind-dimension, our heart is now resting in the Dazzling Dark, and our head is, thank God, missing in action.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " As the highest development, physically and spiritually, on earth of the creative cause, man should aim to solve the mystery of his being.
- " Shun praise. Praise leads to self-delusion. Thy body is not Self, thyself is in itself without a body, and either praise or blame affects it not.
- " Abstain because it is right to abstain, not that your self shall be kept clean.
- " Degrade not truth by forcing it upon unwilling minds.
- " It should never be forgotten that Occultism is concerned with the inner man, who must be strengthened and freed from the dominion of the physical body and its surroundings, which must become his servants. Hence the first and chief necessity of chelaship is a spirit of absolute unselfishness and devotion to Truth; then follow self-knowledge and self-mastery. " - H. P. Blavatsky
- " Awakening begins when a man realizes that he is going nowhere and does not know where to go. " - G. I. Gurdjieff
- " Sometimes there would be a rush of noisy visitors and the Silence of the monastery would be shattered. This would upset the disciples; not the Master, who seemed just as content with the noise as with the Silence. To his protesting disciples he said one day, "Silence is not the absence of sound, but the absence of self." - Anthony de Mello
- " Show me a sane man and I will cure him for you." - C.G. Jung

Comic Philosophy

" Back in the Alfalfa Sprout Capital of the Universe, standing here at the ground zero of political correctness, I am reminded of my old fondness for these dear and fuzzy folk. I think of them as the American hobbits, except that they have, of course, banned smoking. Here they are, saving water, saving whales, saving dolphins and generally trying to bring humankind up to a level of perfection that is in almost lunatic defiance of everybody else's tendency to let things go to hell in a handbasket."
- Molly Ivins, writing about Boulder, Colorado

" There are more psychotherapists per capita in the town in which I live than anywhere else in the world. Why do you think that is? It's one of two reasons: either my town contains more screwed-up people than anywhere else in the world, or it contains more quack psychotherapists. " - Mr. Cranky, writing about Boulder, Colorado

" If nothing else works, a total pig-headed unwillingness to look facts in the face will see us through." - The Black Adder, possibly writing about Boulder, Colorado

02/13/04

Vernon Howard

This month's Missal takes a look at Vernon Howard. Born in Massachusetts in 1918, he began writing at an early age and by 1965 had published the best sellers The Mystic Path to Cosmic Power, and The Power of Your Supermind. Little is known about this modern mystic and teacher's early life. Reports are that he seldom mentioned his past, and instead concentrated on helping others to see the trap of illusion they were in, and how they could escape. We can surmise from a photograph of him that he was active in the military at some point, probably during WW I I. He comments in his writing that he had been a counselor and teacher for many years. In the 1970's, he formed the New Life Foundation, a group dedicated to spiritual development, and taught there until his death in 1992.

Vernon Howard's teaching is primarily one of inspiration. He had no practical, step-by-step system I can surmise, but continually referred the student back to questioning himself. This process leads to the beginnings in the student of what Howard called impartial Self-Observation. His many books and essays continually bring one back to the fact that we do not know ourselves, and that this is the reason for our problems and misery. Over the years of our life, he tells us, we have created a false self through identification with our thoughts and projections, and have come to believe this strange creature to be us. Through self-observation, we see through the fallacy that we have to remain as victims, moved about by the world and circumstance, and instead see that we can be happy, at peace with the moment, and free from events and time.

Why do some events make me feel happy, while others bring sadness?
Because some events seem to confirm false ideas you have about life, while others seem to deny them.
Is it really as simple as that?
As simple as that. However, you must prove this for yourself through daily experience. For instance, notice your disturbance when other people do not agree with your claims of being a successful person. This leads to a state which is above all events.
- Vernon Howard

His steady admonishment that 'know thyself' is the key, throws the attention back on itself, keeping us from confusing our ability to project and imagine with that of simple seeing. Stressing common sense and trust in one's own perception, Howard can provide a wealth of material to keep us inspired, and to gauge our own intuition and progress. He shows us how we are not reactive or negative in essence, but are taught this mistake. To love our own illusive misery more than our inherent happiness and peace, he writes, is the result of identifying with our thoughts and unquestioned beliefs: the false self. Howard shows us how to escape this trap of the false self through the door of unbiased, impartial observation of our own thoughts, emotions, and mind, leading us to the truth and realization that we are the Seer, rather than the seen.

THINKING *produces noisy and wrong action.*
SEEING *allows silent and right action.* - Vernon Howard

One gets the feeling that he was a man whose teaching method hinged on his ability to personally inspire seekers to look within, through his writing, personality and

presence. Without his presence today, after the inspiration that comes from reading his work has faded, one can be left with the feeling, what now? To put a sincere practice of self-observation to work for us without a teacher there to correct our efforts, is a hard task. Still, Howard's lifetime of work continues to point the way to freedom, through inner work on negative thought and emotions, and a return to wakefulness and mental clarity.

" To be asleep means to be the slave of anger and envy, to demand that events turn out according to personal desire, to deceive oneself and others, to suffer from guilt and shame, to take secret delight in hurting others, to live in fear. To be awake means to possess self understanding, to have only one person within yourself, to see through the folly of worldly ambitions, to live from your real nature, to be free of all negative feelings, to be genuinely compassionate." - Vernon Howard

Tricks and Traps

Trap: Identifying with the False Self. Through placing our attention only on the reaction-pattern of thought and emotion that we unconsciously project upon the world, we are trapped into calling that resulting composite view reality, and foolishly say "I" to this composite filter through which we see nothing but illusion.
Trick: Self-Observation. By practicing true self-observation through the listening attention, we separate our attention from its identification with the projection. This tricks us into withdrawing our attention from the mind and, perhaps unknowingly, backs it out of the composite view, thus it retreats from the error of projection. This starts our reverse vector towards what is more relatively true. This new freedom of movement of the attention also gives us the possibility of turning the attention around and going within.

" The higher power does not need your aid. End your vanity. The higher power seeks to tell you to stop trying to help both it and yourself, for this enables it to help you.
In a true man, spirit is the king and thought is the obedient servant. In a false man, thought is the king and the spirit is considered an enemy. "- Vernon Howard

Commentary

Containing Tension

" We are cowards, and what we witness about us is a dynasty of fear in a play house of desires." - Richard Rose

Most of us go through life with no clear awareness of our limited time and energy, but instead continue to plan and plot our way along as if nothing will ever really change. We live to have fun, known as the pursuit of happiness, making our forays into the world of pleasure from a base of imagined security. Driven by the fear that our security is tenuous at best, we rush to have even more fun, before the circle of our dissipation and paranoia collapses in on itself. We never question our motivations or bother to define what we mean by happiness, perhaps because of an inner intuition that that would take the fun out of it. Let's take a look at what this pursuit really is,

and how it can be turned from a struggle downhill into frustration and bitterness into a change of being.

This pursuit of happiness can best be defined as the pursuit of a fading memory, a memory of a time when some outside agent gave us a thrill of such magnitude we can't forget it, or else it relieved our anxiety so well as to leave us in a state of unusual peace. Being creatures of habit, we try repeating the same sequence of events that gave us the previous result. This cycle is sooner or later found to be one of ever-decreasing returns. We find the thrill or release lessen, while the inducing agent is needed in ever greater quantity. We never question the process itself. We never wonder why we even need an outside agent in order to feel happy, at peace, or complete. Only when the agent turns on us, and becomes the deliverer of pain and misery instead, do we stop. Even then, we still seldom question the process, but think we can beat the system by getting a new, improved agent and becoming cleverer in its application.

"As incredible as it sounds, an unhappy man does not realize that happiness is better than unhappiness. Knowing only his own concealed anguish, he worships it, which is the same as self-worship. " - Vernon Howard

This unconscious trap of worshiping our own weakness keeps us from becoming strong. We fail to realize that the tensions we feel, as anxieties or promptings, are the very things that will free us from all need, if we stand up to them. By giving in to every prod and poke that comes into our consciousness, we give away our time and energy to nothing, and keep nothing with which to build our mental strength and intuition. Through resisting these daily irritations and promptings, we save our vitality and time, which can then be put to use on the spiritual path. We also become something, something that has a greater capacity. We can think clearer, have more time for study, and come to have a resistance to the inner noise, which used to send us running for distraction or numbness. We will have increased our capacity for storing tension dramatically, much like putting our money in a bank that pays high interest, to be used for something of true value when the time presents itself, rather than spending every dime in our pocket, and relegating ourselves to living paycheck to paycheck. Eventually, we will also have gained enough inner quiet to possibly hear something from within, giving our intuition a chance to be heard.

"*Be very careful that you do not unconsciously assume that nervous tension is power. This is vital. Watch yourself the next time you work toward some goal. Look very closely to discover tense feelings and nervous thoughts whirling around inside. Do not let them deceive you into assuming that they are creative forces; they are not. They are thieves of genuine powers. As always, your awareness of their thievery is your first fine step toward casting them out. "* - Vernon Howard

The energy we feel as excitement or thrills, is not the energy we are after. This is just the frenzy of a nervous mind, of thoughts and needs wanting to take advantage of us in exchange for a brief moment of peace when our stolen energy is gone. True strength and peace is in an increased capacity for tension. By increasing this capacity, we increase our resistance to the effects of life. We become calmer in the face of stress, and can think clearer under pressure. By virtue of our increased intuition, we may even begin to see through many of the traps we formerly succumbed to. Our patience will increase, and we will not panic and run when unflattering truths about

ourselves come into the light of day. We will be able to sit and meditate for the lengths of time necessary to gain insight into these truths about ourselves, no longer giving into distraction, fear or pride.

Through this reversal of the trap of dissipation into the discipline of containment, we gain a chance at freedom, and have become something more than a utility of forces unseen. We now have the possibility of using our limited time and energy in real ways in the pursuit of self-discovery. Our imaginary life of having our cake and getting to eat it, too, becomes instead a life with a true direction, towards truth and self-knowledge leading to real happiness. The Kingdom of Heaven is truly within, and we will not find it by taking our pleasure and meaning from without, from the world and its ceaseless change and pain.

The next time you feel an inner prod, an urge, an itch from below which you know can only be scratched at the price of your peace of mind, do not think that relief is in doing what it wants. Try resisting, turn away. We graduate from crawling by gaining enough strength to stand up and walk. Walking upright depends on having enough capacity for tension to resist falling down. Be patient, and learn to walk without wobbling. The view is better and you can cover greater ground. By this resistance, become something greater than the world, and take your meaning and definition from the silent strength you then find within.

" To avoid action, thou must first determine for great action." - Richard Rose

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- "Awareness and happiness are exactly the same thing.
- " Knowledge of divine nature is possible only by entering and passing through the dark tunnel of human nature. Any other way leads to self-trickery and self-isolation.
- " Our pains are caused by our wrong viewpoints toward things. The false self throws up an imaginary picture of how it insists things should be. And every time this should be clashes with what actually happens, we react painfully. The problem is not what actually happens, but our demands that something else should happen.
- " Interpretation blocks reception while masquerading as reception. Rightness does not need interpretation; it requires simple acceptance and nothing else." - Vernon Howard
- " The point of this Work is to save energy and not to be eaten by identifying. Unless we save energy we cannot awaken, because life and its turning events take our energy at every moment. None of the things that happen on the Earth, due to tyrants, etc. is comparable with the way in which we are used by life whose object is to keep us fast asleep. So it said we are all in prison. But we do not see this. We feel it is someone else's fault. Here we err deeply." - Maurice Nicoll
- " Real freedom is the absence of the self that feels trapped, not the trappings that the self requires to make it feel free. - Guy Finley
- " In order to act, you must be somewhat insane. A reasonably sensible man is satisfied with thinking." - Georges Clemenceau

Comic Philosophy

" The American people are sheep. They're comfortable, rich, working. It's like the Romans, they're happy with bread and their spectator sports. The Super Bowl means more to them than any right." - Jack Kevorkian

" The road to truth is long, and lined the entire way with annoying bastards." - Alexander Jablokov

04/25/04

The Gnostics

This month's Missal takes a look at the Gnostics. The Gnostics were an early Christian sect, who were declared heretics by the early Church, and wiped out by the end of the fifth century. Until the later part of the 20th century, most information about them had been lost, as their writings had also been destroyed, and most of what was known about them were accounts left by their enemies, the main stream Christian bishops of the time.
The main tenet of the Gnostics was that salvation, becoming one with God, was accomplished through interior realization rather than through an intermediary, such as the Church or clergy. The individual, turning away from the material world, came to find his Source within through his own efforts and knowledge, or 'gnosis'. The Greek term gnosis means investigation or knowledge; the understanding of spiritual mysteries.
In 1945 a vital discovery was made in Egypt. An earthen jar containing ancient Gnostic books or codices was found. This collection, known as the Nag Hammadi library, was to give the world a clearer picture of the Gnostics and their philosophy.

Absolute reality, as taught by the Gnostics, was unknowable through the senses, or even the mind, and could only be known through an intuitive and inner direct perception. This Self could only be ultimately realized through the path of the heart, being unreachable through conceptual thinking. This True God was not to be confused with the God of the Old Testament, called by the Gnostics the Demiurge, a term meaning 'half-maker' or public craftsman. This god, the ruler of the physical universe, was the illegitimate offspring of Sophia, or wisdom. Believing himself to be all-powerful, having lost his connection with his Source, the Demiurge rules the Earth with arrogance, through fear and desire.

" Not all humans are spiritual (pneumatics) and thus ready for Gnosis and liberation. Some are earthbound and materialistic beings (hyletics), who recognize only the physical reality. Others live largely in their psyche (psychics). Such people usually mistake the Demiurge for the True God and have little or no awareness of the spiritual world beyond matter and mind. For instance the blind and arrogant creator-demiurge bears a close resemblance to the alienated human ego that has lost contact with the ontological Self. Also, the myth of Sophia resembles closely the story of the human psyche that loses its connection with the collective unconscious and needs to be rescued by the Self." - Stephan A. Hoelle

This remarkable analogy of the arrogant creator-god, lost in ignorance, calls to light the ancient maxim, 'As Above, So Below'. In the microcosm, our own ego, lost from its source and claiming to be the master, reflects the macrocosm of the Demiurge and its relationship to the higher Self. By showing us this recurring theme in many of their manuscripts, the Gnostics reveal the path back to reality; regaining our inner connection to the Self through gnosis.
The Gnostics taught that we needed help to overcome the hypnosis of earthly life and its demiurge ruler, or ego. These helpers, the Messengers of Light, came in many forms, the highest being Jesus. Jesus was not thought of as saving us from our sins through His death and suffering, but of leading us back to Truth through His teaching and His life. Many of the codices of the Nag Hammadi library are teachings of Jesus, in the form of sayings and parables. The most popular and accessible is the Gospel of

Thomas, in which Jesus labors to show his disciples their current state, and of how to regain their lost grace.

Jesus said, "I took my stand in the midst of the world, and in flesh I appeared to them. I found them all drunk, and I did not find any of them thirsty. My soul ached for the children of humanity, because they are blind in their hearts and do not see, for they came into the world empty, and they also seek to depart from the world empty. But meanwhile they are drunk. When they shake off their wine, then they will change their ways." - Gospel of Thomas

Another facet of the Gnostic teachings is the role of the feminine. Several of the writings, including Thunder, Perfect Mind are written in a feminine voice. Mary Magdalene plays a greater and different role, too, as used in several of today's popular works, such as The Da Vinci Code and Holy Blood, Holy Grail.
The greatest gift of the Gnostics, for which they were persecuted and eventually destroyed, is that of inner self-inquiry as the path home. While guides and helpers are needed, and available, we are responsible for our own liberation, and cannot buy our way out of our state of ignorance save with our very life.

Jesus said*, "A man had received visitors. And when he had prepared the dinner, he sent his servant to invite the guests.*
He went to the first one and said to him, 'My master invites you.' He said, 'I have claims against some merchants. They are coming to me this evening. I must go and give them my orders. I ask to be excused from the dinner.'
He went to another and said to him, 'My master has invited you.' He said to him, 'I have just bought a house and am required for the day. I shall not have any spare time.'
He went to another and said to him, 'My master invites you.' He said to him, 'My friend is going to get married, and I am to prepare the banquet. I shall not be able to come. I ask to be excused from the dinner.'
He went to another and said to him, 'My master invites you.' He said to him, 'I have just bought a farm, and I am on my way to collect the rent. I shall not be able to come. I ask to be excused.'
The servant returned and said to his master, 'Those whom you invited to the dinner have asked to be excused.' The master said to his servant, 'Go outside to the streets and bring back those whom you happen to meet, so that they may dine.'
Businessmen and merchants will not enter the places of my father."

The Gnostics bear much in common with a later group, The Cathars or Albigensians.

Jesus said, *"Become wanderers."*

Tricks and Traps

Trap: Seeking spiritual comfort in the world and nature. When we make a move to change, and perhaps become, we will encounter the pain and adversity that accompanies all change and growth. If we then retreat or run from the pain into the past comforts of nature and the world, are we just being tricked into stagnation and

decay? Running back to mommy or daddy, love (sex), worldly distractions, even into drinking, drugs, and shopping, only serves to delay our facing of the truth about ourselves and our egos.

Trick: Turning within, and questioning our reactions. When faced with spiritual difficulty, instead of retreating into old habits that might not have our spiritual best interest at heart, we can turn within. In a quiet mind, without the motivation of fear or need, we can question the pattern of pain and the rush to relieve it. In climbing a steep hill, we may find ourselves out of breath, legs cramping, faint with fatigue, not knowing when or if we will reach the top. Instead of quitting and rationalizing our way back down the hill to our old refuge of inactivity, dissipation and distraction, we could simply take a break. Remembering our aim, we catch our breath, and scout out the route ahead before continuing upwards. By facing our pain and fear in clarity, we eventually break through to the clear air of higher being. Through intuition and reason, we change to meet whatever real task is before us; for the task and the one faced with it are One.

Commentary

The Gap of Time

The Gnostic's tale of the Demiurge, the arrogant ruler of the material world, gives us a clue as to the nature of our own prison, and how to escape it. Being himself created, a creature, the Demiurges belief in his own infallibility is a lie in basis, and so must be continually bolstered. To accept the true nature of his existence would be unthinkable, for it would mean his demotion from absolute ruler to mere manager, a caretaker of sorts, rather than the True God. This he sees as death, and rightly so. Let us take a look at how we as ego, a reaction-pattern created from thought, make the same mistake, and how we can become free of this prison of projection and delusion.

When we become identified, we do not become identified with the world or the body. We actually fall asleep to the world or body, and become identified with the mind; meaning we are identified with thought. We may believe we are seeing things as they are, for we have never bothered to take a look at how we see, or what we are really seeing. The self-reflecting consciousness sees just that: a projected reflection of its own consciousness. This inner mind-world is a superimposed projection, built of thought that was formed throughout the person's life and the process of which he is completely unaware. We do not see this projecting process, for it is instantaneous and automatic. We only see the end result; a world made of thought, removed from the eternal Now through a gap of time.

This split-second from when we receive a percept and then react to it with thought, is this gap of time. This gap, though it be only a split-second, is a chasm wide enough to separate us from our very Self or Source. It is also wide enough to allow us to live in a world of reaction; a world of judging, thinking, and assumption. This dualistic realm is never stable, ever changing, and ruled by a tyrant whose very existence is after-the-fact. This tyrant is called ego, and is the very thing we have come to be. Our very sense of self has become identified with a reaction-pattern, removed from the present through time. This sad state of affairs is not only unreal, but patently dangerous. All of the world's ills spring from this illusion.

This illusion can also be called mind, or the inner drama. We live in this self-created drama, and must continually re-create it to keep our false sense of self somehow stable in an unstable world. Now, in our struggle for self-survival, our first

reaction to hearing this is to dig in, to insist more than ever that we are in charge by deciding to take immediate action and remedy the situation with our new knowledge. We may decide to root out this egoic ruler who has deluded us for so long, and never again make the same mistake. Or, if our pattern is based in fear, we may decide to run farther into distraction and thought, hoping to be safe in sleep with the covers pulled tightly over our heads. Both of these reactions would be laughable if they weren't so common. Through our very effort to free ourselves, we trap ourselves even more. Through the arrogance of 'deciding', the Demiurge has simply affirmed its self-declared infallibility. We have made the same old mistake, again. As the reaction-pattern, we have only reacted. Nothing has changed; the dream goes on.

How then, can we escape this prison of thought and time? Our very effort to escape binds us more tightly, and even the world of distraction and sleep provides no rest, being subject to drastic change through ever-reacting thought. The answer lies not in affirming our ignorance through thinking we now know what to do, but in our admission of the problem itself. Through the simple admitting that we do not know, we begin the homeward journey to freedom. We start with this surrender; then our attention has the possibility of freeing itself from the drama of the mind in time.

This surrender is a not a passive giving in to our identification with the world or thought, but an acceptance of the facts. We realize that we do not know ourselves. We do not know how we see, much less what, and are thus freed to start looking. This admission frees our attention from the hypnotic trap of conceptual thought, and stabilizes it in silence. To find the possibility of moving this attention within to find out who we really are, as the True Self, means that we must free this wandering attention from identification with thought, and allow its gaze to be turned back within, across the chasm of time and projection.

When we can actually view the world without association, meaning we are finally capable of admitting we know not what we see, we have found a valuable clue. We have now become an observer, capable of turning our gaze within. No longer lost in time and the projection of the associative mental world, there is now the capacity to move within. We have this new freedom because we are no longer locked in the after-the-fact reaction-dimension of thought. This is how honest self-observation gives us possibility to become, to become a real Observer. In the world of thought, there is none. We step out of our own way, and are freed from our personal demiurge as we allow the True Consciousness to come forth.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- Jesus said, " Whoever finds the interpretation of these sayings will not experience death.
- " Let him who seeks continue seeking until he finds. When he finds, he will become troubled. When he becomes troubled, he will be amazed, and he will rule over the All.
- " Know what is in front of your face, and what is hidden from you will become clear to you. For there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed.
- " Whoever has come to understand the world has found only a corpse, and whoever has found a corpse is superior to the world;... How miserable is the

body that depends on a body, and how miserable is the soul that depends on these two.

- " If you bring forth what is within you, what you have will save you. If you do not have that within you, what you do not have within you will kill you." - Gospel of Thomas
- " All you really need on this earth is enough food, shelter, physical freedom to walk around, and a little recreation. The basics of life are all you really need to be happy with the one exception of finding something that is higher than this world's satisfaction. You don't have to be anyone but someone who wants to make contact with the Creator, the Author of the whole universe." - Vernon Howard
- " The practical job of awakening someone consists in part of showing him or her by various devices that all mental attempts to reach the pure Consciousness are in vain. It lies back of our mind and back of our consciousness. The problem is to reach Consciousness as it is in itself and not as reflecting some thought or perception of ours that is in it at the time. Naturally, as long as "we" decide or "we" try to do this, we are regarding ourselves as ultimate and reinforcing the bonds of delusion." - Alfred Pulyan
- " If you feel the need for entertainment or escape, you are asleep." - Richard Rose

Comic Philosophy

" This is a different thing. It's spontaneous, and it's called wit." - The Black Adder

"At first, I only laughed at myself. Then I noticed that life itself is amusing. I've been in a generally good mood ever since." - Marilyn vos Savant

" If there really is a God who created the entire universe with all of its glories, and He decides to deliver a message to humanity, He WILL NOT use, as His messenger, a person on cable TV with a BAD hairstyle." - Dave Barry

06/04/04

Cathars

This month's missal takes a look at the Cathars. Also known as the **Albigensians**, the Cathars were a medieval sect practicing in the Languedoc region of southern France from the 10th to the 14th century. Their origin has been traced to the Bogomils and the Gnostics, with whom they shared a similar philosophy. The term Cathars originates from the Greek, catharos, meaning the purified ones. Most of what we know of them is from their enemies, the Inquisitors of the Catholic church. They were effectively wiped out by the Inquisition by about 1300, leaving little of their own behind but legend.

Catharism was based on the idea that the world is evil, as believed the Gnostics before them, and had been created by an evil god, known to the Gnostics as the Demiurge, and to the Cathars as Satan. They equated this evil god, or Satan, to the Jehovah of the Old Testament, and only used the New Testament, particularly the Book of John, as their Gospel. To the Cathars, men became corrupt due to the hypnotic influence of the world of matter and its evil ruler. The path they saw to liberation and escape from this hell that is earth was to renounce the world and live a pure life, free as possible from the corrupting influences of matter. Those that did live this disciplined life were called Perfects, and traveled the countryside ministering to the Believers among the common folk.

Their conviction that the world is a scene of unmitigated evil led to certain logical conclusions for those who wished to escape from the bonds of matter. It called for a life of extreme asceticism and complete dedication to the spiritual goal.
- Louis Khourey

These Perfects were referred to by the Believers as bonne hommes, or good men, and were named Perfects in derision by their Inquisitor adversaries. They usually worked in pairs, the deacon and his student, the minor son. They had no churches per se, believing the true church was within, in the heart of man. The Perfects themselves lived lives of purity, being celibate, non-violent, and strict vegetarians. This was in stark contrast to the priests and bishops within the corrupt and opulent church of the time. They had the power to remove a person's connections to the material world, so that the Believer would go to Heaven when they died. This rite performed by the Perfects was called the consulamentum, the wiping away of sin, which was usually performed on the Believer on his deathbed to prepare him for Heaven. After receiving this, the Believer would sometimes fast, so they might die sooner, and with less taint from the world. The consulamentum was the only sacrament of the Cathar faith. They did not perform marriages, as procreation was not condoned, for it only brought more souls into the world to be corrupted.

Catharism was:
"...Christianity, without chapels, without statues, Christianity which always refused to encompass anything sacred within visible matter"...."the heart of man is the true church of God". - Anne Brenon

Women were treated as equals, for the Cathars believed the physical form to be irrelevant. The soul could have had either form before, and may once again come back as a male. Their insistence on not becoming tied to the world led them to

renounce all oaths, also. This did not sit well with many lords and bishops of the time, for in an age of illiteracy, spoken oaths were common.

The popularity of the Cathars reached it height at the beginning of the 13th century. This brought about the beginning of the end, for the Catholic Church and the nobles of northern France became jealous of the Cathars growing power. A crusade was launched which eventually led to the dramatic last stand at the Cathar castle on Montsegur. Here, after an as yet to be explained surrender and terms, the remaining Perfects were burned, ending an era and starting a legend. Stories still abound of the last night of this final siege, and the supposed escape of four Cathars with a treasure, reputed to be anything from gold, to the Holy Grail itself.

The Cathars left us with not just another story of strength in the face of persecution, but also an inspiring call to our intuition that things might not be as they seem. Their struggle to escape the bonds of earthly existence and find Heaven and God within, give us an ideal and lifestyle to aspire to. While most of us cannot hope to live the life of a Cathar Perfect, we can take heed from their lives, and turn our attention away from the world and its hypnotic hold long enough to find our lost connection to the changeless realm within.

In the first place, they usually say of themselves that they are good Christians, who do not swear, or lie, or speak evil of others; that they do not kill any man or animal, nor anything having the breath of life, and that they hold the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ and his gospel as the apostles taught.
- *Excerpt from* Bernard Gui's Inquisitor's Manual

Tricks and Traps

Trap: Making up rules as to when we are aware or awake, and when we are asleep. If we are using the intellect to judge our state of awareness after the fact, we're not free from the ego, but simply lost in its pride. Focusing on the inner drama by dictating what we think we should be aware of, rather than just being aware, is still identification. The objects of our attention do not improve or lessen our awareness, no matter how we label them. It's the identification with the view that puts us to sleep.
Trick: Watching our thoughts without attachment, so as to see both sides of the ego as it judges itself. If we are identified with the part of the ego that says when we are awake and when asleep, you can bet that the part that is subject to this criticism is not far away. Look for how they both rely on each other like opposite sides of a coin. Awareness is not subject to being unaware, its attention is just easily caught. It can be looking at an ego and identified, or looking and listening. It can even look at itself....

" What I suspect we need is not any kind of path or discipline, but a collection of tricks or devices for catching the Dark at the corner of the eye, as it were, and learning how to spot its just-waiting-to-be-seen presence, combined with strategies for stopping the hyperactive survival-programmes from immediately explaining the perception away." - John Wren-Lewis

Commentary

Movie Madness

The Cathars believed that their soul became trapped in the world, reincarnating over and over until they were once again free from identification with this dimension and could return home to pure Spirit. They saw how our attention becomes easily trapped in this dualistic universe. Snared by the temptations of the outer life, the mind creates an inner thought-based world to match, and by these very thoughts, reinforces the outer world of matter and the senses. Seeing how thoughts and matter became intertwined, creating a net nearly impossible to break, the Cathar Perfects labored to save themselves with great earnestness. A little serious introspection will show us that we too are trapped in a net of two worlds interwoven of mind and matter.
The first of these worlds, and the primary projection, is the physical world of matter and the senses. It is basically neutral, having no emotional or value-based characteristics in and of itself, and separate from us, being a view. This world includes our body, also. The second world, our personal inner drama, is entirely in our heads, and is reactive, less real, and layered upon the first world like icing on a cake. It too, is only a view. The only reality in either of these worlds is our attention, which, when it comes into contact with this dualistic mess, soon becomes trapped.

These two worlds, or movies, let's call them, are so intertwined that we come to see them as one. We are taught from birth to accept what we see in front of us as real, and soon learn to accept our inner reactions, or thoughts, as valid also. Most of these early thoughts are colored by the psychic atmosphere of our home environment, and are never questioned, being so close, and us so young. Soon enough, as the play of life unfolds, we have blended our thoughts and the scene before us into one big drama, which we call our life. This so-called life oscillates between heaven and hell, depending on how the two movies are interacting. Barring a catastrophic failure, trauma, or mounting misery, we never question any of this. Any attempt at escape usually consists of simply rearranging one of the two movies to better fit the other. Let's take another look at each of these dramas, and see if we can find any holes in this net; the trap of movie madness.

The first movie, the world 'out there', is the universal projection we are all, as humans, subject to. It functions according to universal rules, and can be taken as good or bad, right or wrong. Hardly anyone sees it clearly, in and of itself. To illustrate this, simply pick an object and try to look at it without association. If you could see the world as it is, without benefit of the inner drama's projections, you would not know what the object was, nor care. As soon as 'knowing', or memory, kicks in, you are looking at the inner movie as it layers itself over the neutral world of the senses. For most of us, many years of inner work are necessary before we can gaze upon the world without attachment. This can be a startling revelation, to look about at a world created new every moment, full of wonder and possibility. This listening attention can only be had in a quiet mind cleared of emotional baggage, a mind unconcerned with voices of judgment and fear, desire and greed.

The other drama, the inner movie, is the world of thought, both personal and impersonal. It is reactive, associative, and entirely in the head of the individual, regardless of how it may or may not correspond to the heads of others. It is what separates and confines. Again, to get a look at this, pick any familiar object, and take a look. What you tell yourself you are seeing is your inner movie at work. If you see the object as separate, with associations in memory, no matter how valid, you are looking at your own head, not the object. As you go through your day, look at how

everything you see is colored with memory, expectation, and judgment, trapping your attention into a dualistic dream world of your own creation. And it all happens automatically, as if by magic. And magic it is. We weave and spin the net that binds us into our own heads with every thought we identify with. How can we free our trapped attention, and perhaps turn it back in the direction of our Source, towards something non-associative and changeless, something Real?

The devil is said to be in the details, and this is where we can start. Simply look at your thoughts, your reactions, as they automatically fire every second of the day. There are many holes in the net, if we but look. By a constant passive attention, a listening, a looking without thinking, we can spot the many little clues that show us how we project the inner movie onto the outer, and how we can break the chain of relentless association. Once this listening attention is familiar, one can learn to turn it, to move it from movie to movie. We may eventually find it can be turned around and focused within, behind the inner movie to the formless realm beyond all experience. This freedom of movement of the attention doesn't happen by willing it, for that would be just another ego-character playing about in the inner movie. It simply happens, once we've paid the price.

If you're not lucky enough to have paid the price of losing your own head through the grace of trauma or disaster, then the freeing of your attention must be bought with austerity, conviction and earnestness. The Cathar Perfects gave us a hint on how to get started freeing the attention through their lives of abstinence, discipline, and peace, which set them free from the cares and temptations of the worlds of matter and thought. This lifestyle develops the intuition and clears the head of desire and fear based thinking. Then, by paying constant attention, coupled with intuition, one can see little tricks, gaps in the net, that build on the conviction that things are not as they seem. The inner presence of one who has already lost his head can also help. If felt, this presence may trigger a revelation, a conviction that there is something beyond the apparent. As for earnestness, this cannot be bought or faked, but again can be bolstered by intuition, clear reasoning, and the facing of the fact that life, as it is in appearance, is a zero-sum game.

The everyday world of paying the bills and getting by will not allow itself to be questioned; it will not help you of itself. If you have read this far, you must have seen enough holes in your own net to start questioning your worlds, inner and outer. If so, make a move. Find your true companions, the ones who too have had enough of the dream world of living alone, in the movie theater inside their heads. They're out there in the lobby, waiting for you, these soon to be headless souls. Help each other, clear a path through the tangle of thought and form. Find the exit, the door to daylight and freedom, and walk away from the movie madness of shadows and dreams. You may discover, once you are outside in the daylight, that you and your companions are One.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- God said, "I am the Lord thy God, and there are no other gods but me." Then a voice came out of the deepest heaven and said, "Thou liest, god of the blind!" - from a Cathar prayer
- " People are able to continue living or tolerate life by putting serious thoughts as far back as possible. Something inside the individual does not wish to examine its

potential for oblivion. The human mind does not want to see anything negative about itself.

- " We are unaware of this life of make-believe, simply because we live it as reality.
- " There is a path to Truth. From ignorance to relative knowledge. From relative knowledge to an awareness of the limitation of such knowledge. And finally, we pass from intelligence to a reality of Being." - Richard Rose, The Albigen Papers
- " Whether their dualism was absolute or mitigated, all Cathars believed the world to be an evil place where human souls, created by God, were imprisoned in matter created by Satan. There was no Hell or Purgatory other than the earth, and the goal of the spiritual life was to free the soul from the material world so that it could be re-united with its spirit which dwelt with God. If the soul failed in this effort, it would migrate after death to another body to try again." - Louis Khourey
- " It feels quintessentially natural that personal consciousness should be aware of its own Ground, while my first 59-odd years of so-called 'normal' consciousness, in ignorance of that Ground, now seem like a kind of waking dream. It was as if I'd been entranced from birth into a collective nightmare of separate individuals struggling in an alien universe for survival, satisfaction, and significance." - John Wren-Lewis
- " Experience is binding. Intense experience is intensely binding -- pleasurable and painful alike. Observing experience is liberating." - Bob Cergol

Comic Philosophy

" It's embarrassing that 90 percent of the universe is unaccounted for."
-- English astronomer Martin Rees

" God does not play dice with the universe; He plays an ineffable game of His own devising, which might be compared, from the perspective of any of the other players (i.e., everybody), to being involved in an obscure and complex version of poker in a pitch-dark room, with blank cards, for infinite stakes, with a Dealer who won't tell you the rules, and who smiles all the time."
- Neil Gaiman & Terry Pratchett, Good Omens

" Yo, yee Pharos, let us walk through this barren desert in search of truth, and some pointy boots, and maybe a few snack crackers." - Southern Culture on the Skids

7/4/04

U.G. Krishnamurti

This month's missal takes a look at the 'anti-guru', **U.G. Krishnamurti** (1918-2007). UG was born in July of 1918 into a Brahmin family of means in South India. His mother died soon after, and he was raised by his maternal grandfather, who brought UG up in an atmosphere of religion and Theosophy. His early education was in the Hindu scriptures and spiritualism, with many of the early Theosophists, such as Colonel Olcott, coming by to visit his grandfather. This early training left an important mark on UG. He realized early on that even religious Indians and Theosophists were kept from knowing the truth through belief, rather than finding it for themselves.

"So, one thing I discovered when I was quite young was that they were all hypocrites: they said something, they believed something, and their lives were shallow, nothing. That was the beginning of my search. "

He continued his education in philosophy and psychology as well as in spiritual matters, eventually lecturing extensively, marrying in 1943. In 1955 he and his wife and four children moved to the United States in search of treatment for his eldest son's polio. He continued to lecture, and met with some of the great teachers of the time, including Ramana Maharshi and J. Krishnamurti(no relation). He became increasingly frustrated with his search, feeling that no one had anything to give him, but that he must find an answer.

"I was so young, but I was determined to find out if there was any such thing as moksha, and I wanted that moksha for myself. Everybody is talking about moksha, liberation, freedom. What is that? I want to know for myself. These are all useless fellows, yet there must be some person in this world who is an embodiment and apostle of all those things. If there is one, I want to find out for myself." - *"I must find out what that state is. Nobody can give that state; I am on my own. I have to go on this uncharted sea without a compass, without a boat, with not even a raft to take me. I am going to find out for myself what the state is in which that man is. I wanted that very much, otherwise I wouldn't have given my life."*

His search for truth was beginning to be formulated by the question: what is that state, the state of moksha, of liberation? By 1960 the money he had inherited from his grandfather was spent, and he began to feel an inner upheaval, a change occurring within which led him to end his marriage and move to London. Though his friends thought he was headed downhill fast, he did not resist the urge, and remained homeless, spending his time wandering the streets of the city. He led this transient life for several years, eventually moving to Saanen in Switzerland, where as luck would have it, he met Valentine de Kerven. She took care of him, providing his basic needs along with a bit of grounding confrontation, while the change deepened.
His question now became: if I am in that state now, the state of moksha, how do I come to know this, how do I know?

"The search went on and on and on, and "What is that state?" was my question, and the question had an intensity of its own. The question "What is that state?" had a tremendous intensity for me -- not an emotional intensity -- the more I tried to find an answer, the more I failed to find an answer, the more intensity the question had. Then

-- very strange -- that question "What is that state?" transformed itself into another question "How do I know that I am in that state, the state of Buddha, the state I very much wanted and demanded from everybody? I am in that state, but how do I know? I didn't have any answer for that question -- it was like a question in a whirlpool -- it went on and on and on. Then suddenly the question disappeared. Nothing happened; the question just disappeared."

The search had ended, not with an answer, but with the disappearance of the problem. UG calls this experience the "calamity ". Here is his own description:

The disappearance of his fundamental question, on discovering that it had no answer, was a physiological phenomenon, UG says, "a sudden 'explosion' inside, blasting, as it were, every cell, every nerve and every gland in my body." And with that 'explosion', the illusion that there is continuity of thought, that there is a center, an 'I' linking up the thoughts, was not there anymore. - "Then thought cannot link up. The linking gets broken, and once it is broken it is finished. Then it is not once that thought explodes; every time a thought arises, it explodes. So, this continuity comes to an end, and thought falls into its natural rhythm. "
"I call all these events the 'calamity'. I call it the 'calamity' because from the point of view of one who thinks this is something fantastic, blissful, full of beatitude, love, ecstasy and all that kind of a thing, this is physical torture -- this is a calamity from that point of view. Not a calamity to me, but a calamity to those who have an image that something marvelous is going to happen. It's not the thing that you had sought after and wanted so much, but totally different. What is there, you really don't know -- you have no way of knowing anything about that -- there is no image here".

After this sudden experience, on his 49th birthday, he underwent a series of changes to his senses and how his mind functioned, much akin to what Douglas Harding describes as "headlessness". He then lived a nomadic live, never staying in one place for long, adamantly refusing to give formal lectures or correspond with anyone. Nevertheless, his talking and ranting, mostly about how he has no message to give, fill volumes. He insisted that he cannot help anyone, and that his life served no pupose as a guide in helping others to find realization. That said, his books and the websites devoted to him have a large following. He is described as being the anti-guru, the anti-Krishnamurti (a reference to J. Krishnamurti), and that his words are like grenades lobbed into the mind, destroying the hopes and fantasies of the thought-based ego that liberation will be a wonderful experience.

"I have no particular message for mankind, except to say that all holy systems for obtaining enlightenment are bunk, and that all talk of arriving at a psychological mutation through awareness is poppycock. Psychological mutation is impossible. The natural state can happen only through biological mutation. " - "It is an act of futility to relate my description to the way you are functioning. When you stop all this comparison, what is there is your Natural State. Then you will not listen to anybody."

Despite the fact that he denounced himself as a teacher and professed not to be able to help anyone, UG's work can be useful in confronting those whose spiritual egos may be the main stumbling block and attachment. Contrary to his rhetoric of having no message, I can't see any explanation of why he talked at such length of his history and

experience, except that UG does care about those who hear him. Otherwise, the contradiction is hard to explain. He passed away in March of 2007.

Tricks and Traps

Trap: thinking that Liberation, or moksha, is a conclusion, a deduction: a product of thinking. If we are identified with the mind, we become trapped into believing it will eventually solve the problem of self-definition and thus leave us in peace. But the mind being a problem creator as well as solver, it will simply lead us into a new problem complete with a new, better solution, and so on, without end. Even worse, if we're lucky, it may force us to constantly defend, project, and renew any thought-based solution until we wear ourselves out, and are forced back to honest self-observation.

Trick: there is no solution, for there is no problem. Peace of mind is dependent on nature and circumstance; liberation is our true and present nature. While a quiet mind is a necessary step and found through effort, it is not the final goal. By a combination of watching our thoughts and looking at the looker, we become detached from the mind, and find that true peace lies beyond it. Then, circumstance and our daily life will no longer be the problem, since a solution is no longer sought in thought, world, or mind. No longer hounded by the mind to fix ourselves, our lives simplify, and we reside in peace within, while the mind and its world of thought is relegated to practical matters, only.

Commentary

The Hi-Jacking of Thought: The Paradox of Fear and Death

In spiritual work, we hear a lot about the so-called 'false self'. We may then decide, based on our new found information, to distance ourselves from this 'self', and look for something else we have heard of : the real 'Self'. This splitting of our 'selves', sad to say, becomes just another trap of the mind to keep us lost in the realm of thought. After some honest self-observation, we may see that we have invented a problem so that we might continue unabated in our love affair with thought. Fearing a loss of continuity of thought, which we equate with death, we enter a new 'spiritual' realm in which we can become lost for years, perhaps lifetimes. Let us take a look at this realm of thought and its various selves, and see why we worship it so, this paradox, this trap of mind and fear from which few escape.

Let's take a look at a man involved in ordinary life, and see how the circle of his mind works. He has a bad day at the office, where his boss berates him, causing a loss of self-esteem. He returns home and starts his daily meditation practice, intent on regaining some peace of mind after the trauma of the day. He meditates on things holy, on the words of wise men that tell him he is immortal, infinite and serene, and that it's just that false self thing that is troubled and disturbed. His body calms down, and he finds a bit of energy, feels renewed, and the holy words of how he is Everything and One pump up his deflated ego until he feels he can face life once more. He is now reassured that the self he seeks through his spiritual ambition is the real one, and the false self the one that was deflated in daily life. He has convinced himself that one day he will make the real self permanent, and ditch the false one for good. But come

later that night, his wife points out some fault of his, the kids are being kids, and he finds himself back in the dumps again. His resolve to be the better self is forgotten amid the onslaught of circumstance.

Now, if your goal is just to be a better person and get by as best you can, this all might not make sense, but if you've had the intuition that life, in thought alone, is a zero-sum game, let's take a look at the basis of our man's dilemma. He has, first off, become lost in thought, and secondly, believes that more thought will somehow release him. His ego has split itself into several objects. One is the judging, critical man who resolves to change, and dumps all problems on the heads of the others, including his false selves. These unlucky saps are the pairs of polar opposite selves, including the everyday man of action, whom he calls his 'false self', and its twin illusion, the 'real self' he aspires to, projected as innocent, perfect, and always just out of sight. The common ground of this menagerie is thought. All are patterns of thought. In any valid sentence structure we have a subject, an object, and a verb. It is the same in our man with one difference: he is lacking the verb, and changes from subject to object at the drop of a hat. The subject/object is the ego, or self, which splits and changes according to circumstance, and the missing verb is our basic seeing, the observer.

Our man's subject/object thought-patterns can be seen as two movies: one an inner drama of thought, memory and concepts, being basically reactions to the other movie: the outer world of the body. When the outer world, say the man's boss, delivers a negative shock, an affliction to the man's individuality sense, he is then forced to counter this in the inner drama with positive thoughts in order to maintain his ego. This is the real function of his so-called meditation; an attempt to get his ego back on its feet, and reaffirm his sense of existence. This cycle is self-perpetuating and circular; it never ends of its own accord. It is simply thought maintaining a belief in itself, through the fear of thought coming to an end. It is not spiritual, good, bad or even real. It will only end when we no longer fear its end. Only when we can face the moment alone, without running headlong back into the realm of thought, do we have a chance of facing our self, much less actually going within.

This pattern of identification with thought is rationalization of fear and desire; it is not proper thinking. Thinking has been hi-jacked and is now used to keep the idea of our 'self', itself a thought, alive. It is lying to one's self to keep the storyline intact. Thought is used to manufacture a 'real self', which we aspire to, or believe in. We then reject our present state, the 'now' of seeing, the verb, in favor of an illusion that we desire, or an image we are running away from. Thus we are unreal, a thought. A thought endlessly forced to modify itself to avoid the present moment, for that would bring the facts into play and end the continuity of thought, which is seen as death. If we could just look, or observe, rather than thinking about what we think we see, we could 'sit with' or accept what we see. This is to go within, rather than the seeking to bolster the 'self' by thinking our way out of the moment. Thought is hi-jacked through fear, the fear of the end of thought. What a paradox, and what a trap, one in which the only true escape is through the very death of the fear of the end of thought. This dis-identification with our own mind will usually be considered only if it is forced upon us, by utter failure or trauma, baring intense true earnestness. We must uphold our pride in order to avoid facing the end of thought, our basic fear, and thus until our pride, our knowing, is so badly shaken that we can once again see clearly, we will not consider anything outside of our pride in our mind.

As U. G. Krishnamurti points out, we can never return to our natural state of enlightenment by the rearranging of our thoughts: psychological mutation. We must

actually change what we are, our basic identity, and thus leave thought aside. We return to our true state, that of seeing rather than thinking. But how? The trap is almost foolproof. Any effort on our part is just more thinking, an unreal self trying to catch it's tail, going ever faster until it flies up its own you know what. Some teachers tell us that earnestness is the key, that we must become so earnest in our search that we become a living vector towards truth. True, but definitely the exception to the rule. For most of us this lies farther down the road, and a little convincing might be in order first.

To gain this conviction, this earnestness, we can do two things. First, we take care of ourselves. We save our energy, however we can, and lead a simple, directed life. This gives our intuition a chance to mature, and our reason a chance to purify. Secondly, and here's the hard part: we learn to look, to listen, to observe. We learn to return our thinking to what it does best, which is running the practical matters of life, such as earning a living and fighting spam. Then, free of plotting and planning our future victory over the universe and ourselves, we instead take up the arduous task of self-observation. Life will give us plenty of opportunities for this, if we are brave, and learn to sit in the silence within. We can't look directly within at first, we would only be indulging in fantasy and escape. But we can learn to look at our sense of 'self', when life threatens this sense. Next time you feel a threat to your basic sense of existence, to the thought of who you are, instead of running away or countering it with another thought, simply look at it. Thus we retreat from thought, backing within, in an oblique manner. This also gives one a sense of direction, of where 'within' really lies. When thoughts arise and the spin of thinking comes rushing back, don't go with it, but sit quietly and just look. Accept the pain of the ego in its fear of death, and look at its root. Look at the fear, the need to run away into distraction and thought. Stay focused, quiet and brave, and allow yourself to be in the moment. After a time, you will come to know this direction, the way within, and will come to look at your troubles as opportunities for further meditation. The sense of being the doer or subject will fade, the attention will be freed, and thought will be seen for the reaction it is. Motion and mind will no longer be your 'self', and listening with attention will be valued more than plotting. This is true meditation, and the road Home.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " All experiences, spiritual or otherwise, are the basic cause of our suffering.
- " The plain fact is that if you don't have a problem, you create one. If you don't have a problem you don't feel that you are living.
- " Sexuality, if it is left to itself, as it is in the case of other species, other forms of life, is merely a biological need, because the living organism has this object to survive and produce one like itself. Anything you superimpose on that is totally unrelated to the living organism. But we have turned that, what you call sexual activity, which is biological in its nature, into a pleasure movement.
- " It is fear that makes you believe that you are living and that you will be dead. What we do not want is the fear to come to an end. That is why we have invented all these new minds, new sciences, new talks, therapies, choiceless awareness and various other gimmicks.

- " You love fear. The ending of fear is death, and you don't want that to happen. I am not talking of wiping out the phobias of the body. They are necessary for survival. The death of fear is the only death." - U. G. Krishnamurti
- " Fear, I realized, was the result of my own imaginative world I created, and that is how I was trapped. When you are able to release yourself from your own imagination then all of a sudden you are free." - Bryce Dallas Howard
- " Imagination and fiction make up more than three quarters of our real life."- Simone Weil
- " The ability to delude yourself may be an important survival tool." - Jane Wagner
- " The highest form of spiritual work is the realization of the essence of man. You never learn the answer; you can only become the answer." - Richard Rose

Comic Philosophy

"Tell the truth and run." - Yugoslavian proverb

"...They discovered only a small asteroid inhabited by a solitary old man who claimed repeatedly that nothing was true, though he was later discovered to be lying."
- Douglas Adams, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*

" In the end, everything is a gag." - Charlie Chaplin

8/6/04

Suzanne Segal

This month's Missal takes a look at the strange life of Suzanne Segal. The sudden loss of her very sense of self, a complete accident, and the years afterward trying to understand what had happened to her and why, make a perplexing and unfinished story. She had spent the early part of her adult life from the year of 17 until her mid-twenties as a devoted follower of Mahareshi Mahesh Yogi, the founder of Transcendental Meditation, or TM. After leaving the group, disillusioned with the Mahareshi and his band of followers, she moved to Paris and married a young Frenchman. Four months pregnant and in her 27th year, Segal was standing in line at a bustop in Paris in the spring of 1982, when she felt her ears pop, and the change began:

"I lifted my right foot to step up into the bus and collided head-on with an invisible force that entered my awareness like a silently exploding stick of dynamite, blowing the door of my usual consciousness open and off its hinges, splitting me in two. In the gaping space that appeared, what I had previously called 'me' was forcefully pushed out of its usual location inside me into a new location that was approximately a foot behind and to the left of my head. 'I' was now behind my body looking out at the world without using the body's eyes."

She felt like a floating cloud of awareness, a witness, which had no direct connection to the body and no sense of "me". This witness stage lasted for several months, even during sleep, and then disappeared.

" The personal self was gone, yet here was a body and a mind that still existed empty of anyone who occupied them. The mind, body, and emotions no longer referred to anyone -- there was no one who thought, no one who felt, none who perceived. Yet the mind, body, and emotions continued to function unimpaired; apparently they did not need an "I" to keep doing what they always did. Thinking, feeling, perceiving, speaking, all continued as before, functioning with a smoothness that gave no indication of the emptiness behind them."

Along with the complete disappearance of her sense of self, Segal felt an ever-present fear, as the mind desperately tried to make sense of the situation. This fear and the mind's quandary were to last ten years. She traveled from one therapist to another, trying to find someone to help her understand what had happened, but found no one. Even her years in the Transcendental Meditation movement had left her unprepared for this life of 'no-self' and the fear that accompanied it. She found that while the life of no-self filled the mind with terror and confusion, outward functioning continued even better than before. During this period of fear and searching, she managed to get a PhD. in psychology and raise her daughter Arielle.

" The mind, body, and emotions no longer referred to anyone — there was no one who thought, no one who felt, no one who perceived. Yet the mind, body, and emotions continued to function unimpaired; apparently they did not need an "I" to keep doing what they always did. Thinking, feeling, perceiving, speaking, all continued as before, functioning with a smoothness that gave no indication of the emptiness behind them. No one suspected that such a radical change had occurred." -

" Life became one long, unbroken koan, forever unsolvable, forever mysterious, completely out of reach of the mind's capacity to comprehend."

The fear and confusion continued unabated for a decade until she found the explanation she was seeking in Buddhism. The Buddhist doctrine of the skandhas, the five aggregates that make up the personality and give the illusion of self, helped her to understand how functioning continued without a 'doer'. At this time she also met several people who gave her validation, including Jean Klein, and found the writings of Ramana Maharshi, who she came to consider her spiritual father.
At long last the fear abated, and joy arose. The mind began to realize its limitations, and the obsessive fear dissolved.

" Once the mind admitted to the parameters of its own sphere and stopped pathologizing what lay outside it, the non-personal, indescribably joyful flavor of the vastness experiencing itself moved radically to the foreground forever." - "The presence of any thoughts, feelings, or actions is never interpreted to mean anything other than that they are present." - "... no judgment about good or bad or right or wrong ever arises; everything is simply what it is."

Where western psychology failed to give her an answer, eastern philosophy responded. Suzanne began to hold weekly dialogues, training classes for her fellow therapists, and finished the account of her experience, told in her book, Collision with the Infinite. Alas, this period of joy and work was not to last. After a couple of years, she began to experience what she called ' bus hits', when the vastness, as she described the everything we all are, began to expand on itself. These periods became more intense and left her drained. She stopped her work and gatherings and began to slip into ill-health. The fear she had had in previous years returned, also. By the spring of 1997, she was diagnosed with a brain tumor, and died shortly after.

Her last few months were as much of a mystery as the initial experience at the bus stop. She began to remember periods of childhood abuse, and even told a friend that she now knew that she existed, even though there was no 'self'. For an account of this period, read Stephan Bodian's afterword in Collision with the Infinite.
While Suzanne Segal's life and story provide detailed descriptions of life with no-self, she gives little in the way of advice to others as how to attain this state themselves. The abrupt, accidental nature of her experience, and the as yet unexplained last months of her life leave little to the aspiring seeker but tales of the vastness. She offered these two suggestions to the novice:

" The first is to see things to be just what they are, because that is how the vastness is always seeing things. Thoughts are thoughts. Emotions are emotions. The body is just the body. It's the mind's interpretation of things that ends up creating suffering -... The second suggestion, which is actually a non-suggestion, is to follow the obvious, because that is how the mysterious doer behind everyone's life is constantly revealing the truth of each moment. Now I'm not saying you need to figure out what the obvious is and then follow it. The mind doesn't usually perceive the obvious, and tends to devalue what it can't perceive. Take the expression "it's just too obvious," for example. It's not complicated or painful enough. The mind is drawn to complexity and struggle. That's the sphere of the mind."

Her friends and colleagues never doubted the depth of Suzanne's realization, even through her final days. She herself never used such words, referring to her realization as " the naturally occurring state", possible for all of us.

" *The purpose of human life has been revealed. The vastness created these human circuitries in order to have an experience of itself out of itself that it couldn't have without them.* "

- All above quotations from *Collision with the Infinite* by Suzanne Segal -

Tricks and Traps

Trap: Identification with the mind as the ultimate judge and arbiter. We think the mind can tell us what we are, and draw on it as the final say, even believing unconsciously and completely that it is us. Since this causes us to take things for what they are not, it leads to constant change, confusion, and suffering.
Trick: Observing the mind as it flipflops according to circumstance. Thought and the mind are basically reactions, so they change according to circumstance, as in "changing your mind". How could such a thing be taken as the ultimate source for our very definition? Watch your mind, your thinking, as it flipflops in its reactions, ever changing and elusive. Now, who's watching?

Commentary

Obvious or Oblivious?

Suzanne Segal's suggestions to see things as they are and follow the obvious, thus realizing ourselves as the vastness, are valuable guides pointing the way within. But she does not provide us with any hints on how to become such a person: one who can see clearly, for whom the obvious is just that. We cannot count on an accident at a bus stop to magically provide us with clear vision and the advantage of no-self. Most of us already believe and act as though we do see clearly and that the obvious is our path already. Yet, we are filled with desire, pain, and suffering, and as a little honest self-observation will show, we are not possessed of clear, perfect vision. This bit of self-insight, or the honest view of a friend, might help convince us of our lack of inner clarity. If we have the intuition that there is a better way of seeing, that enlightenment and self-inquiry are not mere words, we may accept clear vision and a true link to the obvious as valuable, though perhaps not as present in us as we might wish. Let's take a closer look, first at what our present position is like without these two suggestions, and then see how we might come to gain clearer vision, a link to the hints of the obvious.

A man in the midst of life is under intense pressure or tension to spend his energy in certain pre-programmed directions. His basic dilemma is rooted in his unquestioned belief that he himself is the one who has chosen this pattern and that it is he that wants to live as these forces or tensions dictate. He does not see things for what they are, being oblivious to the obvious, and instead thinks himself the 'doer'. The business of life in society takes up all his energy and time, and thus keeps him from seeing the trap that no matter how successful he is in life, he cannot change the facts: he will not

win. Old age, disease, and death are the end result. Now, don't get this wrong, for this is how it should be with life in general, and there is nothing wrong with nature in and of itself. But if a man has an inner longing, a certain nostalgia that there is something missing in this dream of life and tension, he may have the opportunity to find that he is more than just a man-thing in the struggle of nature. He may come to know that he is not a thing at all, but That which is aware, of nothing and everything.

The day-to-day struggle to earn a living, procreate, care for a family, build a career, etc., take up most of our energy, with the resulting need for compensations such as fun, recreation and distraction taking the rest. There is little if any vitality left to use in self-inquiry and learning to see the obvious, or why we don't. Even if we do have the inner longing to take a look at ourselves, we may fall for the trap of laziness and procrastination by buying into the idea that since there is no doer, there is nothing to do. We should not use the words of those who have found this truth as an excuse to avoid the effort required to make that truth our own. Any effort we put into self-discovery will be found to have been a good investment, and will lead to greater and greater incentive to continue.

The reason we cannot see clearly is that we think, feel, and see through a filter of desire and fear. We rationalize our actions from this desire-based thinking, creating pride in the belief we know the truth about ourselves. To begin to be free of this trap we use it, as it uses us. We set aside a period of time everyday in which we allow the desire of freedom and truth to guide our thinking into lines of self-examination. We use the fear of death and suffering to force us to examine the very motivations for everything we do. Not with a mind to change ourselves, but to find the truth, to see things as they are. We can use the inspirational works of those who have gone before to steer our thinking in the proper direction, and then allow our minds to turn inward and look at why we do what we do, think what we think. We start small, and as our efforts pay off we learn ever more ways to conserve and redirect.

As we turn from gazing at the self-created projection we call the outer world, and our inner fantasies of how to better arrange it to suit our struggle for self survival, we may find that life itself becomes less difficult. If we look at the problems and fears which threaten our sense of self, we become free from this self, seeing how it lives only within our minds. We gain courage from this, and learn to look steadily and fearlessly at our very defeats and obsessions, dissolving their hold, and thus beginning to see everything else clearer as well. It becomes obvious that we, as ego, are our own creator, and by retreating from the self-created patterns of behavior and thinking that bind us in the fog of desire and fear, the obvious becomes clearer. We come to realize that listening calmly and attentively to our own mind is how to see it, and are thus set free from believing unquestionably in our thoughts as being us. We may even find we can listen to our thoughts, without becoming involved.

As our energy becomes more and more our own, we find this listening attention reveals the obvious, now that our mind and its former desire/fear patterns are no longer clouding the view. The next step we need to take in our search for truth may suddenly become clear, obvious. As Jim Burns says, we can "chase our attention", now that this attention is free from the hypnotic spell of an illusory 'self'. We are no longer oblivious to the hints the inner Self is constantly putting in front of us. Free from the spell of the inner movie, the drama of our personal mind, we look for what our true longing, our inner Self, is always trying to show us. The poet John Davis said to "follow your fascinations". Now that we are free from inherited and learned desires and fears, we can come to know what our true fascinations really are. Our life becomes an adventure, as we walk the path back Home with a glad heart, finally free

of the misconception that we are a thing, a thinker, a doer. We take joy in our life, free from fear, with the only remaining desire that of abiding in our Self, in love and freedom.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " The experience of living without a personal identity, without an experience of being somebody, an "I" or a "me," is exceedingly difficult to describe, but it is absolutely unmistakable. It can't be confused with having a bad day or coming down with the flu or feeling upset or angry or spaced out. When the personal self disappears, there is no one inside who can be located as being you.
- " There is a turning inward that occurs when the mind searches for internal information, whether it be about feelings or thoughts or connection to a name or inner experience of any kind. This is generally referred to as introspection. Without a personal self, the inside or internal simply did not exist. The inward-turning motion of the mind became the most bizarre of experiences when time and again it found total emptiness where it had previously found an object to perceive, a self-concept.
- " In no way...am I suggesting that practices should not be done, only that there is no practitioner who is the doer behind them. This is true of every activity. ... Just because there is no practitioner (and never has been) does not mean that practice will not take place. If it is obvious for a particular spiritual practice to occur, then it will.
- " If you could see things as only and exactly what they are, you would see that the 'you' that is seeing is the vastness itself." - Suzanne Segal
- " Our pains are caused by our wrong viewpoints toward things. The false self throws up an imaginary picture of how it insists things should be. And every time this should be clashes with what actually happens, we react painfully. The problem is not what actually happens, but our demands that something else should happen. " - Vernon Howard
- " Those who do not observe the movements of their own minds must of necessity be unhappy. " - Marcus Aurelius

Comic Philosophy

" Watching this film (the inner movie, when we first get a good look at the strange drama we call our mind -ED.) is like being drugged and dropped into the middle of a homeowners' association meeting in Norway. Who are these people? What are they talking about? Who's married to whom and why? Why are they behaving this way? " - Mr. Cranky

" A man talking sense to himself is no madder than a man talking nonsense not to himself." - Tom Stoppard

09/10/04

Franz Hartmann

This month's Missal revisits one of the most profound authors and mystics of recent times, **Franz Hartmann**. Dr. Hartmann, a Bavarian, was born in 1838. He served in the Bavarian artillery in his youth, and then studied medicine and became a physician. Emigrating to America in 1865, he traveled about as a doctor, serving as coroner in Georgetown, Colorado for a time during its boomtown mining days. He was beginning to show an interest in spiritualism, studying the events and life of a medium in Denver. He saw firsthand the dangers of the occult, as the medium became increasingly under the power of the channeled spirit, and eventually slipped into madness. As his interest in spiritualism continued to develop, he visited a number of American Indian tribes to research their religious beliefs, and at some point was active in the Spiritualist circles of New Orleans.

Leaving the world of travel and spirits for a time, he married a woman from Texas, where they resided on her ranch. It was short lived however, as she died within months, and Hartmann moved to the San Francisco area. Here, he was torn between two loves, one a new lady friend, and the other his growing interest in India and the work of the Theosophists and H. P. Blavatsky. The latter won out, and he set sail for India in 1883, invited to the Theosophical Society's headquarters in Adyar by Colonel Olcott.

Blavatsky considered him "a bad lot", and he was called "dirty Franz" by some for his refusal to keep his appearance up to Victorian standards, and for his tightfisted management of his funds. Nevertheless, he rose in the ranks, supposedly getting as many as ten letters from the mysterious "Mahatmas". After Blavatsky died in 1891, the Theosophists split into a number of factions, and by 1900 consisted of three main groups, one of which was led by Hartmann.

After India, he lived in England and then Vienna, where he was in charge of a sanitarium for tuberculosis patients. He was a prolific writer, turning out volumes on alchemy and the Rosicrucian's, and well as biographies of Jacob Boehme and Paracelsus. Unfortunately, his work was later not in favor with the Nazis, who burned many of his books, some not surviving to this day. He died on August 7, 1912, having dedicated his later life to helping others find the Truth.

Dr. Hartmann's philosophy was molded by his experience with the mediums and occultists with whom he had contact. He saw that a way of living based on virtue, energy conservation, and common sense was essential for protecting oneself when venturing into the unknown waters of the interior world. He also soon found that the only knowledge worth having was the knowledge of one's own self, and this was also found in the inner realm.

"The beginning of all knowledge is the knowledge of self; the knowledge of the soul and not the vagaries of the brain."

He knew that the exploration of the self was best done when the deep waters of the soul were calm and silent. Then, the interior voice of wisdom could heard and the secrets of the divine revealed. The simple lifestyle necessary for this calm interior was found through resisting temptation, rather than dissipation, and was learned the hard way through his varied experience in the tumult of life.

"The capacity of perceiving the truth depends on the tranquility of the soul."

He also learned that a certain strength and discipline were necessary in keeping the mind calm and quiet, once this state was recognized and valued. This was not the blind adherence to unquestioned beliefs, but the strength that comes from experience coupled with wisdom. In his writings, he often uses the framework of alchemy to illustrate this path of becoming through discipline and hardship, as seen in his New Guide on the Path.

"Do not believe that there is anything higher in the universe than your own divine self, and know that you are exactly what you permit yourself to become."

This looking within to discover the self eventually led him to find the real; the Truth within. He called this process of using the mind for self-discovery, magic, and wrote about it in the language of science and alchemy. The highest practice of this magic was not in the gathering of power, ego, or fame, but in the spiritual regeneration of man through the removal of all that is unreal and illusory.

"The knowledge of God and the knowledge of man are ultimately identical, and he who knows himself knows God." - "True religion and true science are ultimately one and the same thing." - " Magic is a science which teaches the true nature of the inner man as well as the organization of his outward body."

Hartman knew that this magic was no parlour trick, and did not lead to the glorification of the ego as its end, but caused a becoming, a change in the man who practiced it that was not merely a change in behavior, thought, or belief. It was a complete transformation, brought about by the 'death' of the personal man, and the awakening of the divine, the Inner Self.

"Each one is bound to his own ideals; he whose ideal is mortal must die when his ideal dies, he whose ideal is immortal must become immortal himself to attain it."

"God does not redeem the personal man by death. He redeems himself by freeing himself from the personality of man."

Hartmann never was one to follow convention, and traveled to wherever his work led him. His ideal was the Truth, and his struggle to become the Truth and communicate it defined his years, perhaps best expressed in his advice on how to enter the path to infinite life: To Know, To Will, To Dare, To Be Silent.

"The truth never changes; but we ourselves change, and as we change so changes our aspect of the truth."

A NEW GUIDE ON THE PATH,

FOR THOSE WHO DESIRE TO FOLLOW THE PRACTICAL WAY.

1. Know that All is One.
2. Know that everything is Thyself.
3. Know that the One in a state of vibration produces the great multiplicity of forms and activities in the Universe.

4. Know that if you examine this multiplicity from the standpoint of your intellectual reasoning, you will arrive at the following deductions:

5. Everything that you call " Life," " Energy," " Substance," is a Duality.

6. Everything has a tendency to return to Unity.

7. All desire and therefore all suffering originates from duality.

8. Let thy aspiration be for enlightenment.

9. Know that the result of the joys experienced by the attainment of enlightenment is happiness.

10. Rise above the state of condensation.

11. Know that the result of the joys experienced in the state of condensation is suffering.

12. On the road from Unity in motion to tranquility is the state of condensation. It is the cause of your illusions, because you imagine it to be tranquility; and it is the cause of your doubts, because you regard it as the object of your desires. Know that the striving after the unification of the duality is the only source of your will, your desires, and of those joys whose results you call "suffering."

13. Know that the door for the solution of that which is fixed is what is called "Matter."

14. Know that everything has to pass through that door.

15. Know that the door for the solution of the fixed is also called "Life."

16. Know that everything has to pass through that door.

17. And that the long sojourn in "Matter" and the interruption of the voyage by "Life" means retardation in the solution of the fixed and procrastination in the unification of the duality.

18. Enforce the practice of the power of that which is solved over that which is condensed.

19. Direct your attention to the consciousness of that which is dissolved over that which is condensed.

20. Carry this consciousness through all the planes of your being.

21. Elevate your whole body to the capacity to think, to hear, and to see.

22. Cause it thereby to become a fit instrument for the use of your self-consciousness of the One and of your self-power (resulting from unification).

23. Conquer the pains resulting therefrom.

24. When the divine Language is once heard within thy heart - when the King within thy interior has once obtained dominion - when thou hast passed through water and fire, and thy spirit has become the life of thy blood - then you may say: I am, I go, and I remain.

- Franz Hartmann, from *Magic, White and Black*

Tricks and Traps

Trap: Identification with pain. The usual reaction to pain is avoidance, either through distraction or medication-induced relief. Thinking it is 'us' that hurts, we must get rid of our pain. Pain is nothing more than a signal that something needs our attention. Identification with our thoughts and feelings, and thus our pain, keeps us from this simple truth. By avoiding pain or medicating it out of our awareness, we

procrastinate facing both the problem the pain is pointing to and the action or change needed to solve it.
Trick: Seeing pain for what it is. By seeing pain as the simple signal it is, we can turn our attention on it without fear or over reaction. The underlying problem can be dealt with and, usually, the pain stops. This is especially true in relation to psychic pain, the avoiding of which can keep us in the following Trap of
Ignoring our conscience: That faint voice from the depths is often seen as a pain to be avoided, thus preventing us from learning the following Trick of
Trusting the Inner Self: If we learn to listen to this inner voice, our own inner wisdom, we see that instead of it being a pain or inhibition keeping us from what we want, it is actually a guiding signal from an interior compass deep within. This beacon gives us direction in our search, pointing to a path or lifestyle that gives better probability of Becoming. Experience will show that the pang of conscience is best dealt with by the avoidance of temptation, not pain.

" Man does not know the influences which cause him to think and to act, as long as he does not know his own nature. He is therefore not a responsible being, except to the extent of his wisdom and power to control his own nature. Wisdom and strength can only be attained in life by experience and by the exercise of the power of overcoming temptation."

Thou self-existent Cause
Of all existence, source of love and light;
Thou universal uncreated God,
In whom all things exist and have their being,
Who lives in all things and all things in Him;
Infinite art Thou, inconceivable
Beyond the grasp of finite intellect;
Unknowable to all except thyself.
Nothing exists but Thou, and there is nothing
In which no Good exists; Thou art, but we
Appear to be; for forms are empty nothings,
If not inhabited by Thee; they are
Thyself made manifest.

- Franz Hartmann

Commentary

Why Don't We Get It?

" What I suspect we need is not any kind of path or discipline, but a collection of tricks or devices for catching the Dark at the corner of the eye, as it were, and learning how to spot its just-waiting-to-be-seen presence, combined with strategies for stopping the hyperactive survival-programmes from immediately explaining the perception away. D. E. Harding's exercises for discovering one's own essential 'headlessness' are the best ideas I've yet come across for the first half of this process, but, by his own admission, most people 'get it but simply don't believe it'." - John Wren-Lewis

The above quote by John Wren-Lewis points out a common conundrum seen often nowadays in seekers of the Truth. Many of us can recall times when we were strangely indifferent to our usual pattern, and the world seemed new and alive, with the noise of the mind blessedly absent. Then, the thought-pattern of personality took back the reins and the world became once more known and dimmingly familiar. Even the startling effects of Douglas Harding's exercises can become relegated to memory, for in our everyday world the miracle of 'seeing' is soon lost, replaced by the usual fog of 'knowing'. Why is this? Why doesn't something so startling as seeing without one's own head last? Why is the ego's hold on us so complete, that its survival is the paramount fact of our very life, robbing us of seeing without warning?

We may think that the problem lies in emotion. That if we were just a bit more enthused about it all, we could retain the clarity through thick and thin. We come away from a seminar pumped up, making inner promises to never forget what we've seen, and to try harder at every turn. Here, we may be misled once more. The act of seeing is not one of emotion, anymore than it is of thought. The memory of seeing is not the act, any more than the memory of the emotional reaction is. I can remember once listening to an intense emotional sermon by a sincere preacher. Everyone in the church came under the same spell, convinced that they would go forth from that moment on and be a better person, worthy of the glory of eternal life. Then, an even stranger thing happened. While in the parking lot after the service, I realized I could not remember anything the preacher had said, not a word. I couldn't even remember what I had been so enthused about. By the time I got home, the mood was completely gone; the thoughts and business of the day had totally replaced it.

Now, there is nothing wrong with becoming inspired. It's a necessary part of the path. But, it is not the goal. Seeing is not a state of being in perpetual bliss, about our seeing. This is again the trap of living in the reaction, not the state. This trap of reaction is a clue to why no matter how intense or startling a state is, we soon lose it. We are trying to get back to seeing by looking at the reaction. We forget to see, by trying to remember to see. We look at our previous emotional or mental reaction to seeing, while our seeing, always there in the moment, every second, is overlooked.

Let's back up a bit, and go back to the start of the problem. When we were first brought into the world, we were taught by people, well meaning but asleep, that we are a thing, an object, living in a world of things. We were taught that some of these things, our thoughts, were more real than our very being, meaning our seeing was secondary to our thinking about our seeing. This trick was played on us until we could do it ourselves. Once we were well trained in fooling ourselves, we became 'thinking'. The world of thought became our new home. We lost our innocence, as we slowly lost sight of our seeing. We traded it for knowing, the unquestioned belief that our thoughts were more real than our seeing of our thoughts. Soon enough, we could no longer see our very seeing, and began to believe we were our thoughts.

Here then, lies the problem. We have become a collection of thoughts, an entity, which treats every new moment as if it were already a memory, basing each new moment on only the past and the reaction this past has to each moment. We are so wrapped up in this thought-collection, this 'knowing', that we even treat a moment of seeing as if it were another memory, reacting to it as if we already know all about it. A reaction can never be in the moment, for only seeing happens now. This trap of living one step behind ourselves cannot be explained away with conceptual thinking or fought with reactionary emotional thrills. It cannot be gotten rid of by changing our behavior, such as going left instead of right. What then can be done?

Franz Hartmann gives us a clue when he says, " There is nothing more difficult to find than one's own self." There is also nothing more valuable. It is our own 'self' that is the problem. Any plan of escape from the trap of thought-reaction is simply this self trying to survive, even if the plan is one of perpetual seeing. The self will see seeing as yet another tool to perpetuate its own continuity. This self is a collection of thoughts, an inventory of all reactions, which seeks only its own continuity as a thought-pattern. The only way to deal with such a thing, is to see it. To observe it.

Simple observation, unbiased and without reaction or judgment, i.e. seeing, will take us farther than any clever plan or emotional outburst. A return to innocence, the initial stage of not-knowing, will give us an edge, open a crack in the ego's armor, and return the value of our very existence to that of seeing, rather than to the reaction to seeing. By beginning to watch what we do, we start a pattern of return to the state of a free attention. Once we are able to watch our 'selves' as we go about our daily tasks, we may soon see that we can watch our thoughts as well. We all have moments where seeing is spontaneous and personal. If we come to value these moments, we begin to switch our meaning from the world of thought back to that of awareness. We can take the tricks we learned at meetings and seminars and put them to use in every moment: while driving, working at our desk, and even while watching TV.

We may soon notice a strange thing happening in our head, while we watch our watching. We may see that as soon as a moment of seeing fades, a familiar mood or state has returned, which is in fact the reason for the cessation of the seeing itself. This vaguely familiar pattern is our own state of mind. The collection of thoughts we feel to be 'us', has slipped back. The old pride in 'knowing' as reactive thought, our personal dogma, will slide in like a fog bank, and then we are our old self again, and the seeing is now incorporated into this 'self's' inventory. "It" has survived, and we are back asleep.

Only through the simple process of self-observation can this thing called the 'self' be seen. We may need years of looking at it, seeing why it does what it does, thinks what it thinks, until we know it well enough to cease to believe in it. All of our energy, for all of our life, has been poured into this thing: our personality, the little self, the ego. A few moments of seeing, while of momentous importance, will not cause its complete demise. This demise is what we fear most; for it is seen by the thought-pattern we call `us', as death. At some point, the initial joy of seeing will turn to the pain of ego-death, as the Truth becomes known. It will not be pleasant. In fact, the pain and horror felt by the ego as it faces its own death, will be felt as yours. Hartmann's words again ring true: "Conquer the pains resulting therefrom". While all this may be just words to you for now, know that after you have gone beyond this realm of thought, beyond this self-surviving collection of reactions seeking nothing but its own continuity, 'seeing' will still be there. You will then have no more need of thought or reaction to give you meaning and value, as the simple act of seeing will once again be enough. The world of thought will no longer be your home, having become a movie, a dream, as much a comedy as a drama, wherein the bit character you used to call your 'self' is merely another player. Your interest will be only in a pure amazement at your own unknowable Being, … and perhaps the need to help another find freedom from the trap of reaction, the world of 'self'.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " Man, after having vainly sought for the light of the Truth in externals, and found nothing but darkness, at last discovers that the land of the sunrise exists within his own soul.
- " There is nothing more difficult to find than one's own self.
- " Magic may be said to be that science which deals with the mental and moral powers of man, and shows what control he may exercise over himself and others." - " Before one can become a magician he must learn to control his own mind; for mind is the substance with which the magician acts, and the power to control it is the beginning of magic."
- " The Truth teaches nothing else but its own existence.
- " Life, sensation, and consciousness are not the property of personal man, neither does he produce them."
- " Evil is necessary to afford experience, and experience leads to ultimate good.
- " A beautiful god is the most noble product of Man. " - Franz Hartmann
- " My writings are only for those who are willing to receive the truth in a simple and childlike state of mind, for it is they who are to possess the kingdom of God. I have written only for those that seek; to the cunning and worldly-wise I have nothing to say." - Jacob Boehme
- " We should do that which our conscience teaches, for no other reason but because our conscience teaches it. To learn from others, to accept the opinion of others, to act in a certain manner because others are acting in that way, is temptation." - Paracelsus
- " The power of accurate observation is commonly called cynicism by those who haven't got it." - George Bernard Shaw

Comic Philosophy

I feel more like I do right now than when I got here. - Richard Elwin Spurgeon

Pop psychologists talk about "Emotional Baggage". Those aren't the dark circles under your eyes after a wicked party, no, what they're referring to are the prior experiences that a person brings to each new event. This unique personal collection of memories shapes our comprehension and understanding when new events occur. Generally when the term is used, it's to donote anyone more screwed up than you are. They say that our past assists us in making judgments when new situations are encountered. If that's really so, my wife has refined the technique into art. Baggage? She's carrying around a matching set of Louis Vuitton designer luggage, all the pieces, all the way through the giant steamer trunk. - Jon de Vos

10/11/04

William Blake

This month's missal takes a look at **William Blake**, a visionary mystic of the late 18th to early 19th century. He was a major poet, profound thinker, and one of the most original English artists of any age. A visionary from childhood, Blake struggled to reproduce his visions in various forms, from painting and prose to hand-colored etchings with poetic text.
Born in London in 1757, the son of a hosier, Blake was apprenticed to James Basire, an engraver, in 1772, where he learned much of the skills which would later come to fruit in his art. In 1782 he married Catherine Boucher, who would help him with his etching and art throughout his life. It is said that when she first saw Blake as he entered the room, the sight of him caused her to swoon. Blake's younger brother Robert was also to play an important role in his life. Robert died in 1787, devastating Blake. He later attributed his method of illuminated printing to his departed brother, saying Robert, soon after his death, showed Blake the technique in a dream. This painstaking method of etching, which he used in conjunction with hand coloring, is not completely understood. The most likely explanation is that he wrote the words and drew the pictures for each poem on a copper plate with a liquid impervious to acid, which was then applied, leaving the text and illustration in relief. Ink or a color wash was then used, with the printed picture finished by hand in watercolors.

I saw no God, nor heard any, in a finite organical perception, but my senses discovered the infinite in every thing, and as I was then persuaded, and remain confirmed; that the voice of honest indignation is the voice of God, I cared not for consequences but wrote.

Blake lived his life as a poor artisan, and was not recognized as a major poet until long after his death. Even though he was never a commercial success, he worked tirelessly right up until his death in 1827, convinced that mankind would profit from his efforts. Blake's final years, spent in great poverty, were cheered by the admiring friendship of a group of younger artists who gathered round him. He died in London, August 12, 1827.

" Is he honest who resists his genius or conscience only for the sake of present ease and gratification? "

It can be said that while much of his poetry is rant, having no clear plot, rhyme or meter, his philosophy is timeless and succinct. One of his chief ideas was that of the duality of creation, the 'contraries', and how each was necessary for existence. He realized tension was necessary for creativity and spiritual progress. Alfred Kazin writes in his introduction to The Portable Blake, " Blake realized that the triangulation of opposites led to an understanding on a higher plane; a Holy Marriage of Heaven and Hell. This spiritual Union of Energy and Reason creates a higher order born from the tension of the Contraries, leading us back Home from whence we came. Blake was...a mystic who reversed the mystical pattern, for he sought man as the end of his search."

" Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence. From these contraries spring what

the religious call Good and Evil. Good is the passive that obeys reason. Evil is the active springing from energy. Good is Heaven. Evil is Hell.

All Bibles or sacred codes, have been the causes of the following errors:
1. That Man has two real existing principles Viz: a Body and a Soul.
2. That Energy, called Evil, is alone from the Body, and that Reason, called Good, is alone from the Soul.
3. That God will torment Man in Eternity for following his Energies.
But the following Contraries to these are True.
1. Man has no Body distinct from his Soul; for that called Body is a portion of Soul discerned by the five Senses, the chief inlets of Soul in this age.
2. Energy is the only life and is from the Body and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy.
3. Energy is Eternal Delight. "

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell is both a humorous satire and a work that expresses his essential philosophy. Through his 70 aphorisms, The Proverbs of Hell, he reveals the depth of his understanding of both mysticism and psychology:

Prisons are built with stones of Law, Brothels with bricks of Religion.
The bird a nest, the spider a web, man friendship.
Eternity is in love with the productions of time.
Where man is not, nature is barren.
The tygers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction.
Let man wear the fell of the lion, woman the fleece of the sheep.
A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees.
He who desires but acts not, breeds pestilence.

Opposition is true friendship.
Enough, or too much!

Blake believed that the inner world of his visions were of a higher order than that of physical reality, and that ideals should be taken from that world of inner vision rather than from the world of matter. His work again and again tells of how energy, that which springs first from the unmanifest, is primary to that which later constrains and inhibits, which Blake called reason. Much of this reflects the time in which he worked, that of Victorian England, a time when restraint was king, and freedom restrained.

"Those who restrain desire, do so because theirs is weak enough to be restrained; and the restrainer or reason usurps its place and governs the unwilling. And being restrained it by degrees becomes passive till it is only the shadow of desire."

Through all his rant and raving, Blake seems to have kept a sense of humor, and never compromised his vision to fit the demands of health and wealth, remaining poor until his end. In an attempt to ground him in necessity, his wife is said to have once set an empty plate before him for dinner, trying to pull him out of his inner world long enough to put bread on the table. It probably didn't work.

" The inquiry in England is not whether a man has talents and genius, but whether he is passive and polite and a virtuous ass and obedient to noblemen's opinions in art and science. If he is, he is a good man. If not, he must be starved."

Tricks and Traps

Trap: remaining unconscious of our dominant decision-making process, either thinking or feeling. Most of us are heavily weighted to one or the other, and equally oblivious of it. To illustrate how this trap works, let's take a person who is feeling-based. One afternoon, they decide to quit eating donuts. This decision is feeling-based, meaning they felt it to be good idea from an emotional reaction regarding the negative consequences of continuing the behavior. They don't feel good about the behavior because fear, let's say, has entered the picture. They decide to stop. Then, the secondary function, thinking, comes in and rationalizes the decision in order to bring verbal thought in line with it: " They make me gain weight, they cost money, I need discipline, I need to cut back on the sugar", etc. This is the main clue that their thinking is secondary: it is only used as a rationalizing tool for the already made feeling-based decision. This is best seen when the flip-flop occurs the next morning. The urge, or positive feeling, to have a donut now outweighs the previous day's emotion, and the decision is made to eat one. Then the thinking processes come in and rationalize why: "I can do what I want, I'll start exercising, I won't have one tomorrow, nobody will know," etc. This thinking is directly the opposite of the previous days, but this doesn't matter when the feeling or desire is primary. This feeling-based system alone is a wobbly, painfully slow way to walk through life.

This one sided trap can be seen in thinking-based people, too. In them, the decision is based on rigid rules of logic, and then reinforced with the emotions. If the situation dictates that the thinking should change, the feelings will arise to support the decision to stick with the old rules, regardless. This can be seen in literalists who fall back on unbending rules for all decisions, and then use the feelings to support them in their foolishness. One will encounter many head-on collisions with brick walls on this path.

Trick: Understanding can only occur when both of these functions, thinking and feeling, occur together in a marriage of reason and emotion. Each should be used to check on the other, forming a system of discernment, rather than thinking being only a rationalizing tool for desires and fears, and feeling only an emotional support for literalism.

Together, they can form understanding and find the truth, enabling us to walk the walk, steady and sure; apart, they breed strange creatures as varied as the wishy-washy flip flopper and the unfeeling monster of fanaticism.

To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour.

- William Blake
from 'Auguries of Innocence'

Commentary

What Do You Love?

" If a thing loves, it is infinite." - William Blake

Progress on the spiritual path can be thought of in terms of value, or love. What is most important to us is what we value the most, what we really love. The path of self-discovery can be seen in these terms. We observe ourselves, and discover what our true motivations are, leading us to see what we value. Another way to see this is by checking our fact status. What we actually do everyday tells us much about what we value, and perhaps shows us the gap between our personal storyline and our actions. If this fact checking and self-observation are carried far enough, we may begin to get a look at something called our 'self' or personality, and begin to see its illusive nature. We may be forced to admit to its exalted status as our real true love, despite our ego's protestations to the contrary. Using this shock as further fuel for the search, we become a bit more honest in our future assessments. If self-inquiry is carried even further, through this process of elimination we may find something more real to love than this 'self'. Back beyond our mind's motion, something still and silent lies. If you find a love of truth, rather than fiction, it may take you there.

Finding this still-point depends largely on our state of satisfaction with our beloved 'self'. If this state becomes one of dissatisfaction, we have the incentive to look for something more stable. Hearing from others that have gone before that there is something somewhere 'within', and that it is worth any effort to find it, also adds to our incentive. By looking at what we love, we can come to love the truth, and find there is something worthwhile inside us other than mind-motion and change. Let's take a look at how this path might turn out, and some of the pitfalls and signposts along the way from love of 'self', to Love Itself.

We hear of this so-called still-point, called by such names as silence, stillness, the center, the Source, what we really are, etc., and wonder. If our intuition is not clouded by the dissipations of relentless pleasure seeking and the resultant fear, we may discover a longing, a nostalgia deep within that tells us we may have once known this silence, and still love it more than we might know. This longing is fed too, perhaps, by being tired of the jostling effects of life, its traumas and endless no-win scenarios, leading to death and dissolution.

So, we read the books and search the Internet, finding many who tell of the way back to this stillness. They vary from the intellectual work of Hubert Benoit, to the practical experiments of Douglas Harding. We find the paths back to this center also called by many names: 'the inner movement', 'self-remembering', a 'double-pointed arrow of attention, one directed in, one out', 'observing the observer', or 'looking back at what we are looking out of'. Many speak of 'silence', and even the many forms of silence. From this information alone, we may not come any closer to really knowing this still-point, but if we persist in looking, we may get lucky and discover much that it is not. We begin to see that it cannot be something of the mind, for we find the mind is motion. We may be fooled into thinking that the stillness is something we can manufacture, that it's found only in ashrams or monasteries, or that we can force it onto the relative world through controlling the environment. Or we may decide to create it within by controlling our mind, forcing it to think only what we have been told we should think, and discover that this too is folly.

When the still-point is finally reached, even if only for a moment, it is unmistakable. If we have allowed ourselves to hone our intuition and clear our thinking, we will find that this silent place within is not just a concept, but very real. The movement necessary to turn our attention back away from the outer and inner movies of the mind and senses is found to be also something real, and not a thought or concept at all. We find too, that we forget, and are carried back into the mind at every instant. But if our love for the silence is true, it will turn us back into it again and again, provided our previous experience with the mind and its motion has been enough, or too much.

This is where what we value or really love comes in. If our meaning is taken from the changing scene of the relative world, we will keep our attention directed towards it. We will turn away from the silence within, and our longing will be for the excitement and changes of the mind. We may declare our love for the center, but our attention will long for the agony and ecstasy of the world of form. Boredom with silence too, means our value has not yet moved inward from the world to truth, but remains trapped by the colorful kaleidoscope of the mind, and the energy releases of the body.

This part of the journey is a journey within. We retreat from our former love for motion and change, and move inwards toward simplicity and truth. After the still-point has been found, and correctly valued, our attention is then turned round, and we begin a new phase, one of our new love being tested. While we continue to hold a part of our gaze on the still-point, it being what we really are, we also turn round and engage in the world of action. This is to test our love, to see if the trials and tribulations of the outer world can knock us off course, and change our point of reference. If we come back to the center, time and time again, during and despite every trial, we find we are becoming less of the world and more of the silence. In any situation in life, no matter how difficult or how often we forget, if we eventually return to the still-point as our anchor, we find we are becoming one with it. We become that which we love.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " As a man is, so he sees.
- " When the doors of perception are cleansed, man will see things as they truly are, infinite.
- " Do what you will, this world's a fiction and is made up of contradiction.
- " I must create a system or be enslaved by another man's; I will not reason and compare: my business is to create.
- " I myself do nothing. The Holy Spirit accomplishes all through me.
- " God appears, and God is Light, to those poor souls who dwell in Night; but does a Human Form display to those who dwell in realms of Day. " - William Blake
- " He was born with a gift of laughter and a sense that the world was mad." - Rafael Sabatini
- " One of the most useful factors in the conditioning of a man is praise. Training by means of praise has the following advantages: it makes the object of praise dependent, it creates an addict, and it increases productivity. Long before man is in a position to choose his own way of life, he will have formed the necessary

addiction to praise. For man, who was brought up to be proud and honorable, every working day is merely an endless series of humiliations." - Esther Vilar

- " Death is a tragedy ... but only for the living. We who have died go on to other things."- Charles de Lint

Comic Philosophy

When a Man has married a Wife he finds out whether her knees & elbows are only glued together. - William Blake

If you're killed, you've lost a very important part of your life. - Brooke Shields

11/18/04

St. Nicholas and Jehoshua

This holiday season the Missal takes a look at two figures, Saint Nicholas and Jehoshua, who each represent many vastly different sets of ideals in the current celebration of Christmas. We'll take a look at only their purer form, the ideals they represent, without the historical, commercial, and political faces put upon them down through the centuries.

Saint Nicholas was born during the third century in Patara, a village in what is now Turkey. His wealthy parents, who raised him Christian, died in an epidemic while Nicholas was still young. Obeying Jesus' words to "sell what you own and give the money to the poor," Nicholas used his whole inheritance to assist the needy, the sick, and the suffering. He dedicated his life to serving God and was made Bishop of Myra while still a young man. Bishop Nicholas became known throughout the land for his generosity to the those in need, his love for children, and his concern for sailors and ships. There is little in the factual accounts of his life, and he left no writings of his own.

One story tells of his love for others and of his humility. A father in the town where Nicholas lived had no money for the dowries for his three daughters, meaning they would not find good husbands, thus, in those times, faced a life of poverty and despair. Nicholas came to their house late at night and left a bag of gold, either by throwing it down the chimney or through a window, where it landed in the stockings before the fire. Returning for two more nights in a row, he secured the girl's dowries and their futures. When the father found out who had performed these deeds, Nicholas insisted that the thanks be directed to God, not himself. Thus, we have the stories of Santa Claus coming down the chimney, and the gifts he leaves in the stockings.

The Apolytikion (Hymn) of St. Nicholas

An example of the Faith and a life of humility, as a teacher of abstinence you did inspire and lead your flock, and through the truthfulness of your deeds were exalted by greatness, through your humility uplifting all and by poverty gaining wealth. Father and hierarch Nicholas, intercede with Christ our God that our souls may be saved.

Many such stories are told of Nicholas, all showing how he cared for the poor and innocent, and had no desire to take credit or reward for himself.

Little is also known of Jesus, or **Jehoshua** of Nazareth. While He may have existed in the sense read in the Gospels, as well as an historical figure, and may have actually spoken some of the many teachings attributed to Him, His real value lies in the ideal He represents, and how this can lead us to the inner Christ. As an inner guide who leads us to the true temple within our heart, where we become one in Holy Marriage to our Soul, and as the sword of discriminating wisdom, which leads us to retreat from the false, thus coming to Truth, He serves as a link between the outer man and the Inner Source. Much as the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sanghat, Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, the formula for living and becoming. We become the Path, and thus come to the Father. Though Jesus preached the religious law of the time,

including the commandments, he acted in pure spontaneity from His own wisdom, even if it meant breaking the law.

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by Me."
- John 14:16

Rather than a figure of sentimental puppy-love, a harsh judge doling out unforgiving punishment, or a lost figure of historical vagueness, the ideal represented by Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, that saves us by leading us away from identification with the world and ego, lighting the Path back to the Divine.

"As long as man does not know his own divine self, he will continue to seek in externals that which can only be found inside oneself. When he awakens to the realization of the divine power within himself, he will cease to look for salvation in external persons and things, and instead of seeking for a Christ in history, he will find the true Jesus within himself."
- Franz Hartmann

Both of these figures are in basis an archetype, an ideal, and though perhaps based on an historical figure, molded by history, passion and greed into their commercial counterparts, this ideal is the energy or power that drives the images even today. To be caught in the spell of any of the various forms is to be identified with an image, trapped in the archytype, and thus lose the meaning and practical use of the underlying truth. Both of these men, and the force behind them, was not one of pride, greed or pious fundamentalism, but one of truth and humble action, though that action be difficult, and the truth lost in the details. The path within does not end in the messenger, i.e. the archytype, but continues into the nameless stillness and slilence beyond all images and their activities.

" The major tempation to be overcome in this period is the temptation to fall for one of the subtle but powerful archetypes of the collective consciousness. In the state of oneness, both Christ and Buddha were tempted in this manner, but they held to the "ground" that they knew to be devoid of all such energies. This ground is a "stillpoint", not a moving energy-point. Unmasking these energies, seeing them as ruses of the self, is the particular task to be accomplished or hurdle to be overcome in the state of oneness. We cannot come to the ending of self until we have finally seen through these archetypes and can no longer be moved by any of them."
- Bernadette Roberts

Tricks and Traps

Trap: believing the 'world' is the sole source of your troubles. In the active-reactive situations of life, we may mistakenly come to believe that other people or circumstances are the sole source of our problems, as well as the potential source of our future happiness. This locks us into a no-win situation, for the world is not going to change to suit our petty desires and fears, nor will molding our 'self ' to fit the world resolve the conflict either. The world is change, and as such, no counter-change made in our environment or pattern can last, or bring peace and lasting security.

Trick: seeing that identification with our 'self', as it rises to meet the world, is the root cause of our trouble, desire and fear. When we come to see that our own reaction-pattern is what we should be looking at, we may also come to see that what we have been calling 'me', is not us at all. It is but another part of the changing world, a view. By observing our 'self 'as it rises up in reaction to the world, through self-observation, we come to this startling realization: we are only an observer. All action-reaction is of the world or view, it is not us. Thus, we separate from our pattern, and the view becomes just that, 'self ' included. Once we have hit this point of fact, we are ready to go within.

" When you know yourselves, then you will be known, and you will understand that you are children of the living Father. But if you do not know yourselves, then you live in poverty, and you are the poverty."
- Jesus, The Gospel of Thomas

Commentary

The Paradox of Change

"And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." - Luke 11:9

Both Jesus and Nicholas had one important thing in common; they were men of action, and taught through example. The theory came later, from those who recorded their lives and words. Neither of these men taught that we should wait around for them to save us, or that the inner kingdom was only entered by first gaining permission from paid priests and preachers. They taught that we must change first, in a fundamental inner way, and then the doors could be seen, knocked upon, and entered.

The primary change that must precede any exterior change, is that of value or aim. Another way to put this, is that what we love must change in order for our life to gain new direction. This inner or spiritual change comes first, an inner realization perhaps that things are not as they seem, and that if we are to find something permanent and unchanging, we can no longer put our faith in the ceaselessly changing outer world, a world of flux we now know cannot be depended on. This inner change causes or precedes the outer or psychological change. And from there, our actions too, may change.

A strange belief seen in some who profess to desire the truth, is one that no effort or change is necessary, but that all one must do is wait, or believe, and that some force will do the work or changing for us. We should just sit, and perhaps talk high words of exalted states of complication or simplicity, and we will be enlightened or saved simply because we already are and just don't know it, or because our unconscious belief in our innate superiority will cause the gods and teachers to save us from the perils of life with no effort of our own. This is all nothing more than a rationalization for our own pride and laziness, or else fear of action and its consequences. While there is truth in the effortlessness of essence, and that the ego cannot create heaven in its own image, no matter the effort, this is only known after the fact, not before.

Waiting for inner change to occur without effort is actually the worshipping of our current psychological state. We do not wish for real change, but for all resistance to our self-centered will to be removed, so that our self-survival mechanism can render us omnipotent and eternal. This is ego worship, nothing more. The willingness to change, in a real and drastic sense, is shown first by a willingness to accept the truth of ourselves as we are, regardless, and then by a willingness to work on changing our current psychological state. This shows the powers that be we are not afraid, of mental change or emotional pain, and do not place our identification with our accidental state of being above fact of Truth, and our petty wants and worldly needs above love for Truth. We show we are willing to let go of our identification with our reaction-pattern, our 'self', and face the unknown, knowing intuitively that the Kingdom is within.

This initial change of heart and mind, the change in our direction or aim, comes to each of us in our own manner. Some may find it through mental inquiry into their present state. Others may find it through an intuitive feeling, while still others come to it by the trauma of drastic events. Some may find it through contact with a teacher or friends. Whatever the path we take to this moment, and whether we are even aware of it at the time, the inner change is primary and causal. It works its way outward and affects our lives, whether we like it or not. We will eventually look back with understanding, perhaps, but always with gratitude and praise. If this has not happened to you, but you know for sure that your life can't be as good as it gets, then begin the effort: ask, knock, and seek, with all your heart and mind, and surely you will find.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- Jesus said, " Know what is in front of your face, and what is hidden from you will be disclosed to you. For there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed.
- " Let him who seeks continue seeking until he finds. When he finds, he will become troubled. When he becomes troubled, he will be astonished, and he will rule over the All." - The Gospel of Thomas
- " Man as a true human is essentially a religious being and only secondarily a political, social, and economic animal." - Phiroz Mehta
- " The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function." - F. Scott Fitzgerald
- " We live in an atmosphere of gloom and despair, but this is because our eyes are downcast and rivetted to the earth, with all its physical and grossly material manifestations. If, instead of that, man proceeding on his life-journey looked - not heavenward, which is but a figure of speech - but within himself and centered his point of observation on the inner man, he would soon escape from the coils of the great serpent of illusion. From the cradle to the grave, his life would then become supportable and worth living, even in its worst phases.… - H.P. Blavatsky
- " Every day people are straying away from the church and going back to God." - Lenny Bruce
- " Religion is a defense against the experience of God." - Carl Jung

Comic Philosophy

"(The Bible) has noble poetry in it; and some clever fables; and some blood-drenched history; and a wealth of obscenity; and upwards of a thousand lies."
- Mark Twain, *"Letters from the Earth"*

" Puritanism: the haunting fear that someone, somewhere, may be happy."
- H.L. Mencken

12/18/04

Perennial Philosophy

The Missal for the new year looks at the Perennial Philosophy, popularized by **Aldous Huxley** in his book of the same name. One way of expressing the central insight of the Perennial Philosophy is with the phrase That Thou Art, taken from the Sanskrit of the ancient Upanishads. Basically an anthology, a book of quotes by then lesser known authors, Huxley weaves examples given by these teachers of how all religions and spiritual systems are united in basis through a perennial philosophy. While it was the 17th-century German philosopher Leibniz who first called this ground of all religion by the Latin phrase philosophia perennis, Huxley's anthology, first published in the 1940's, popularized it and opened the door for the mainstream seeker to its history and teaching.
He defines the perennial philosophy as : *the metaphysic that recognizes a divine Reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds; the psychology that finds in the soul something similar to, or even identical with, divine Reality; the ethic that places man's final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Ground of all being -- the thing is immemorial and universal. Rudiments of the Perennial Philosophy may be found among the traditionary lore of primitive peoples in every region of the world, and in its fully developed forms it has a place in every one of the higher religions."*

While the reality of the Ground the perennial philosophy alludes to is available to everyone, being our common source, very few come to recognize it, much less become one with it. The error that leads to this mistake in identity, or of being lost in illusion, is the obsessive insistence on being a separate self, the attachment to I, me, or mine, which excludes unitive knowledge of God. This 'self'-manufactured separateness from our Ground is brought about by identification with reactive thought, as described by Huxley:

> *In the modern world the child tends to grow out of his direct awareness of the one Ground of things; for the habit of analytical thought is fatal to the intuitions of integral thinking, whether on the "psychic" or the spiritual level.*

The path to reuniting with the Ground or That, is brought about by a turning within to directly perceive our source without the interference of reactive interpretation by words, associative thinking, and unquestioned belief states. Huxley again:

But happily there is the Highest Common Factor of all religions, the Perennial Philosophy which has always and everywhere been the metaphysical system of prophets, saints and sages. It is perfectly possible for people to remain good Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, or Moslems and yet to be united in full agreement on the basic doctrines of the Perennial Philosophy. We have seen that many thoughts are unthinkable apart from any vocabulary and frame of reference. But the fundamental ideas of the Perennial Philosophy can be formulated in a very simple vocabulary, and the experiences to which the ideas refer can and indeed must be had immediately and apart from any vocabulary whatsoever.

According to Huxley, one of the problems with religions is their tendency to degrade into "ritualistic legalism", or literal worship of long dead personalities and dogmas. This can lead to unquestioned belief in the also literal, and perhaps manipulated,

translations of the original teaching. Misapplied by the 'lawyers' and priests of the religion, these legalistic rituals lead the masses outward into behavior modification instead of inward in search of Truth. Then, the world and its desires are taken to be examples of the higher good, and animal fears seen as evil; all defined by outward behavior only. Unconscious inner states of mind, oft ignored by literal man, are formed by this outward orientation, and lead to the greed, ignorance and fear we see today and throughout history.

The bodies of human beings are affected by the good and bad states of their minds. Analogously, the existence at the heart of things of a divine serenity and good will may be regarded as one of the reasons why the world's sickness, though chronic, has not proved fatal. And if, in the psychic universe, there should be other and more than human consciousness obsessed by thoughts of evil and egotism and rebellion, this would account, perhaps, for some of the quite extravagant and improbable wickedness of human behavior.

We cannot be free to even begin a real search for the Truth if we are unconscious of the true motivations and causes of our actions and thoughts. Turning back within via "a direct intuition, superior to discursive reasoning" reconnects us with That, the common Ground of all. Huxley lays out four doctrines of the sophia perennis to help lead us back from the maze of Maya and her illusions, and "so to come to unitive knowledge of the Divine Ground " that lies within.

At the core of the Perennial Philosophy we find four fundamental doctrines:

First: *the phenomenal world of matter and of individualized consciousness--the world of things and animals and men and even gods--is the manifestation of a Divine Ground within which all partial realities have their being, and apart from which they would be non-existent.*
Second: *human beings are capable not merely of knowing about the Divine Ground by inference; they can also realize its existence by a direct intuition, superior to discursive reasoning. This immediate knowledge unites the knower with that which is known.*
Third: *man possesses a double nature, a phenomenal ego and an eternal Self, which is the inner man, the spirit, the spark of divinity within the soul. It is possible for a man, if he so desires, to identify himself with the spirit and therefore with the Divine Ground, which is of the same or like nature with the spirit.*
Fourth: *man's life on earth has only one end and purpose: to identify himself with his eternal Self and so to come to unitive knowledge of the Divine Ground.*

He strives in his collection of sayings to give examples of the kind of life conducive to the perennial philosophy: a simple life, one of taking our attention and energy from time-bound pursuits, and redirecting them to the inner search. This is the simple way of the seeker, "pure in heart and poor in spirit".

The ground in which the multifarious and time-bound psyche is rooted is a simple, timeless awareness. By making ourselves pure in heart and poor in spirit we can discover and be identified with this awareness. In the spirit we not only have, but are, the unitive knowledge of the divine Ground.

All quotes by Aldous Huxley

Tricks and Traps

Trap: Being as Image. If we take our being as our image of ourselves, derived from our thought/feelings, we limit ourselves to the being of an image; we are an ever-changing symbol created after the fact of our very projecting of that same image from our thought/feelings. When you look in the mirror, do you identify with the image you see, the image you would like to see(improved version), or with That which sees ?
Trick: Look carefully at your thoughts and feelings. A teacher once remarked that we are much better creators than observers. Another says that identity spins identity. By questioning our thoughts and feelings, we may see this 'self' creating process in action, and perhaps slowly back out of our mind-made images into the listening attention. As pure observing, we are free from limitation, for instead of being trapped in form and mind, we now contain all images, all thoughts and emotional reaction. Our being now is as air, still and aware.
Trap: Fear of pain and death. But if we give up our self-images, especially the improved ones of our dreams and vanities, it hurts, for we are left with nothing to stand on. All that is left is fear of dissolution, death, no-image.
Trick: Look carefully at what is actually happening in the course of a 24 hour day. We start out our day in a dream world in our sleep, then we go through the 'death' of waking up, and start another dream, our daily life. Even the seemingly simple act of walking from a room outside into the daylight is an enormous change, but we're so asleep we no longer notice it, much less the changes in personality that automatically ensue whenever circumstance dictates. Through simple honest observation, we can come to see how tenuous and vague our waking life 'self' really is. This shock turns our attention within, and we find ourselves looking back at what we are looking out of, no longer obsessed with our image-creating mind and its desires and fears.

Commentary

On Direction

" In the modern world the child tends to grow out of his direct awareness of the one Ground of things;.... " - Aldous Huxley

" I tell you that no one can experience this birth(of God realized in the soul) without a mighty effort. No one can attain this birth unless he can withdraw his mind entirely from things. " - Meister Eckhart

There is a story a westerner tells of his first visit with a tribe of Native Americans. He was sitting in a home, watching a toddler play about while the adults talked. Noticing that the child was having trouble opening a heavy wooden door, he sprang to help, but was stopped by one of the residents. He reacted in disbelief, for he could not see how helping the child push the heavy door was not something anyone would not jump to do. The resident explained that they would rather let the young one figure it out on his own, for this would make him more reliant and resourceful, and not dependent on others. The visitor eventually came to a personal understanding of the

wisdom behind this story, and later came to see how it affected his so-called civilized society and its members as well.

Huxley tells us of a perennial philosophy, a path leading within to a common Ground or reality beneath all religions and paths. This Ground, he says, is found within, as in the biblical saying of the Kingdom of Heaven. Yet, as we are, we are turned only outward into the world of form and illusion, trained to be dependent and needful of a world that has no stability, only change and flux. The very idea of 'within' is frowned upon, or else mistaken for unquestioned belief systems we have unconsciously adopted. We come to forget the way within, and even its existence. This dependence on outer support, only, leaves us dependent and unable to intuit our own way. While it may be of use in the outer world of business and society, even then, we can only go where we are led. This might not be ultimately desirable or in our best interest.

When we become dependent on outer sets of rules and behaviors for our model, we run into a trap of duality. If we are honest in our observations, we find things do not always go according to the plan we have bought, and are thus placed in a dilemma. Since the outer plan we have adopted cannot be wrong, it being counted on for our very existence, and since we have traded our intuition and inner guidance in favor of it, we are left with having to place the blame for the discrepancy in action and results somewhere else. The usual method for rationalizing the failure of the plan's perfection is to blame the operator, either ourselves or someone else. Even in the Bible, the word for making a mistake, taken from an archery term for 'missing the mark', has been mis-translated into 'sin'.

This trap of looking without to find the blame for the plan's failure to provide heaven is the hell of the perfectionist. He is trapped by that most slippery of all nets, his own ego. The ego has an uncanny ability to divide itself whenever it makes a mistake or doesn't get what it wants. This splitting enables it to separate into two parts: one plays the part of the good guy, who would have heaven if it wasn't for that other part, the bad guy, on whose head all blame is placed. This splitting can also be played with one part in our own head, and the other in the body of another. Our ego does not see a difference in where the bad guy lives, whether in our head, or out. We are led continually outward and about, into illusion and duality. Thus, whatever training we had, in whatever plan we have bought, is kept intact.

Now, why would we be kept in such a dilemma? And by what? Something seems to want us to look only outward, and not to question our motivations, fears and desires. If we are kept helpless, distracted, led ever farther into complex obsessions, and deprived of the mental energy needed to develop our intuition and ability to question, we will never be able to figure out how to get the door open on our own. If it doesn't open at first try, and no one springs to open it for us, we fall back on our negative emotional training, and begin to play the blame game within the fractured realm of our 'self '.

Huxley also speaks of a certain lifestyle conducive to the search, one of simplicity and purity. To be again as a little child, but with the wisdom of experience. With this lifestyle of containment and simplicity comes patience and energy. Then, if it takes us time and effort to open the door, so be it. The trap of looking for someone else to do our work, whether outer or inner, leads us to a lifetime of dependency. Whether this is under a guru, a job, a system, or another person as love-object, we still cannot open the door, for we will not give ourselves the chance. Now, this does not mean we should shun contact with others, but that we do not count on them to do our thinking, searching or understanding for us. We cannot help others if we are not free and

independent ourselves. We take information and guidance from those our intuition says have gone farther down the road than us, but we find the proof of this ourselves by walking the walk, on our own. We are guided, but not carried, and form friendships, not co-dependencies.

In the end, we find we are only One, and no duality really exists. By turning within, in true Self-reliance, we may come to know this before it's too late, as old age and lethargy rob us of any chance to see the trap of duality and dependence, much less escape it. If we push on far enough, we come to the place of Paradox: where by losing our self, we find our Self, and find that only by exhausting all efforts do we finally see the door has been open all along. As we walk through the ever-open door into the Kingdom Within, we realize we never really left.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " Contemplation is that condition of alert passivity, in which the soul lays itself open to the divine Ground within and without, the immanent and transcendent Godhead.
- " We pass from time to eternity when identified with the spirit and pass again from eternity to time when we choose to identify with the body.
- " The best that can be said for ritualistic legalism is that it improves conduct. It does little, however, to alter character and nothing of itself to modify consciousness.
- " Maybe this world is another planet's hell." - Aldous Huxley
- " There is only one religion, though there are a hundred versions of it." - George Bernard Shaw
- " There is an arresting thought in one of Plato's Dialogues, the Symposium, that love is the midpoint between ignorance and wisdom, the mediator between humans and the gods, and that through love we attain spiritual understanding." - W. T. S. Thackara
- " When one is perfectly still - mind and body, silent and alone - there is no personality to speak of, thus personality is one's unique way of expression, it is what others see and know of us, nothing more or deeper than that." - Bernadette Roberts

Comic Philosophy

When a guru's not engaged in meditation
A-reciting of his mantra for the week,
His capacity for infantile inflation
Is enough to drive disciples up the creek.
He will take the girls aside for tantric yoga
While celibacy's ordered for the chaps;
If he starts behaving like an angry ogre
He will claim it's just to make your pride collapse.
Oh, with all this yogic practice to be done,
A disciple's lot is not a happy one."

- John Wren-Lewis

Pully, hauly, tug with a will;
The gods wiggle-waggle but the sky stands still.

- Aldous Huxley, *Island*

01/25/05

Tao Te Ching and Lao Tzu

This month's Missal takes a look at the Tao and it's exposition in Lao Tzu's Tao Te Ching. Translated as "The Path" or "The Way", the Tao has been called a vehicle for achieving tranquility of mind through the union of the opposites. The main mystical term of Lao Tzu and the Taoists that followed, the Tao is formless and unfathomable as the Source of all.

The Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao.
The name that can be named is not the eternal name.
The nameless is the beginning of heaven and earth.
The named is the mother of ten thousand things.
Ever desireless, one can see the mystery.
Ever desiring, one can see the manifestations.
These two spring from the same source but differ in name;
this appears as darkness.
Darkness within darkness.
The gate to all mystery.

Lao Tzu is a mysterious figure thought to have lived in China in the sixth century B.C. in the ancient capital Luoyang. Some scholars feel that there was no single author of the Tao Te Ching, but that it is a collection of writings by many ancient sages. The character of Lao Tzu lends depth to the book, and gives it a face, regardless of the obscurity of the facts. He was said to have been a scholar and librarian in the archives of the Imperial Court, and a contemporary of Confucius. Upon hearing of Lao Tzu's reputation as a sage, Confucius paid him a visit. Being interested in the rituals and customs of the times, he asked Lao Tzu what he thought of them. Lao Tzu gave Confucius a very non-politically correct scathing about the uselessness of ritual and belief. After being confronted with LaoTzu's Zen-like wisdom, Confucius wrote this poem:

Birds can fly,
Fish can swim,
Animals can run,
So they can all be snared or trapped.
But Lao Tzu is like a flying Dragon, un-trappable.

In the twilight of his life, Lao Tzu became disgusted with the disintegrating character of the kingdom and its inhabitants, and left for what is now Tibet. He set out for the western border of China, saddened and disillusioned that men were unwilling to follow the path or Tao. At the border he came to Han Gu Pass where a guard, Yin Xi, realized who he was, and that Lao Tzu was leaving the kingdom for good. He asked him to record his teachings for posterity before he left. Lao Tzu climbed down from his buffalo and immediately wrote the Tao Te Ching. He then left and was never heard of again. Composed in 5,000 characters, the Tao Te Ching has been passed down continually through the centuries.

Heaven and earth are ruthless;
They see the ten thousand things as dummies.
The wise are ruthless;

They see the people as dummies.
The space between heaven and earth is like a bellows.
The shape changes but not the form;
The more it moves, the more it yields.
More words count less.
Hold fast to the center.

Whether Lao Tzu was an actual historical figure or not misses the point. The wisdom in the Tao Te Ching is timeless and springs from a common source inside us all. It is beyond duality, beyond mind, yet immediately available if we leave the trap of thought and concept, and listen as we look.

Heaven and Earth last for ever.
Why do Heaven and Earth last for ever?
They are unborn, so ever living.
The sage stays behind, thus he is ahead.
He is detached, thus at one with all.
Through selfless action, he attains fulfillment.

-Above Quotes from the *Tao Te Ching* -

The Tao Te Ching is similar in style and content to some of the works of the Chinese Zen masters of later centuries. The sixth Zen Patriarch Seng T'san's classic, Inscribed on the Believing Mind (OnTrust in the Heart), talks of the indefinable Great Way. Here, one sees the Tao spring forth again, still indefinable, yet closer than our own face.

The Great Way is not difficult for those who have no preferences.
When love and hate are both absent everything becomes clear and undisguised.
Make the smallest distinction, however, and heaven and earth are set infinitely apart.
If you wish to see the truth then hold no opinions for or against anything.
To set up what you like against what you dislike is the disease of the mind.
When the deep meaning of things is not understood the mind's essential peace is disturbed to no avail.
The Way is perfect like vast space when nothing is lacking and nothing is in excess.
Indeed, it is due to our choosing to accept or reject that we do not see the true nature of things.
Live neither in the entanglements of outer things nor in inner feelings of emptiness.
Be serene in the oneness of things and such erroneous views will disappear by themselves.

Excerpt from *Inscribed on the Believing Mind* by Seng T'san

Tricks and Traps

Trap: Thinking our current mood or energy level is final or real. We may be having a bad day, work or home life is hell, and we forget that things were different a short time ago. Our thinking becomes negative and we may even decide that spiritual

work is worthless, for it has not made us happy, or kept us in a good mood. This can be good, if it causes us to pause, think, and remember to remember this trick:
Trick: Being able to remember. If we can look at our memory without the effect of the current mood, whether good or bad, we can see that we change, meaning whatever mood is currently upon us will soon leave to be replaced by another. While this may break the current mood's spell, it can lead us into yet another trap,
Trap: Thinking that we are a failure(or a resounding success) at spiritual work because of our swings of mood and energy. This can lead into further traps of thinking along the lines of control and judgment rather than observation, by trying to maintain our hold on life(and thus our mood) through manic efforts at controlling it by force: peaceful meditation techniques, thought control, copping out, being overly efficient, proselytizing, refusing to admit the facts, self-berating, passing the buck, etc. To break this obsessive grip, we need the following trick,
Trick: What within us is always present, regardless of the present mood or circumstance? Simply by the act of looking at ourselves(non-judgmental observation), we can rise above the spell of the present mood. While honest self-observation may not make us 'feel good', we can come to see that the thinking-feeling state of the mood is 'not us'. And, by looking at the difference between these two 'selves', the one of moods and the observing one, we may find something of a surprise.

When we dream we do not know that we are dreaming. In our dreams we may even interpret our dreams. Only after we are awake do we know that we have dreamed. But there comes a great awakening, and then we know that life is a great dream. But the stupid think they are awake all the time and believe they know it distinctly.
- Chuang Tzu

Commentary

Observing Our Afflictions

" The finite mind cannot perceive the infinite. The finite mind can become less finite - it can become infinite." - Richard Rose

Some have asked why Richard Rose felt it was necessary to look at traumatic incidents from our past as a starting point for meditation. Why dreg up these unpleasant memories? Why not let a sleeping dog lie, rather than rudely wake him up and face the consequences? These are good questions. They can best be answered from our own experience, if we care to put the advice into practice. Then we can answer the questions ourselves and in the process, perhaps, change our being.

Let's start out by defining our aim; why do we search? Any meditative practice can be defined as a means to this aim. If our aim is to find the Truth, regardless, then we must assume that we don't presently have it, or are at least not aware of it. This admission is the basis for our search and will serve us well.

Most systems of meditation speak of the ego as the main obstacle to enlightenment. The ego can be defined as the sense of individuality, for which there is a survival-program of manic proportions. An individual thing such as the ego is by definition finite. If our quest is to find the infinite and eternal, then being identified with something manifestly finite is obviously a problem. That the finite mind can become

infinite may speak to our intuition of the usefulness of reviewing traumatic incidents, if we define these incidents as afflictions to the individuality sense, or ego.

Any time we have suffered emotional trauma at the hands and minds of our fellow man, it amounts to a rebuff. We have been rejected for our behavior, caused by our thinking. If later, after the heat of the event has died down, we look at the thinking pattern that led to the incident, we may see that we were acting from the manic survival program or ego, and not from a universal position of clear thinking. We can then see why we were rebuffed, and thus our thinking is possibly corrected, and becomes less finite. Any thinking that originates from opinion, ambition, fear, or personal emotion is finite in aspect, biased in its being. To become less finite and more universal, our thinking must become less based on personal opinion, and thus becomes less biased in aspect. The rebuffs we get from our fellow man for our finite reactions are red flags that point this out. Of course, if our aim is not one of becoming less finite, but only to survive as an individual ego-animal at all costs, none of this is pertinent.

The main characteristic of the ego is its insistence on being right, no matter the facts. It will even split itself in two, and place the blame for its actions on its offshoot in order to keep itself convinced of its rightness. To examine our self in the light of the facts, and to admit our faults and errors, flies in the face of this ego-aspect and thus tends toward making our being less finite. Here again we see the value in dealing with past traumas caused by biased thinking, for it removes us from identification with our errors as it corrects our thinking.

The ego's insistence on being right regardless stems from its insistence on 'knowing'. It cannot learn, for this would imply that it does not already know. Thus it cannot question its own actions or thinking, for this would also imply fallibility, something it cannot allow. To clear our thinking from this trap of 'knowing', and to become able to receive from a higher power or self by the admission that we do not know, enables us to become still less finite. That which is empty, and thus not full of itself, has a higher being than that which claims to know and therefore cannot receive. An empty glass has possibility.

Only the real part of us can connect with the Real. Only that which is less finite can connect with the Infinite. By questioning our thinking patterns that led us into less than desirable outcomes, we back away from these patterns and become less finite. As an observer, capable of seeing present time experience clearly, and of honest admission of past mistakes, we are much less finite than as a pattern projector bent on recycling whatever doctrines flatter its valued concepts. A clear aware space has infinite capacity, and can receive. An ego, having to defend a set pattern of thinking, has no such capacity, and eventually becomes a cause for pain and misery, if it is allowed to live unchallenged and unquestioned.

Once we can admit when we are wrong, we have allowed something greater to come into our lives. Eventually we may come to see that the Golden Rule and the commandment of loving thy neighbor as thyself are not mere dictates of virtue, but clues to our higher inheritance as Universal Man, if we wish to claim it. If we insist on being full of ourselves, vain and 'right', change, which is inevitable, will cause pain and denial in us as we bow at the foot of our god, ego.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " Stop thinking, and end your problems.
- " Those who know do not speak, those who speak, do not know.
- " Even a 1,000 mile journey starts with a single step". - Lao Tzu
- "To regard the fundamental as the essence, to regard things as coarse, to regard accumulation as deficiency, and to dwell quietly alone with the spiritual and the intelligent -- herein lie the techniques of Tao of the ancients."
- " Once I, Chuang Tzu, dreamed I was a butterfly and was happy as a butterfly. I was conscious that I was quite pleased with myself, but I did not know that I was Tzu. Suddenly I awoke, and there was I, visibly Tzu. I do not know whether it was Tzu dreaming that he was a butterfly or the butterfly dreaming that he was Tzu. Between Tzu and the butterfly there must be some distinction. [But one may be the other.] This is called the transformation of things."- Chuang Tzu
- " To make clear the achievement of nature and throw light on all things is called yang. To be hidden, without form, deep and unfathomable, is called yin. Yang knows yang but does not know yin. Yin knows yin but does not know yang. The Profound Principle alone knows both yin and yang, both going and stopping, and both darkness and light." - Yang Hsiung
- " Some say that Heaven produces the five grains in order to feed man and produces silk and hemp in order to clothe man. This is to say that Heaven becomes a farmer or a mulberry girl for the sake of man. This is contrary to spontaneity. Therefore their ideas are suspect and should not be followed." - Wang Ch'ung
- " I have been reading your Descartes. Very interesting. "I think, therefore I am." He forgot to mention the other part. I'm sure he knew, he just forgot: "I don't think, therefore I'm not." - Katagiri Roshi
- " To generate anything above the mental capacities, we must remove the ego." - Richard Rose

Comic Philosophy

"Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more,

Men were deceivers ever;

One foot in sea, and one on shore,

To one thing constant never.

Then sigh not so,but let them go,

And be you blithe and bonny,

Converting all your sounds of woe

Into Hey nonny, nonny."

- William Shakespeare*, Much Ado about Nothing*

The one serious conviction that a man should have is that nothing is to be taken too seriously. - Nicholas Murray Butler

Joy is not in things, it is in us.- Benjamin Franklin

People with opinions just go around bothering one another. - Buddha

02/25/05

Advaita

This month's Missal takes a look at **Advaita Vedanta,** commonly known as Advaita. The most popular of the Hindu philosophies based on the Upanishads, Advaita is a Sanskrit term meaning "not two", or non-dualism, signifying that the Atman(individual soul) and the Brahman(God or Reality) are one, and 'not two'. This interpretation of the Upanishads, that the individual soul and God are one and the same, is what distinguishes Advaita from other forms of Vedanta.
While aAvaita has no founder as such, the Hindu philosopher Sankara (686-718) is credited with gathering the oral teachings and putting them into a cohesive written form. Sankara revitalized the Hindu religion and started monasteries throughout India. His greatest work, The Crest Jewel of Wisdom, or Viveka-Chudamani, is still revered as the leading exponent of advaita philosophy. While some modern scholars cast doubt on whether there was a single historical figure who wrote this treatise, its worth is self evident.

Advaita states that only the ultimate reality or Brahman exists, and that the Atman or individual soul is identical to and not separate from this reality. The world of form and illusory separateness is called maya, and is the cause of the misconception of individualness.

" Maya is neither real nor unreal, nor both together; She is neither identical with Brahman nor different from Him, nor both; She is neither differentiated nor undifferentiated, nor both. She is most wonderful and cannot be described in words. ... Everything, from the intellect down to the gross physical body, is the effect of Maya. Understand that all these and Maya itself are not the [absolute] Self, and are therefore unreal, like a mirage in the desert."

Liberation from this illusion of separateness or maya through becoming the Atman, and thus Brahman, does not involve simply identifying with a bigger concept, though it may seem as such to the eager aspirant. It is rather the observing of the illusion of separateness through intense self-enquiry. The idea of being an individual or thing must be transcended or seen through, not wished away. It occurs when our ego or sense of self is destroyed through honest self-observation, guided by heightened intuition and clear reason. While the underlying truth of our identical nature as Brahman does not need to be created, but simply realized, this must be found on a deeper level than the mere intellectual acceptance of words and teachers that flatter our ego.

" Teachers and scriptures can stimulate spiritual awareness. But the wise disciple crosses the ocean of ignorance by direct illumination, through the grace of God. Gain experience directly. Realize God for yourself. Know the Self as the one indivisible Being, and become perfect. Free your mind from all distractions and dwell in the consciousness of the Self."

The Real cannot be known through the unreal, therefore, according to advaita, we must find the real part of ourselves first, and thus find the ultimate reality. The cause of our suffering and illusions are found in our mis-identification with the individual personality pattern, which is part and parcel to maya. Through the process of self-

enquiry, we can sift the illusion from the real, and come back to our true Self, or Atman.

One form of advaita meditation, perhaps best taught by the sage Sri Ramana Maharshi, is that of self-enquiry through the question " Who Am I?". By the elimination of all that is not us, we come to see that the view is not the viewer, and that we are none other than the impartial witness, the Atman. One of the dangers of advaita practice is that the ego can easily persuade us to stop the enquiry once an intellectual or feeling level is reached which satisfies our need for acceptance, self-worth, or peace of mind. Thus, we are tricked once again into duality and stop short of the goal. The fear of finding that which IS threatens the ego, is seen by it as death, and avoided at all costs by whatever tricks necessary.

" The Self never undergoes change; the intellect never possesses consciousness. But when one sees all this world, he is deluded into thinking, "I am the seer, I am the knower." Mistaking one's Self for the individual entity, one is overcome with fear. If one knows oneself not as the individual but as the supreme Self, one becomes free from fear."

The true way of Advaita is one of relentless self-enquiry until the goal is reached. Once the real part of ourselves is found, we become Brahman as well as Atman, and all sense of separateness is gone, in ourselves and in our vision.
That Reality is One; though, owing to illusion, It appears to be multiple names and forms, attributes and changes, It always remains unchanged. [It is] like gold which, while remaining one, is formed into various ornaments. You are that One, that Brahman. Meditate on this in your mind.

" This is the final declaration of the Vedanta: Brahman is all; [It is] this universe and every creature. To be liberated is to live in the continual awareness of Brahman, the undivided Reality. "

- All quotes from **Sankara**, various works -

Tricks and Traps

Trap: The Path of Least Resistance. Falling for the trap of ease and ego, we hear that there's 'nothing to do' for there is no 'doer'. So, we stop all effort at self-enquiry in favor of a concept, the thought of how wonderful we truly are, being that all is One(there is always a grain of truth behind every good lie). To escape from this conceptual trap laid by the ego's need to be right and holy, simply observe the facts, by asking the age-old question:
Trick: "Who Am I?" If this question is asked as a practical tool to see what part of the self one is currently identified with, and to look back at what you're looking out of, it can dispel any concept of identity and lead us back within. Careful of the following:
Trap: If the question 'who am I?' is asked only theoretically, due to fear of actually seeing the truth about oneself, it will only lead into more concepts. Try the following:
Trick: Look both inwards and outwards at the same time. Two-way seeing helps to break the spell of our inner movie, the story we tell ourselves about ourselves. If we hold the attention on the outer view while also looking within at what we're looking

out of, we silence the inner storyline, and might catch a glimpse of the current ego as it slithers away. At this point, ask the question again: "Who Am I?"

" You must be prepared to find that which is, not that which you wish to find, even if it is oblivion." - Richard Rose

" For those who are suffering in samsara from the heat of the threefold forms of pain, and wandering in delusion in a desert thirsting for water, may these words of Shankara which secure nirvana and excel all others, procure for them the ocean of nectar close by in the form of the non-dual God."
- last verse of The Crest Jewel of Wisdom, Sankara

Commentary

Earnest Seeker or Sleepy Dreamer?

In pursuing a path of self-enquiry such as advaita, we would be well served to keep in touch with our present state of mind, and not venture too far afield into realms of fantasy and unquestioned belief. One thing we can use to ground our search in fact, is honesty. Another is coming to know our true motivations, why we seek. These two tools help us stay balanced as we walk the razor's edge of truth and illusion, safely crossing the chasm of maya and duality. Let's take a look at aim and honesty, and their counterparts, sleep and imagination.

To get anywhere, we must have direction. To Become, we must have the intimate knowledge that we are not. A little self-observation can show us rather quickly that if we are identified with the personality, intellect, and emotions, we are not a stable entity. Observation of our desires and fears as they manifest and control our actions will show us that we also do not have a stable direction. We hear from those who have gone before that there is another shore, where the misery of instability and want are replaced by Oneness, lacking in confusion and desire. Now, if we like the sound of this heaven, we are apt to use the only well-trained tool we have to find it: our imagination, the inner movie. We have been taught to live in imagination, and to use it as the gauge for how things are, and how they should be. Thus, we have been cut off from our ability to perceive directly, and are left with only concepts, ghosts and echoes.

If our direction is controlled by our imagination, and our imagination by desire and fear, we have no direction. We are wandering in our sleep, led by pleasure, pain, and illusions of happiness, none of which last, but constantly change as we drift along the primrose path of maya. We hear from advaita that there is no person, no doer, and that nothing needs to be done, for all is One. If we are prone to laziness and ease, we may think all we need do to attain this state of oneness is to blindly follow a teacher and their words, and don't worry, be happy. If we are afraid, we may seek security in these words and safety in the ashram. If we are ambitious, we may even claim realization and become a teacher ourselves.

As the years roll by, most of us find that following our desires and fears has simply made us pay. We have paid with our time and money, not only to keep our own imagination pacified, but also to keep our so-called 'teacher's' private dream-world well funded. If we are lucky, sooner or later the bubble bursts, and we are left with only a bad taste in our mouth, an empty checkbook, and a bruised ego. The old saying,

'if it's sounds to good to be true, it probably is', takes on new meaning. Our direction was only towards desire and away from fear. It was not towards truth, at least not yet. We may find that our true aim, what we really wanted, was not truth or oneness after all, and thus we paradoxically move closer to the goal, for now we know ourselves a little better.

Here's also where honesty comes in. If we continue to observe our own mind all the while we seek and meditate, we can see that despite whatever calming thoughts of oneness we hold in our head, the mind does not really change. The catchy slogans and charming teachers do not stand up to the tests of day-to-day life, and we find we remain frustrated and unhappy. We may look back fondly on the time when we did not have to pretend to ourselves that we had 'no-mind', and did not have to put one thought up against another to keep our new spiritual ego afloat. It's hard, miserable work, being perfect. Our talents, friendships, and capabilities are ignored while we cater to an ego-god that cannot be satiated. Is this really what nirvana is all about?

The path to self-knowledge is not one of ease and belief, a quick concept-jump into karma-free bliss, but one of hard work in facing oneself. The path of self-enquiry eventually leads to the state of non-action, but only after all ties to action are broken. Action and awareness do not conflict with one another; they do not need to be at war. Our thoughts are not us, we may watch them undisturbed. If we think becoming is simply a process of getting the right thought/concept to identify with, we are fair game for anything that comes along. Honest observing of the mind gives us a new direction, one of going within, and eventually leads to That which is beyond mind. Identifying with thoughts, whether spiritual or otherwise, leads us farther outward into the mind's labyrinth, where one thing is against another, and the game is lost no matter how strong the belief or loud the noise. Instead of agreeing or disagreeing with yourself, observe yourself.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " Wisdom is not acquired save as the result of investigation.
- " The increase of desires leads to activity, and from the increase of activity there is more desire. Thus a man prospers in every way, and samsara never comes to an end. To break the bonds of samsara, the ascetic should burn away both of these (desire and activity), since thinking about these and external activity lead to the increase of desires. The increase of these two is the cause of one's samsara, and the means to the destruction of these three is to see everything as simply God everywhere, always and in all circumstances. By the increase of desire for becoming the Truth, these three come to an end.
- " I can tell you the contents of a half million verses on spirituality in half a verse: God is real, the world is unreal, the individual soul is none other than God! " - Sankara
- " I see what you too could see, here and now, but for the wrong focus of your attention. You give no attention to your self. Your mind is all with things, people and ideas, never with your self. Bring your self into focus, become aware of your own existence. See how you function, watch the motives and results of your actions. Study the prison you have built around yourself, by inadvertence." - Nisargadatta

- " Doubt is not a pleasant condition but certainty is an absurd one." - Voltaire
- " Friendship like philosophy or art does not have a survival value. Rather it is one of those things which gives value to survival. " - C. S. Lewis

Comic Philosophy

" Hell is other people " - Jean-Paul Sartre.

" Hell is also yourself "- R. Crumb

04-05

Tricks and Traps 2

This month's Missal takes a tour of Tricks and Traps, the many ways we become trapped or identified with the finite, and the tricks we can use to break the spell. We'll delve into the mind's assumptions and focus on three main traps or mis-identifications: believing we are the body, the mind, and/or the spirit. As we go through these traps we'll also take a look at ways and means, practical tricks, we can use to break their hold, and thus bring in the possibility of discovering who we really are.

Most of us will not admit we still believe we are a body, this is just too spiritually naive, and dangerous. Bodies rot and die, so why would we cling to that? Still, we may exhibit this belief in our actions and thinking, if we are honest and take a good look. An easy way to see this is the effect the body and its chemical changes has on us. If we are tired and frazzled, our thinking becomes negative and fearful. Once rested and refreshed, we become optimistic and full of hope. Though we may tell ourselves we are not a body, hormones and their effects might suggest otherwise. One way to start the process of realizing that there are no things, not even our own body, and thus get behind our body-based thinking, is to take a look, or see, what's really there. For starters, try the following trick by Mike Conner's, from his Effortful Meditation Exercise:

"The mind and senses discriminate the appearance of objects of experience from each other using patterns of sensory conditions: size, color, sound, feel, smell, weight, boundaries, warmth, etc. And we assume that the characteristics of each object are the object and that our senses are merely receiving external data about it. That these objects do not exist except to the mind of the experiencer is not and cannot be discovered by using the senses which tell us that the objects do exist.

An example is the "wave" created at the stadium by people standing and sitting in turn. We see a wave, moving, but this wave only exists to our sense of sight; its only substance is people, standing and sitting. The wave is merely an appearance.

The people too are only the appearance caused by the body's cells, and their version of "standing and sitting."

The cells also are only the appearance caused by molecules "standing and sitting."

...the molecules by atoms,

...the atoms by subatomic particles,

...the subatomic "particles" are not really particles at all!

...they are waves in what appears to be nothing, to the mind,

...this apparent nothing is in fact the only real substance! "

Another take on this in-seeing that we do not exist, is in Douglas Harding's mirror experiment:

"Where you hold your (real or imaginary) mirror reveals your identity at that range, at that level. If you could see a reflection of yourself at very close range you would see cells, molecules, atoms and so on, down to practically nothing. In fact, this is the level of ourselves that scientists reflect back to us using their sophisticated modern instruments. But mirrors, cameras, electron microscopes, other people - all fail to tell us what we are right at the centre of ourselves. No-one can take that last step into the centre of each one of us and tell us what and who we are here - except ourselves, for we are already here! Instead of waiting for others to tell us who we are at centre (they

will never be in a position to say!) we can simply look for ourselves. What do you see right now where others see your face, whether that face be human, planetary, galactic, cellular, atomic...? Point to this place and look. Doesn't this 'inseeing' reveal no appearance here at centre? But isn't this 'no-appearance' nevertheless aware, and full of all you see - full of every level of this wonderful living universe!"

Now that we see there's nothing there where we believed we had a body, let's see that's there's nobody home either, by taking a look at an even subtler trap, that of believing we are a mind. We can easily see that we are not the body, but what reacts to the body and its chemicals? Are we that? We think we think, and that we are our thoughts and the thinker of these thoughts. This being a much cleverer trap, it is that much easier to dispel. Simply sit still once again, and allow your thoughts to come and go as they please, but watch for them closely. What happens? Nothing, no concepts or images, only you as seeing. As soon as your attention lapses, the thoughts or images return, and with them the idea that you must be thinking them. Try this exercise by the French Zen teacher, Hubert Benoit:

" Alone, in a quiet place, muscularly relaxed (lying down or comfortably seated), I watch the emergence within myself of mental images, permitting my imagination to produce whatever it likes. It is as though I were saying to my image-making mind, 'Do what you please; but I am going to watch you doing it.'
"As long as one maintains this attitude -- or, more exactly, this relaxation of any kind of attitude -- the imagination produces nothing and its screen remains blank, free of all images. I am then in a state of pure voluntary attention, without any image to capture it. I am not paying attention to anything in particular; I am paying attention to anything which might turn up, but which in fact does not turn up. As soon as there is a weakening of my voluntary effort of pure attention, thoughts (images) make their appearance. I do not notice the fact immediately, for my attention is momentarily asleep; but after a certain time I perceive what has happened. I discover that I have started to think of this and that. The moment I make this discovery, I say to my imagination, 'So you want to talk to me about that. Go ahead; I'm listening.' Immediately everything stops again, and I become conscious of the stoppage."

We can see from this that we are not our thoughts or the thinker, but then why don't we disappear when we're not thinking or identified with images? When we are watching thoughts, or just listening, what are we?

The most subtle trap of all, especially if we are a spiritual aspirant, is that we are a spirit in a body/mind. If we declare we are a spirit trapped in a body, we could be just rationalizing our way out of the work of actually discovering who we really are; we're copping out. We cannot afford to believe in something simply because it flatters us or gives us an easy escape. This trap needs dispelling just as the others. Taking ourselves too seriously as seekers of truth, we sometimes forget to check on our own thinking, and let assuming and believing take the place of seeing and discerning.

"Only a fool proclaims he is a spirit and a body. What we are is a body attempting to discover if it has a spirit." - Shawn Nevins.

Let's take a look at another experiment of Douglas Harding's, the master of practical trickery, and see if we find a spirit, a mind, and/or a body, or what we really are:

Explore what it is to be First Person singular, present tense, with eyes closed.

Consider the following:
“Going by your own, present experience, not by memory, hearsay or imagination, how big are you? What shape are you? Could you be almost any size or shape?
Do you have boundaries? Is there a place where you stop and the world begins? Or is there nothing dividing you from the world?
You can probably hear a variety of sounds, from distant ones to close ones. Do you hear any sound right where you are? Don't sounds come and go in Silence where you are?
At centre are you a collection of thoughts and feelings - a mind? What and where is this mind? Do thoughts and feelings appear out of it or out of nothing? Is your mind centralised, boxed in, separate from the world, or at large, unboxed, united with the world?
Sensations of warmth, discomfort, pleasure, breathing and so on are apparent. Do these make you into 'something' at centre, solid and limited? Or do these sensations come and go in the transparency of awareness, like thoughts, feelings and sounds?
How big is the pain of a headache? One-way attention pays attention to the ache, thinking of it inside the limits of a head. Two-way attention is aware of the space in which the ache - and the idea of a head - occur. Just as it is face there to no-face here, so it is pain there to no pain here."
Underlying and containing all the different things you identify with is unoccupied, timeless, pure awareness. Though it is not a thing, yet it is absolutely real, and always present. It is who you really are."

The trap of identification may not be the only way we fool ourselves. We may be subject to desires and fears declaring to be 'us', thus hiding as the 'I', too close to see or challenge. These desires and fears would be threatened if we got a good luck at them, so the trap is defended. We might not want to break the spell of our thinking, or the belief we are an impervious undefined spirit hiding safe somewhere from karma, for we then might have to look at our true beliefs and thoughts! Life itself may be a trap, and if we are to break free of the ego and its identifications, eventually our tricks may have to be as big and clever as death itself. We trick ourselves into unbecoming and thus Become what we have always been.

If you want to try a big trick, and find out what your values and beliefs really are, try making a commitment to finding the Truth. Devote your energy to this, and this only, leaving your daily life aside. Spend time in a monastery, retreat center, or alone in the woods for six days to six weeks, and honestly observe yourself in the quiet atmosphere, free from your normal habit pattern. Attempt to ignore your desires, habits and fears, needs and wants. You may find you are not the spiritual person you believed, and thus having faced yourself and seen your own mind's tricks and traps, come to know where the problem really lies.

"People are able to continue living or tolerate life by putting serious thoughts as far back as possible. Something inside the individual does not wish to examine its potential for oblivion. The human mind does not want to see anything negative about itself." - Richard Rose

Tricks and Traps

Trap: taking oneself too seriously. Too often in spiritual work, we fall for the trap of the spiritual ego and begin to believe in our own infallibility. We treat others as inferior beings, and can't understand why we are still subject to cause and effect. Being serious seekers on the righteous path of truth, why won't everything and everybody just shape up or leave us alone, do what we want or get out of our way? To escape this self-indulgent trap we can use the following
Trick: taking the Work personally. If we have fallen into the trap of thinking that spiritual work is about correcting the world and its inhabitants so as to bring them around to our superior way of thinking, we have forgotten an important thing; it is our very idea of ourselves that must change, not the world. We can start looking at the log in our eye and not the mote in our fellow's. Self-observation can give us a healthy dose of humility, helping us to see ourselves and others in a clearer light. Now that we've avoided trying to make the world fit our ego, we're in danger of falling for the
Trap: taking the Work too personally. Here, we may think that self-observation means judging ourselves rather than others, and now try to make our ego fit the world. To escape this self-indulgent trap we can use the following
Trick: learning what self-observation really is. We listen instead of assume and project, we discern instead of judge. We strive to see that the world of our imagination is not always an exact match for the world of perception, and if we're lucky, the next time we look in the mirror we'll have a good laugh, having come to see a bit clearer one more of the many ways we fool ourselves.

" One thing you must be able to do in the midst of any experience is laugh. And experience should show you that it isn't real, that it's a movie. Life doesn't take you seriously, so why take it seriously." - Richard Rose

Commentary

The Trap of Compensation

"Every child is seduced into taking part in our game of life. He loses direct-mind ability when he identifies with and participates in this dimension, and tries to manipulate it for his own petulant form of counter-seduction." - Richard Rose

Many are the traps of the mind, and many are the tricks it plays on us. Being dual in nature, we are kept running from one experience or mood to another, all the while thinking that the solution is just up ahead, that if we could just get the mix right, we could finally keep all aspects of our lives under control, and finally secure our peace and happiness. But mind, being a two-faced dimension, will never be at peace, at least not for long. One of the basic traps of this thing called mind is that of compensation. We compensate, or balance, one aspect of our lives with another, in the vain hope the house of cards will not collapse and leave us face to face with the truth about ourselves.

The trap of compensation, like most things, is most easily seen in our fellows and hardest seen in ourselves. It's easy to see how others struggle to keep their desires and fears in check, their daily battle to balance the spending with the earning, the work with rest. Safe in our own imagination, we may think they are a bit foolish when they

blunder and stumble, lacking the perfection our own ego ascribes to itself. We are too busy buying the rationalizations and excuses we keep at the ready for why we would actualize this perfection, if only life had given us better cards. This feeling of superiority, a form of pride, is simply compensation operating in ourselves. We cannot accept that we are in the same boat as our hapless neighbor, or that his excuses are as valid as ours. Thus, we have to compensate for the tragedy we see before us by telling ourselves how we are above it, superior in either action or rationale.

The base compensation we are all tied to is the game of pride and fear. We have a fear, that of death, which we must keep unconscious. If it were to ride too close to the surface, we would be paralyzed, and could not go about our daily business in the illusion of society. This fear of death is a built-in program designed to keep us from self-destruction in one sense, but in another, it serves as a hindrance to self-discovery. We cannot question it, for that would mean facing the unknown, or at least admitting there is such a thing, waiting behind us, terrible, death to the ego's belief in itself. In order to keep moving and participate in the game of life this fear must be kept at bay, or compensated for. This is accomplished by the mechanism of pride. We believe we are special, whether in a positive or negative sense, it makes no difference. This superior attitude gets us out of bed every day and out into the fray, believing we are something that matters. We go out to do the 'right thing' and thus keep the fear safely under the mat.

The great psychologist, G. I. Gurdjieff, taught that we have mechanisms in the mind called 'buffers'. Their function is to keep the different parts of us from ever meeting, thus assuring that we never get the kind of view of ourselves that we get of our neighbor. This helps us function by keeping us in the dark about what we're really like. We can persuade ourselves that we are good, right, doing our best, etc., while never having to let the facts rock the boat. Gurdjieff said that if a man's buffers were removed, he would go mad. He could not stand to see his true nature, with its contradictions and compensations. Pride serves the purpose of a buffer by not letting us get a clear look at our fear. We can cruise through life without hesitation or question, believing in what we have been taught, doing our best, and never doubting our self-image as the long suffering saint, martyr and good guy, the victim and helpless innocent. One thing pride or fear will never allow us, is to truly doubt. The great questions of our own existence and being are kept shut out.

To find the truth about ourselves, and life and death, we must face our pride and find our fear. This fear is close to the root of our problem, which is that of misidentification. We have been tricked into thinking we are an object, that we exist; a person who lives and dies. As an object, we are thus in a world of objects, and must defend ourselves. We cannot admit death, the great taboo, for that would leave us squarely in the unknown, the thing we fear the most. But until we face this fear, we will never be rid of it, and never be free of the mind-numbing pride that compensates it.

The grand trick, the lie beneath the fear, is that we are a thing. That we are separate, a body/mind amongst hostile other bodies, vying for a limited pile of goodies and security. As soon as we bought into this illusion, we became liable for the entire package of fear and pride, life and death. We then can no longer face this trade-off, that we have sold our infinite non-existent existence, so to speak, for an ego/body in a world of strife. We must keep looking away, taking pride in our plans and excuses, for to remember the truth is too terrible.

Misidentification causes fear, which causes pride, which leads us ever farther from our Home. We compensate for our lost inheritance by taking pride in our new-found

'life', holding the fear of the truth as far back as possible until the house of cards collapses, and if we are lucky, we get a glimpse of the game.

How can we find our way out? How can we return to Truth, without relying on accident or belief? Gurdjieff called the first step on the road home, self-remembering. To remember your Self. We start by observing ourselves, by questioning, to see what tricks and compensations we use to avoid looking at the facts of our situation. We begin to see that maybe we are not what we have been telling ourselves. We see that our neighbors having a rough time of it is not a cause for celebration, but an opportunity to see the same in ourselves. We can face ourselves and laugh, knowing that though we may not yet have the ultimate answer, we can begin looking. We see that the game is mostly fixed, so why be afraid? Taking ourselves too seriously hasn't worked in the past; it only fostered our pride and thus our self-ignorance. We take a step within, seeing ourselves a bit more as we really are, and find it helps. We hear from others who have gone beyond fear and pride that everything is ok, and take heart. We try the tricks they teach us, and perhaps once again glimpse our infinite nature. We lose ourselves, and gain the universe.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " Use the "Who am I?". Focus the attention on sensation and feeling, not on thoughts. Do not focus the attention on emotions per se, but on the sensation of having the feeling – both the sensation of having the feeling and the source of the feeling. Thoughts generated by this attempt are the reaction to this "direct looking," and the "looking away" is experienced as a rush of ensuing thoughts." - Bob Cergol
- " Try a little experiment. Close your eyes and say to yourself: 'I wonder what my next thought is going to be.' Then become very alert and wait for the next thought. Be like a cat watching a mouse hole. What thought is going to come out of the mouse hole?" - Ekhart Tolle
- " Man is not an individual as much as he is a changing mass. He is on the other hand an unchanging unit of life, or absolute light that the changing or relative man is unaware of." - Richard Rose
- " If you are willing to realize that you cannot create your own virtues or changes; if you are willing to feel the pain of emptiness, helplessness, and inadequacy; if you are willing to wait, knowing that of yourself you can do nothing - then you will be facing Reality correctly. The reply to that stress of need is fulfillment." - Roy Masters
- " ...the foundation of all mental illness is the avoidance of legitimate suffering." - Carl Jung

Comic Philosophy

Americans want the version of religion that allows them to do whatever the hell they want and have God love them, forgive them, and condemn the neighbors to eternal hellfire when THEY do something wrong so that heaven isn't populated by anybody the "good people" don't like.

The mantra for American religion is "do what I say, not what I do." Be it Jerry Falwell or Tom Delay or the legion of child-molesting priests, we're so far past the hypocritical threshold that it's sometimes hard to imagine that there are people in the world for whom religion isn't simply a justification for trying to make the lives of others miserable. - Mr. Cranky

A little nonsense now and then is cherished by the wisest men. - Roald Dahl

5/15/05

Enneagram

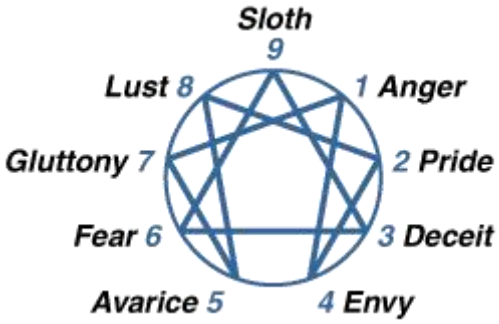
This month's Missal explores the possibility of self-discovery via the enneagram. Coming into popularity in the second half of the twentieth century, this ancient symbol has many meanings ascribed to it, as well as varied tales of its origins. From the Sufi's and mystical Judaism, to Plato and Plotinus, there is an enneagram origin theory to suit every system of spiritual or psychological work.
In modern times the enneagram, or 9 pointed symbol that currently has that name, was introduced by George Gurdjieff around 1915-20. He used the symbol as a way to show the process of transformation in man from personality back to essence or original being. Various dances and movements were used in conjunction with the symbol to help students in the journey to essence by illustrating the laws of three and seven. He did not use it as a means of mapping the human psyche and its character fixations.

"Gurdjieff's presentation of the enneagram did not apply directly to personality or character types, ...What instead was characteristic of Gurdjieff's presentation of the enneagram was that he described it as a symbol relating the law of the triad (law of three) to the law of the octave (law of seven). Thereby he brought the enneagram into relation with the form of the musical scale." - David Eyes

The so-called "Traditional Enneagram" only goes back to the late 1960's and early 70's when Oscar Ichazo first began teaching it in various forms, calling it the enneagon. Ichazo came upon the scene in Arica, Chile, claiming to have been instructed in a 'school' of apparent Gurdjieffian origins. He soon after started The Arica School and taught Americans John Lilly and Claudio Naranjo among others, the later of whom went on to formulate his own version of enneagram teaching.

Ichazo's four main versions of the enneagram are called the Enneagon of the Passions, of the Virtues, of the Fixations, and of the Holy Ideas. The Enneagons of the Virtues and Holy Ideas are the original Divine Forms of man, which become distorted, leaving the enneagons of the passions and ego-fixations. The formulation of the ego, and the resulting loss of contact with the original Holy Ideas and Virtues, leads the individual to degrade into the 'passions' through what we now call the Seven Deadly Sins: anger, pride, envy, avarice, gluttony, lust, and sloth. Ichazo added fear and deceit to round out the list to nine. The enneagon being a nine pointed symbol, it is not really known how or when the original nine sins became seven.

"An essential individual will be in contact with these [Virtues] constantly, simply by living in his body. But the subjective individual, the ego, loses touch with these Virtues. Then the personality tries to compensate by developing passions."
- Oscar Ichazo



In the 1980's, the enneagram as a means of character typing took off, thanks in large part to the efforts of Dr. Naranjo and Helen Palmer. Palmer, called by some "the mother of the personality enneagram", began teaching what has been called the 'oral' or 'traditional' approach. This is seen by some, including Ichazo, to be only a belief system manufactured by Palmer and others, with no real relation to any original system.

"Concretely speaking the enneagram authors start from the point of a 'belief,' which they make into a 'dogma,' because they accept it irrationally and in full without any analysis or criticism as if it would be a divine truth, unquestionable and final. They appoint an 'old Sufi' theory or whatever as their basis to elaborate scientific propositions. The work of the enneagram authors is plainly unscientific and without rational foundation, because it is based on dogmatic formulations." - Oscar Ichazo
Ichazo

Still, the books sold and the classes were filled, and by the late 1980's the enneagram was embraced by everyone from New Agers to Jesuits as a valid system for everything from personality work to match making. Today, there are hundreds of different sites and books harping a particular version, many claiming ancient origins and even success in the business world. The use of the enneagram as a means of transformation to a state beyond the mind has been largely forgotten except for a few Gurdjieffian students, notably J. G. Bennet and Anthony Blake.

One useful aspect, seen in the work of Don Richard Riso and Russ Hudson on their site, The Enneagram Institute, is that of the healthy or degrading aspects of one's particular type. While every type has distinct features, one can come under the influence of the negative as well as the positive aspects. Only from the healthy aspect have we a chance at finding essence, through discovering our chief feature or compensation, the practical root of our identification with the ego. While in the negative aspects, we are too engrossed in personality survival, obsessive compensations, and ego-games to receive true intuitive insights from essence, much less remember and act on them.

"The personality is necessary in the course of our development as human beings, but is not the part of us that can bring fulfillment, wisdom, peace, love, strength, or any of the other qualities that comprise what Gurdjieff called "a person without quotation marks." It is in distinguishing the real role and nature of the ego-personality from our Essential nature that the Enneagram can be most helpful."
- Riso and Hudson*, The Enneagram Institute*

While many use the enneagram primarily as a way to 'type' themselves and others, and view it solely as a means for self-improvement, it's spiritual value lies in the map of how we have lost touch with our essence and become engrossed in the resulting compensations. If we feel an inner lack, and look to personality and typology as a means to fill this void, we may be trapped for a lifetime in illusion. Many cruise the enneagam types, dreaming of the perfect personality in which they hope to find stability and strength, never guessing that, as Gurdjieff pointed out, only through a return to essence are we safe from the instability of personality and the changing illusion we call the world . While there is little doubt that self-improvement through enneagram typing has a practical usefulness for the individual and society, for those interested in that which lies beyond the mind, it may prove to be yet another distraction.

Tricks and Traps

This month's Tricks and Traps uses an article by Richard Rose which graphically illustrates the tricks and traps used by our desires and obsessions.

NOTICE
To Those Who Would Steal, Subvert and Enslave : Your identity is known, and your masks and aliases are known,

LUST
Alias: Love, “My need” **Alias:** Celebration of successful period of celibacy
Alias: Poor man's pleasure **Alias:** The other side of the coin

LAZINESS
Alias: “Wise relinquishment of being a doer” **Alias:** “The process of crouching and waiting for the big kill” **Alias:** Recuperation from pitiful excesses and the trauma therefrom

PRIDE
Alias: Discernment that I am meant for better work **Alias:** Wisdom of rationalizing everything, including debasement, as having spiritual stature **Alias**: Ability to avoid work by superior mental ability to pick every work-system to pieces or shoot it full of holes

WEAKNESS
Alias: Strength **Alias:** Wit **Alias:** Flexibility **Alias:** Manifest equanimity **Alias:** Power to squelch **Alias:** Art of compensation **Alias:** Virtue of relinquishment
Alias: Discernment (of statured men like Watts and Castenada who give us an easy way)

PROCRASTINATION
Alias: Logic Alias: Gradualism **Alias**: "One thing at a time" (preferably something else)
Alias: Waiting for God's will or a sign from Heaven **Alias:** Strengthening all my I's (by simultaneously doing kung fu, saying prayers, and in indulging in mental games of chess, of in taking Roses's advice but applying the advised course of action at a negative time.) **Alias:** Going to school **Alias:** Not going to school

TO THE ABOVE CHARACTERS:
Let it be known that force and non-force will be used against them, that they shall be neutralized by RECOGNITION and NON-RECOGNITION. Know that it is important to recognize a negative quality, but it is likewise negative to recognize them as being important.
Let it be known that to overcome these criminals of our fifty states of mind that incessant action shall be used forthwith, but that he who acts, shall not be an ACTOR of action-processes.
Let it be known that our strategy will be to use the powers of these criminals against themselves. We shall procrastinate lust, and employ procrastination to the urges of voices, and we shall use pride to temporarily fuel the fires of determination, by rejoicing in our successes against the wasters. - Richard Rose

Commentary

That Which Is Not

When we look at the enneagram, we are faced with a mental system of organization that thrives on complexity. As we look at the mass of information pertaining, we hope, to our particular personality, we may take a first step towards self-observation. If we honestly look at what we do and think through the course of our days, we can see a pattern, perhaps peculiar to ourselves, and see a reflection of this pattern in a type listed on the enneagram. This is all well and good, if we keep our wits about us and are not looking for another distraction, complex and dazzling, to keep us away from ourselves. The road home is one of simplification, not further webs, traps, and mazes, made of mind and myth, leading us ever farther into that which is not. By studying ourselves, with the help of a map such as the enneagram, we can become more objective, and thus move closer to the universality of mankind and away from the hyperactive survival mode of the individual 'self'. Again, this would be a good first step, but sooner or later we must move deeper within.

The danger here is if we take the map for the land. Any map, whether the enneagram or any other system, is only a way of systematizing what we see in ourselves. It is a tool, which we use to separate and understand what we see, hopefully

helping us to open more and more of our unconscious complexity to the light of observation and acceptance. If the system is used to formulate or cater to a dogma or belief, we have ceased to move within, and are once again tricked by the mind into sleep. Sooner or later, we must leave off our mounting cleverness and return to the innocent seeing of one who has no agenda, no system to uphold or believe, but nevertheless cannot cease to look.

The true test of a system, and of our own honest effort, is in its ability to move us to the point where it becomes useless. We observe ourselves, and through this observation, a separation takes place. We come to a place farther within, beyond mind and thought, thereby separating from that which is not us, systems included. We find we are not what we see, but are That which sees. A system that does not promise this eventual separation is not one that leads beyond mind. It will only serve to bring more complexity and suffering to the unlucky one who is bedazzled by its cleverness. Systems and maps are eventually useless once we have journeyed within to the edges of thought and mind. From thereon in, we must move without the help of that which is not, until we become only That which Is, and That, my friends, is not a system.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " We have to distinguish between a man as he is in essence, and as he is in ego or personality. In essence, every person is perfect, fearless, and in a loving unity with the entire cosmos; there is no conflict within the person between head, heart, and stomach or between the person and others. Then something happens: the ego begins to develop, karma accumulates, there is a transition from objectivity to subjectivity; man falls from essence into personality." - Oscar Ichazo
- ". . . it is a system of Spirit-creation. This is effected by three grand materials acting thus one upon the other for a series of years. These three materials are the Intelligence, the Human Heart (as distinguished from intelligence or mind) and the World or elemental space suited for the proper action of Mind and Heart on each other for the purpose of forming the Soul or Intelligence destined to possess the sense of Identity. I can scarcely express what I but dimly perceive - and yet I think I perceive it." - Keats
- " The real world is beyond our thoughts and ideas; we see it through the net of our desires, divided into pleasure and pain, right and wrong, inner and outer. To see the universe as it is, you must step beyond the net. It is not hard to do so, for the net is full of holes." - Sri Nisargadatta
- " The only way someone can be of help to you is in challenging your ideas. If you're ready to listen and if you're ready to be challenged, there's one thing that you can do, but no one can help you. What is this most important thing of all? It's called self-observation. " - Anthony deMello
- " There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so." - Shakespeare, Hamlet
- " All my friends tell me I actually exist, and by an act of faith I've come to believe them." - Christopher Fry

Comic Philosophy

"Many feel they are called to the priesthood, but what they really hear is an inner voice saying, 'It's indoor work with no heavy lifting, do you want to be a ploughman like your father?'"- Terry Pratchett

"When we remember that we are all mad, the mysteries disappear and life stands explained."- Mark Twain

6/21/05

Richard Rose
(1917 - 2005)

"Beware when the great God lets loose a thinker on this planet."
- Ralph Waldo Emerson

This month's Missal pays homage to Richard Rose, one of the most profound and unusual spiritual teachers this country has ever produced. It was my great fortune to have known Mr. Rose personally and as a teacher. A native son from the hills of West Virginia, Mr. Rose underwent a cataclysmic spiritual experience at the age of thirty that left him with an intimate understanding of the secrets of life and death. He is often referred to as a "Zen Master" by the people who knew him because of the depth of his wisdom and the spiritual system he conveyed to his students. But he did not expound traditional Zen, or any other traditional teachings. What he taught is unique because it sprang from his direct personal experience of the Truth.

Richard Rose lived, spoke, and wrote without the pretense or arrogance so often found in spiritual and philosophic work. He never charged any money for his teaching, and never closed his door to any sincere seeker, or to anyone who was troubled and wanted to discover an avenue to peace and mental clarity.

Since his first public lecture in Pittsburgh in 1973, Mr. Rose continually maintained a lifestyle unaffected by opportunities for wealth, fortune, and fame. He was a simple, humble man, who had the determination, inspiration, and dedication it takes to discover, possibly by accident, the total answer to the riddle of life.

"The purpose is to find the Truth--
meaning self-definition, and the true relation of man to his fellow man, and a true understanding of our life's events."

"My purpose is to outline a system which will prove itself as it goes along, and which will reward us at any point along the line by finding for us a more disciplined and skillful mind, and a mind that is more aware of itself."

I first made contact with Mr. Rose through a newspaper article which contained his photograph. At first glance, something in me knew this man was on the level. A handwritten response to my initial letter confirmed this. I read his books, and knew he had something to offer, but this was not on the level I found in meeting him face to face. I often felt that sitting next to him was akin to being close to a live nuclear weapon, one never knew if and when it would go off. His inner power confirmed my initial reading of him through his writing and photograph; I knew he had found, or become, the Truth. I realized that if he had found it, and I could sense it, then it was possible for anyone with enough drive and intuition to find It also, including myself. This was his greatest gift, to be a living example of Man's potential.

He also had an enormous capacity for friendship and compassion. He would tell stories for hours, bringing his audience to tears with laughter, and leaving them in wonder at the possibilities of our awareness. I never doubted him, and trusted him implicitly, though my ego was often left battered and quaking in its boots. Though the

time I spent with him was relatively short, I never lost site of what I had picked up from his presence.

Richard Rose reached enlightenment at the age of 30 in 1947, after years of unrelenting search. He had promised that if he ever found anything, he would pass it on to future generations of fellow seekers, and he lived true to his word. He taught that the direct path to Truth is through retreating from untruth, rather than postulating a heaven, and then going about projecting this personal concept to others in the hope it would thus come true.

He dedicated his life toward helping those who were seeking self-definition and recommended an approach that is "subjective, subtractive, immanent and designed for immediately changing and becoming." He called this method The Albigen System, a threefold approach for becoming the Truth:

- A way of living your life aimed at understanding that life.
- A life of brotherhood--helping and being helped by others with a common goal.
- A system not of learning but of becoming the Truth.

This system aims at self-definition and considers all knowledge incomplete until the knower or experiencer is known or identified. It does not attempt to prove itself by the vanity of logic but is inductive and answers to common sense and intuition. It revolves around confrontation, both in friendly questioning that challenges each others' thinking to the point of retreating from error and in self-confrontational meditation. The Albigen System is a method for stripping away the glossy veneer of life in the pursuit of the greater Reality that lies beneath its surface. It is a system of spiritual seeking for those who are sincerely interested in becoming the Truth.

"You learn sooner or later that you are not running the show and that if you relax, the show runs better. Things will happen if you just relax; many things are under control in many respects. You quit and things happen, you let the door open, you stop the obstruction, you eliminate the ego. The ego is one of the biggest obstructions to the achievement of anything."

The TAT Foundation formed as a result of the life of Richard Rose. It was his dream to form an organization grounded in what he found so little of in his years of searching - sincerity. TAT was founded on the belief that your investigation of life's mysteries is expedited by working with others who are exploring, perhaps down a different road, so that you may share your discoveries, exchange ideas, and "compare notes" in order to come to a better understanding of yourself and others. TAT is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization established in 1973 to provide a forum for philosophical and spiritual inquiry. Information on the life and teaching of Richard Rose can be found by visiting the TAT Foundations web site at www.tatfoundation.org

" Truth is a path because it is never fully realized, and because many aspects of the search for Truth remain relative. Man is a being whose consciousness depends upon fickle senses and a mind largely capable of witnessing in a relative manner, and largely incapable of direct knowledge."

Tricks and Traps

Trap: Judging our own projections. Half of our thought-pattern is unconscious, being projected by us before we are even aware of it. This projection is taken for granted as real, as what we usually call the 'world', and then reacted to in a semi-conscious fashion. We are constantly tweaking our thoughts and feelings in reaction to our own unconscious creations, believing we are dealing with something we call 'reality'. It's a game we'd best become aware of, this living one step behind ourselves.
Trick: Learning how to meditate, or truly observe. In reviewing our actions in hopes of practicing self-observation, we often look at memories of our body and its recent escapades. But this body is as much a mental fabrication as our judgment of it. To find worthwhile material for meditation, it's best to look instead at what thoughts and feelings motivated the body. These patterns of thought are clues as to how we build our personal universe, and then endow it with realness as well as universality.

"We live in a cloud of illusions and rarely realize that we are spinning this web of fiction for all the hours and days of our lives, unless we are fortunate or unfortunate enough to die slowly. Perhaps slow death may be the only moments of reality for the total life of many earthlings. Because the dying person is forced to face the fact that he is about to become zero."

- Richard Rose

Commentary

"Every last one of us thinks we are right" - Richard Rose

The Dividing Mind

Our mind has an amazing ability to split itself. The effect of this on the seeker of self-knowledge is to lead him about in endless circles of egos, never getting a true look at himself. "The world is divided into people who think they are right" also applies to the world inside our heads. The ego has to maintain this position of being right, or the center of the universe, in order to keep its position as the unquestioned 'I'. It accomplishes this by splitting into different roles. This is the Ego1-Ego 2 game, in which the main ego, or Ego 1, creates a scapegoat, Ego 2, on which to place all negative aspects about itself. It cannot be wrong and maintain its absolute rule, so when the facts speak otherwise, Ego 2 becomes the culprit. The variations of this are legion. Thus, a ceaseless internal conflict is perpetuated and any attempt to go within is effectively blocked. And we wonder why the unexamined life is misery.

This process is started long before memory, when the parents use this same escape mechanism on their children. The parent keeps its attention away from its own negative aspects by using the child as Ego 2. The child is then taught the trick, growing up using this mind-splitting to remain 'right' regardless of the facts of its own behavior or thoughts. The voice of the parent will remain in them, goading them to create their own endless versions of Ego 2 as facets of their personality, to be planted eventually in children of their own.

This process can be seen most clearly in extreme cases where either trauma or frustration reached such a level as to cause the mind to escape by creating another

'person' complete with its own world. In cases of trauma so intense as to be completely unacceptable, the mind may create a new, safe personality and forget the former one which was subject to the traumatic event. All conscious connection with the traumatic event is thus lost. In cases of frustration or extreme boredom, the mind may compensate by creating a grandiose paradigm in which to reside, where it lives in inner fantasy to escape the 'average' existence of the fact state. The ego cannot tolerate 'average'. "Always remember your unique, just like everyone else." In either case, the mind has succeeded in creating a refuge where it can remain 'right'. This is all simply a mechanism of nature to insure that the individuals of the species do not self-terminate prematurely. The sad part is our ignorance of it all, and our continuing identification with the mind's creations. We are not very good at observing ourselves, but most excellent at creating new 'selves' and their worlds.

If we come to the point where no fantasy will do the trick, however grandiose or safe, and where we begin to see we are not 'right' or 'wrong' but simply ignorant, we may begin to yearn for something more than the ego can provide. The Inner Self is continually trying to draw our attention to how we fool ourselves, and relentlessly showing us how to get back in touch with the facts. This is an inner process to which we have a right and need, and with which we can reconnect. It lies beyond the ego-centric position, and comes about when we start to observe ourselves rather than create or visualize 'selves' we then identify with, in either a positive or negative manner. The adage "know thyself" now has new meaning. It does not say "if you don't like what's happening, but wish to stay identified with the manifest, create a new 'you' ". Learning to observe, or listen, takes courage and patience but leads to an amazing situation. You become everything when you are not anything. There are many techniques that can help us learn to listen. In the quiet of a mind at peace, the tools of dream interpretation, intense self-analysis, group confrontation, time alone in contemplation, and even life itself can teach the earnest seeker what he is not, and how to re-establish contact with the Inner Self. Listen with attentiveness; the Inner Self may be heard above and beyond the mind-splitting clamor and dis-ease of the ego and its creations.

Bob Fergeson

Lead me from dreaming to waking.
Lead me from opacity to clarity.
Lead me from the complicated to the simple.
Lead me from the obscure to the obvious.
Lead me from intention to attention.
Lead me from what I'm told I am to what I see I am.
Lead me from confrontation to wide openness.
Lead me to the place I never left,
Where there is peace, and peace, and peace.

- The Upanishads

Quotes -

- " The highest form of spiritual work is the realization of the essence of man. You never learn the answer; you can only become the answer.
- " If we become spiritual agents, then our meaning makes us spiritual beings.
- "Our immortality is dependent not on our ability to extend our personal illusion indefinitely but to transcend it.
- " Find out why you are doing things. When you do, your life will change.
- " Man must develop a system of work, and work with persevering dynamism.
- " Every last one of us thinks we are right. Which means that we think we have the Truth or that if we do not have it, no one else will do any better. But everyone has a different definition of it." - Richard Rose
- " All depends on self-practice...". - Hui-neng
- " Prayer is only another name for good, clean, direct thinking." - Mr. Gruffydd, from How Green Was My Valley
- " Let there be a silent understanding and no more. Away with all thinking and explaining." - Huang Po

Comic Philosophy

" One thing you must be able to do in the midst of any experience is laugh. And experience should show you that it isn't real, that it's a movie. Life doesn't take you seriously, so why take it seriously." - Richard Rose

" It is a great comfort to know you can live a normal life, even after you have lost your mind." - comment about Mike the Headless Chicken*, the true story of a chicken that lived 18 months after losing his head.*

10-05

I Ching, or Book of Changes

This month's Missal explores the ancient Chinese book, the **I Ching**, or Book of Changes. This ancient book was first formed three thousand years ago, and has since evolved to include commentaries and interpretations as well as the original core. The book revolves around sixty-four hexagrams or symbols, each having six lines. These hexagrams are composed of two trigrams(three lines), stemming from the original group of eight trigrams, based on the two lines, the 'yang' and 'yin' (solid and broken).

The most common version of the text is the Richard Wilhelm version, translated by Cary F. Baynes. It was Wilhelm's work that brought the I Ching or Book of Changes to the West. It started out in antiquity as a simple oracle and evolved to become a book of philosophy and guidance as well. Here is a brief history of the Book of Changes in Wilhelm's own words:

In Chinese literature four holy men are cited as the authors of the Book of Changes, namely, Fu Hsi, King Wên, the Duke of Chou, and Confucius. Fu Hsi is a legendary figure representing the era of hunting and fishing and of the invention of cooking. The fact that he is designated as the inventor of the linear signs of the Book of Changes means that they have been held to be of such antiquity that they antedate historical memory. Moreover, the eight trigrams have names that do not occur in any other connection in the Chinese language, and because of this they have even been thought to be of foreign origin. According to general tradition, the present collection of sixty-four hexagrams originated with King Wên, progenitor of the Chou dynasty. He is said to have added brief judgments to the hexagrams during his imprisonment at the hands of the tyrant ChouI Ching Hsin. The text pertaining to the individual lines originated with his son, the Duke of Chou. This form of the book, entitled the Changes of Chou, was in use as an oracle throughout the Chou period. King Wên was the head of a western state that suffered oppression from the house of Shang (Yin). He was given the title of king posthumously by his son Wu, who overthrew Chou Hsin, and became the first ruler of the Chou dynasty, 1150-249 B.C. - Richard Wilhelm

The oracle is cast using three coins to find the lines forming the particular hexagram showing the current pattern of the moment as it relates to the given question. These lines may be stable or moving. The moving lines change into their opposite, leading one to further hexagrams. The text provides an image for each hexagram, archetypal in nature and much like the imagery found in dreams. This is a good way to translate the hexagram, finding the particular mood and imagery one's mind provides to coincide with that of the given hexagram's description.

Our dreams tell us whatever we need to know... the I Ching addresses any question that we want to know, and choose to ask. It does not offer generic advice or one size-fits-all answers; it offers specific, personalized answers to our questions, any question... by mirroring the wisdom of our own higher self. This strengthens intuition and self reliance. - Dr. Ron Masa

The I Ching can be used as a means for advice as well as a means of divination. This change in usage, from a strict oracle of the future to an adviser on a course of action, took place somewhere along the book's rich history.

When it happened for the first time in China that someone, on being told the auguries for the future, did not let the matter rest there but asked, "What am I to do?" the book of divination had to become a book of wisdom. - Richard Wilhelm

New studies reveal the Changes as a poetic but pragmatic manual of divination that allowed court shamans to tell ambitious noblemen how to deal with concrete situations in their lives. It is less philosophically profound than the traditional version of the Changes, but much more direct. - Greg Whincup

While the Book of Changes may be proven to be effective as a predictor of the future ("roughly 80 percent of the time, according to those such as Pauli who have analyzed it on a statistical basis " - Philip K. Dick), its spiritual use is primarily one of connecting us with our inner self. Modern man is too preoccupied with his day-to-day survival in the world of technology and distraction to hear his own inner wisdom. Through a tool such as the Book of Changes, we can reconnect with this inner guide indirectly, much like the process at work in dream study. The danger lies in believing that there is an 'oracle' in the book that is telling us what is real or right. Through this transference we could come to lose touch with our common sense. Furthermore, if we are adamant in finding out the big questions in life, such as 'Who am I ?', and 'What happens after death?', we may be sidetracked from finding our Source directly, and instead spend our time answering the echoes of our desires and fears through a roundabout method.

The I Ching insists upon self-knowledge throughout. The method by which this is to be achieved is open to every kind of misuse, and is therefore not for the frivolous-minded and immature; nor is it for intellectualists and rationalists. It is appropriate only for thoughtful and reflective people who like to think about what they do and what happens to them -- a predilection not to be confused with the morbid brooding of the hypochondriac. - C. G. Jung

The I Ching can prove to be a valuable tool if we see it as an aid to rediscovering our own inner wisdom, thus rekindling our faith in the inner self. It can also be used as a means to test and improve our intuition, and to check our self-honesty as to our aims and desires. Like any tool, it can only do what the operator wishes. If we wish to find out trivial matters of earthly portent, it might help. If we wish to find something beyond the world of change, it may help us reconnect with our life-line to the changeless realm within.

The I Ching does not offer itself with proofs and results; it does not vaunt itself, nor is it easy to approach. Like a part of nature, it waits until it is discovered. It offers neither facts nor power, but for lovers of self-knowledge, of wisdom -- if there be such -- it seems to be the right book. To one person its spirit appears as clear as day; to another, shadowy as twilight; to a third, dark as night. He who is not pleased by it does not have to use it, and he who is against it is not obliged to find it true. Let it go forth into the world for the benefit of those who can discern its meaning. - C. G. Jung

Tricks and Traps

Trap: Wishful Thinking. A common trap when using an oracle such as the I Ching is to base our interpretation of the answer mostly(and unconsciously) on our desires and fears. This could come from an addiction to the emotional reaction or thrill we receive from images of 'what if ' and 'if only'. Thus, the oracle becomes no different than a thrill ride at the carnival or a scary movie. This could also be why some of us have a distorted view of the future, and the past, and shy away from thinking about them, keeping us trapped in the circular pattern of our emotions. If we use our memory solely for indulging in the thrills and pain from our past victories and mistakes, we further this addiction to emotional reaction and lose sight of the real causes the emotions are founded on.

Trick: Clear thinking, and friends. We can avoid a lot of trouble and save much of our energy if we stay away from the trap of thinking and planning solely based on emotion or feeling, and instead use both feeling and reason in our planning and path. A good habit of using the memory to check for facts and motivations rather than to indulge in pain and escape also helps, for it frees us from the identification with the traumas of the past.

And nothing substitutes for trusted friends we can talk to, and to whom we will listen. They can often see our lives without the emotional baggage we carry and thus cut through the nonsense to the clear facts of the matter.

Commentary

Thinking and Receiving

" Businessmen and merchants will not enter the places of my father. "
- Jesus, Gospel of Thomas

When we come upon a system such as the I Ching, our western oriented minds may have a hard time understanding it. We are used to making our decisions with a form of thinking commonly called deduction, where we logically form our opinions and beliefs through a chain of experienced events and thoughts. One thing leads to another. We may be relatively unconscious of this, but it predominates none the less. We may even take the opposite tack, and upon seeing an intuitive system like the Book of Changes, put it into use solely because it works in a different way than what we have been taught, thus believing in it through an unconscious form of rebellion. Neither of these reactions is other than mechanical. But if we have done enough deductive thinking, and a bit of thinking about this thinking, we may know its limits. If our intuition has grown enough for us to trust it, and we can see its value when coupled with reasoning, then when we are faced with systems such as the I Ching or dream study, we can appraise them without prejudice or infatuation.

After much deductive thinking, we come to a dead end. This running head first into our mind's mechanical nature is usually necessary before we will come to trust intuition and information coming directly to us from any other source than logic. Here, the realization that induction is possible may be our last hope in finding a true direction back to our source. We are usually so tied up in survival thinking in order to get through our busy day that we do not leave room for our attention to focus within. Even if we are 'spiritual' and have a practice, it may have turned into just another habit,

and only serve to bolster our daily life with some relaxation and rest to compensate for our otherwise sensual lifestyle.

Now, if we do find that intuition and induction have a value, then how do we use them, and how do we know what's what? Intuition can be unreliable and interfered with just as our reasoning. Desire and fear have an open door to most of our minds, so a little common sense is a good thing. What we like to call thinking can often be seen to be little more than rationalization. Through a system of using reason to check intuition, and vice versa, we avoid opening the door for desire and fear, through either rationalizing their plots and plans, or through a blind believe in hunches and naive spontaneity. With experience gained through honest self-observation, we can see how our mind works and where the weak spots are.

We are told the kingdom of heaven is within, but do we know where this `within' lies? Can we hear it? Is there a possible connection with it, through which we can receive direct knowledge, such as clues as to our true nature? The above quote from the Gospel of Thomas illustrates how practical thinking only, cannot lead us within. For this, we need a working understanding of induction and intuition. While dream study and the I Ching offer indirect paths to connect with our inner self, their main use may lie in showing us that such a place exists, and to give us an inkling of its direction.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " We must admit that there is something to be said for the immense importance of chance. An incalculable amount of human effort is directed to combating and restricting the nuisance or danger represented by chance. Theoretical considerations of cause and effect often look pale and dusty in comparison to the practical results of chance.
- " The heavy-handed pedagogic approach that attempts to fit irrational phenomena into a preconceived rational pattern is anathema to me. " - C. G. Jung
- " We know the outer world of sensations and actions. But of our inner world of thoughts and feelings we know very little. The primary purpose of meditation is to become conscious of, and familiar with, our inner life. The ultimate purpose is to reach the source of life and consciousness. Incidentally, practice of meditation affects deeply our character. We are slaves to what we do not know. Whatever vice or weakness in ourselves we discover and understand its causes and its workings, we overcome it by the very knowing; the unconscious dissolves when brought into the conscious.The dissolution of the unconscious releases energy; the mind feels adequate and becomes quiet. " - Nisargadatta
- " You are the light, You are the refuge, There is no place to take shelter but yourself." - Inscription over the Buddha's ashes
- " Mostly we're too busy living to stop and notice we're alive." - Neil Gaiman
- " Creative minds always have been known to survive any kind of bad training." - Anna Freud
- " Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you mad." - Aldous Huxley

Comic Philosophy

" The good Lord never gives you more than you can handle. Unless of course you die of something."
- Guindon cartoon caption

" If you ever reach total enlightenment while drinking a beer, I bet it makes beer shoot out of your nose."
- Jack Handey

08/15/05

Prayer

This month's missal takes a look at prayer and praying. While prayer is universal in religious and spiritual traditions, it is may also one of the most least understood or examined practices. The dictionary defines prayer as, "the act of communicating with a deity, especially as a petition or in adoration or contrition or thanksgiving". While many view prayer as petition, calling on a higher power to grant one's wishes, prayer's higher forms are often neglected, as they may work counter to the ego and its vanity. Traditionally, prayer falls into the following four categories:
Adorations: Prayers of devotion, surrender, love, praise and offering.
Celebrations or thanksgiving: Prayers of thanksgiving, initiation, affirmation and blessing.
Invocations or petition: Prayers of petition, supplication, calling forth and healing.
Meditations or confessions: Prayers of reflection, contemplation, being and teaching.

These could be called the different forms of addressing the divine in their base or traditional sense. Let's examine the act of prayer of the last category and beyond, perhaps better defined as a dialogue with God, or better yet, as remaining silent before the divine or unknown Source.

The first, dialoguing with God, as put forth by St. Augustine, or "friendly conversation with God" as spoken of by Teresa of Avila, is not simply a common conversation, but a heart-to-heart connection between the higher and lower, moving beyond the limits of verbal exchange. Here, we receive inspiration or teaching from the divine, the solutions to our moral and spiritual dilemmas. This form of prayer is not for worldly gain or for the ego, and is not performed so as to be seen by others, being only between oneself and one's higher power, as one understands this.

"...But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father, who sees in secret, will repay you." - Matthew 6.6

The next stage, that of being in rapport with a higher power, connotes a wordless merging of one's 'self' with that of the divine. In this stage of prayer, the problems and dissonance of the body and mind are lost, and the awareness is sunk in the spirit to which it was drawn through its longing. The mood of intense nostalgia or longing, coupled with an admission of our ignorance or not-knowing, is a clue to the direction of our source, and takes us within.

"Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words" (Rom 8:26).

Another form of prayer just as important to our path is that of self-inquiry or introspection. We pray to be able to see ourselves, clearly and without rationalization. If we come to understand that a retreat form error is paramount in merging with the divine, we will need to see these errors in ourselves for correct change to occur. To become one with the divine means to change, and for this we must first know what we are, and what direction we must go.

"According to Rabbi Irwin Katsof's book How to Get Your Prayers Answered, the Hebrew word for prayer is li-heet-pallel. The latter part of the word - pallel - means

to inspect, examine, while the initial part - li-heet - makes the term reflexive. Therefore, prayer is self-inspection, self-examination." - Helene Ciaravino

One of the most complete prayers is one used by Alcoholics Anonymous, and combines surrender, introspection and union in a short but intense meditation:

Serenity Prayer

Lord,
Grant me serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can, and
Wisdom to know the difference.

Whatever understanding we have regarding prayer, humility, longing, and ardent practice are essential. If our intuition has hinted that there is something higher than our current self, and that we would be better served to contact it, then prayer is essential. Whether it be a simple longing or heartache, a begging for release from ourselves, or a commitment to finding the truth, each of us, within, knows how to pray, and as we practice our prayer will change according to our becoming.

Pray, and think what you will, your thoughts will be purified by prayer.
Pray, and do what you will. Your acts will be pleasing to God and useful and salutory to yourself.
Pray, and do not labour much to conquer your passions by your own strength. Prayer will destroy them in you.
Pray, and fear nothing. Fear no misfortunes, fear no disasters. Prayer will protect you and ward them off.
Pray somehow or other, only pray always and be disturbed by nothing.

-*anonymous, from* 'The Way of the Pilgrim′

Tricks and Traps

" What do you need problems for? The mind unconsciously loves problems because they give you an identity of sorts. This is normal, and it is insane." - Eckhart Tolle

Trap: Being identified with our decisions. The above quote points out a common trap, that of being identified with the decision maker, but being unconscious of the process. We may think we are that which sees problems, and decides on their solution, but may have no grasp of how we unconsciously created the whole scenario. We make up a problem, worry about it, then feel good to have solved it; our ego is affirmed.
Trick: Observing our feelings. If we can see what emotional hook has brought up the need for the problem, and then revels in its solution, we may see how identification works. We need problems, and to feel we are solving them, thus giving our sense of self a double boost. If we can see what we do, as well as observe the feelings that motivate our doing, what are we?

Commentary

The Prayer of Looking

This issue's commentary was written originally as a letter in response to the following question:

"So, can the collective of impulse and energy called ego be 'tenderized' somewhat so as to allow it to get out of the way long enough for unending abiding in It? Or should I just get on with trying to learn how to get on the hamster wheel, serve others, and hope that the house suddenly and abruptly collapses on itself?"

Your question implies an either/or dichotomy, with the choice being one or the other of two states of mind. The answer is simpler: just look. To use the attention to observe. To find out for yourself, by observing yourself; an attentive listening. The end is found in self-inquiry, a questioning, rather than deduction. This questioning is not conceptual or thought based, but is a function of the attention. It is a feeling, found through intuition. You look without ideas, a functional `doing' of your listening attention. Whenever you question in this manner, you will notice there is no longer a problem.

This looking can happen very quickly and easily, but is soon lost. As soon as the experience is logged in memory and added to the ego's inventory, the mind will jump back in, steal the attention once again and declare, "Oh yea, I know all about this, now I've got the answer". As soon as the mind revels in patting itself on the back with what a good job it's done, we're back in the same old problem, the old dissonance and angst; the duality of the conceptual mind. So the answer is, again, to go back to true self-inquiry, to question, to look. To point the attention and look, while simultaneously lining the attention up with our source. Once you've felt this and know how it works, the answer lies in practice. Whenever the mind comes up and bothers you, and you begin to slip back into identification, question, look, and listen. If you keep this up, once you've found the trick of it and place value on it, value above the conceptual problem/solution trap of the mind, you'll again see what you really are, in the moment, rather than as a function of memory and ego. This questioning attention, when practiced and eventually turned within, will take you home. Everything will line up; there is no longer a problem. You are connected with your source, and there are no more questions as far as identity is concerned.

When the mind jumps in and steals the reins after the experience of seeing, what you have is a separation from yourself. You're lost in the mind again, looking outward for answers and identity in your experiences. This is what is talked about when it is said that the experiencer is the product or creation of experience. It is of itself not real. It is a reaction to a reaction pattern. When we have begun to see and admit this, we simply refer back, again and again, to questioning, a listening attention.

This could be called a form of prayer. We pray to, and have faith in, our intuition. We're turning our attention back within to something we may have faith in, but we can't really see. This nameless something or nothing, sometimes called the dazzling dark, a primal ground we sense behind or within us, has no image or form. When we are connected to this formless Is-ness, and then again turn our attention outwards, we are lined up. "Life is real only then, when 'I Am'." - Gurdjieff

When this attention is as a double arrow, one pointed within, one without, we are connected with our source and bypass the personality or response pattern, the

experiencer. We now witness experience directly. This form of prayer needs to be practiced in every moment, as often as we can remember.
So keep questioning, keep this prayer of attention going. Practice it whenever and wherever you can, as often as possible. You'll find it does not interfere with action or your day-to-day life, but it will interfere with the mind, its fantasies and endless problems.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " Prayer is only another name for good, clean, direct thinking." - Mr Gruffydd, How Green Was My Valley
- " The prayer that I learned for myself and I can say came from me quite early was to be saved from myself." - Tim Howell
- " Your prayer should be, ' Break the legs of what I want to happen. Humiliate my desire. Eat me like candy. It's spring, and finally I have no will.' " - Rumi
- " Because every thought enters the heart in the form of a mental image of some sensible object, the blessed light of the Divinity will illumine the heart only when the heart is completely empty of everything and so free from all form. Indeed, this light reveals itself to the pure intellect in the measure to which the intellect is purged of all concepts. - St. Hesychios the Priest
- " The trouble is that we live far from ourselves and have but little wish to get any nearer to ourselves. Indeed we are running away all the time to avoid coming face to face with our real selves, and we barter the truth for trifles." - from The Way of a Pilgrim
- " I like the silent church before the service begins, better than any preaching."- Ralph Waldo Emerson

Comic Philosophy

*"It's not a good idea to address any prayers to a Supreme Being.
It would only attract his attention and might cause trouble."* - Terry Pratchett

"Why is it that when we talk to God we're said to be praying, but when God talks to us we're schizophrenic?" - Lily Tomlin

"Remember, there's a big difference between kneeling down and bending over." - Frank Zappa

02/10/06

Spiritual Retreat

This month's Missal takes a look at the practice of the solitary spiritual retreat, or isolation. This method of self-discovery has been practiced in one form or another for centuries, from the monks in their quiet cells to the Tibetans in their secluded caves. In today's society with its hurried pace and inescapable technology, this practice of spending time in silence and peace is even more important for those seeking contact with the inner self. If, as Jesus once said, the Kingdom of Heaven is within, we would be well served to begin earnestly looking in that direction. While books, teachers and the Internet can show us where others have gone before, and give us invaluable contacts, only we ourselves can make the inward journey.

There are several pointers to help one in making time spent alone productive, and more than just a relaxing break for the pressures of daily life. The most important is to have a reason for your quest, to have a pressing question. Before I had come in contact with the technique of isolation I intuitively knew that the best way to answer important questions was to go off alone, and find the answer myself, in myself. Later, after meeting others who had seen the value in this, the process was confirmed. This need not be only the big questions, such as "Who am I?, What is life all about?" but could also be about life's problems: " Why do I have difficulty with the people at work?" , "How did my marriage become so messed up? "Who are these people called my parents/kids?" The answers are found within, and can best be heard in quiet and silence.

I've heard it said that spending time alone is a cop-out, that it's simply a personality defense being taken as a spiritual endeavor, and this certainly can be the case, if it weren't for the question. Without a pressing question, and the focus required in bringing it to the forefront, time alone could be just a vacation from social pressure. I've seen this first hand, for my biggest problem in isolation was that I liked it, a lot. I would become very comfortable, and had to fight to keep the focus on the task at hand, and not drift into the pleasure of a tension-free environment. One way to keep this focus is to bring a few good books, ones that will keep our head in the right place. We can read a bit once in awhile to bring our head back to the problem and remind us of why we're there.

Another problem I've observed is that of fear. Some are afraid to leave society and its distractions, and thus cannot spend the time alone necessary for the mind to relax and focus on inner questions. They might have problems they're avoiding, or place more value on other's thinking than their own, and thus can't stay in the quiet long enough to produce results. One thing for certain, if you have one of the above predilections, you will come face-to-face with it in isolation or retreat, and hopefully thus become more aware.

"The spiritual experiences that people have are a result of looking inside themselves."
- Richard Rose

" Facing the unknown takes a lot of personal quiet and divorcement from the world around you. I studied this very carefully. It is the bridge between the inner and outer

man. - It takes hundreds of hours of facing the unknown to get the unknown to yield one little insight, one little piece at a time. " - Jim Burns

We must also be comfortable. We need to spend our time in contemplation, not lost in the distraction of basic survival and fighting the elements. Moderation here is the key. While we do not want the distractions of cell phones and television, we also don't need to spend our time and energy trying to stay warm and dry, or fend off the the local wildlife and the curious. Too much frugality and we lose our time and energy, and so the same with too much distraction.

Fasting and celibacy are useful tools we can incorporate into our retreat, too. Fasting is a great way to shock the system and return to a quieter frame of mind, with less ritual, while abstinence saves our energy and helps turn our head away from the habitual draw of nature. If fasting has not been practiced before, it may be best to take it easy until you see how your system will react, and gain a bit of experience with it first. While fasting may be incorporated into the retreat to jump start the process and help restore our inner vitality, we shouldn't make asceticism itself the point. We're not going to get any deep thinking done, or clear our receptive mechanism in order to strengthen the intuition, if we are spending our time passed out under the desk. Moderation once more is key, especially until we become accustomed to fasting's effects.

If the brain and belly are burning clean
with fasting, every moment a new song comes out of the fire.
The fog clears, and new energy makes you
run up the steps in front of you.
When you're full of food and drink, an ugly metal
statue sits where your spirit should. When you fast,
good habits gather like friends who want to help.

from Fasting, by Rumi,

Most of the people I know that have practiced isolations have started out slowly, with perhaps three days and nights at first, then have gone on to retreats of three weeks or so two or more times a year. Whether it's for three days or a month, don't let temptation lead you into stopping early. Even if you're having trouble remembering why you planned the retreat in the first place, or feel it's no longer productive, sticking it out may have unseen benefits, even months later. Of course, there's no use staying if you're too ill or in real danger. The most difficult thing for me was to stay focused on the search and not be distracted by the beauty of the place and the slow passing of time. Staying focused was paramount.

Once you make the commitment to spend a block of time alone, don't forget to watch, to look at the various internal mechanisms before and during that will try to get you to postpone, leave early, or pass away the time in fantasy. If nothing else, you will have made the effort, and become more aware of yourself, and that's a good thing.

"Richard Rose gave me the best description of the attitude one should take. He said not to approach isolation as challenging God or the universe for an answer. Don't draw a circle in the sand and say you won't come out until you are enlightened.

Instead, and this is my interpretation, work as hard as you can and be thankful for whatever happens." - Shawn Nevins

Tricks and Traps

Trick: Valuing the thinking of others more than our own. We can come to value the thinking of others, our teachers, friends and authority figures, and thus reject our own powers of intuition and discrimination. This may have happened when we were too small to fend for ourselves, and were thus tricked into counting on others to do our thinking for us, even after we became adults.
Trap: Our attention is thus outward turned only, even in matters of self-definition. We look without to find our wisdom, strength and meaning, and move farther away from our inner Self. Any messages coming from within from intuition or conscience are discounted.
Trick: Learn to listen to your own heart, and to watch your own mind.
Sometimes called the still small voice within, our own inner self can become a guide if we but listen, and use reason to discriminate between true inner guidance and the voices of fear and desire.

Commentary

A Double Edged Sword

One of the first steps in seeking our true nature is learning to observe ourselves, finding out who we are. Called self-observation, it's the simple but difficult task of getting to know yourself. To begin to discover, and doubt, your very sense of 'self'. If you as 'self' are observable, what then are you really? Can you separate from what is false in you, and if so, what is left?

This cutting away can be done in two different but complimentary ways, by forging a double edged sword of reason and intuition. One edge is honed through group work and observing our daily lives in social interaction, while the other is sharpened through spiritual retreat or isolation, spending time alone without the distraction of the personality defenses. Through these seemingly opposite but complimentary methods, we can become more aware. Aware of who we are, by cutting away what we are not.

The first way, through friends, group work, and life itself, begins by watching the reactions of others to our actions, by asking our friends questions, and learning not to spin their answers. We can ask them to describe us, and through their eyes see something we were blind to. A group of our fellow seekers can serve as a reminder that we have a commitment to our search for definition, and that daily action must be taken. In this manner our friends become like alarm clocks or wake-up calls to keep us on track. Coupled with consciously facing the daily confrontation that comes from being engaged in life, we use these social tensions to become more aware.

To discover the ego-self and see it for what it is, we may need to be consciously engaged in interaction with life; in the workplace, at home, and in groups of our fellow seekers. These can act as mirrors, mirrors made of friends, held together through tension and compassion, showing us ourselves without the veil of false thinking brought on by fear and desire. Then, life itself becomes our teacher.

The psychologist Maurice Nicoll ran spiritual groups in England for many years, and never grew tired of telling his students of the advantages that come from group work:

"If you work on yourself long enough with increasing understanding, you will reach a higher level, however small, in yourself, and you will know at once that the Work is true. The door into this possibility is self-observation, that is, becoming more conscious of yourself, from what you are taught. One can begin to become more conscious of other people, and not only that, but one's conception of the world in which one lives begins to change at the same time. The second line of work is extremely useful with regard to attaining more consciousness of ourselves through self-observation. As I said, men and women think they observe themselves already.

So, if you find a friend in the work, you should ask this friend to criticize you. This belongs to the second line. The result may be quite surprising. If you do not get negative, then you will begin to have more consciousness of what you are like. Some illusions of yourself may even be destroyed. But it is strong medicine."

- Maurice Nicoll

To practice confrontation in a group setting can help us begin to question our own thinking and perhaps show us where and how it came into being. This is often a shock, if we are honest. It can enable us to solve the puzzle of who we are by dis-covering our sense of self and how it is manufactured daily through experience. We learn to discriminate between rationalization and thinking, between projecting and observing. Our reason comes to be in the service of our search, rather than in the service of our fantasies.

Usually our thinking is just a means for us to pump up our sense of self, whether it's in a negative or positive sense. We look for self-pity or loathing to build up the self in a negative manner, and to grandiosity, superiority and judging others to pump it up in the positive sense. We seldom simply look at this self-creation, our individuality-sense, without quickly turning away. But look we must, for we need find out how and why we create this self, what it really is, before we can truly go against it. We learn to be honest, and learn to see things as they are.

If we come to find that our manifest desire is to maintain our sense of identity, we may also begin to question how and why we are engaged in spiritual work. Will we stop our search for truth if it becomes disagreeable or tense? Many so-called seekers will bolt and run when a group begins to reflect the truth about its members.

We alternate this with time spent alone. This also shows us what the ego-self is through the process of triangulation. If we begin to observe the self, it must happen from a vantage point superior to the self. By stalking the self through self-observation, and by getting away from the social survival programs by isolating ourselves from outside influences, the personality or self will slowly shut down. We can then begin to see the difference between what we are in silence and what we are in the noisy pattern of the self, perhaps finding or becoming something which is not the self or personality in the process. When we are free from social pressure, the personality is no longer of use, it ceases to exist so to speak, so what remains? Do you know this part of yourself?

If we take these practical steps to seeing our self through spiritual work, we may be able to find the differences between what are called the outer and inner Man. The outer Man will always be fooling the Inner Man, through using our thinking process to serve emotions of fear and desire. We will always be fooling ourselves as to what we really want, who we are, and how we see ourselves. The outer Man may be

constantly coaxing us into distractions, security, money, and power in order to keep us from looking within at what our real questions are. We can thus live a life of constantly deceiving ourselves, with the outer Man and his experiences taken as the real and only world. This outer self may also fool us with the distractions of spiritual work, of avoiding life by hiding in a seekers' self-created dream of illusion, of the bliss and escape to come. Our attention is thus focused outward, on experience and the world. If we find the Inner Man, through our friends and from time spent in silence, we may find our real questions, and therefore find real answers. We will have transcended the trap of fooling ourselves with our dream-stories, our songs of 'self'. The voice of our intuition will have a chance to be heard instead, and to be valued.

The ego-self will fight this switch in value all the way, through our own thinking and misread emotions, even by hiding in a life of seeking, but it's the only way to real truth. With the help of group work to clear our thinking, and time spent alone to sharpen our intuition, we can begin the task of self-observation and of trusting the Inner Self, that still small voice within.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " All miseries derive from not being able to sit quietly in a room alone." - Pascal
- " You are in a social circumstance as long as you still remember your last face-to-face confrontation or are under the influence of it. Your entire being is affected. This applies whether the confrontation was verbal or non-verbal. The point is that you have to become aware that as long as you are within eyeshot or earshot, you are constantly being affected by the internal condition of those around you. If they have no idea of their internal turmoil, then it is left for you to deal with - which is how most people get along. " - Jim Burns
- " Many stand before the door, but is the solitary ones and those who have become simple who will enter the bridal chamber."
- " Jesus said: If those who guide you assert: behold, the Kingdom is in the Heavens, then the birds are closer to it than you; if they say: behold, it is the sea, then the fishes know it already.... The Kingdom: it is within you and it is outside of you. When you know yourself, then you will be known and you will know that you are the children of the Father, the Living One; but if you do not know yourself, you are in the vain and you are vanity."- Jesus, the Gospel of Thomas, saying 75 and 3
- " Embracing dispassion and thus desisting from all karmic activity, shying away from society, one should, thereafter, ever meditate upon the Self within oneself, in oneself, by oneself, - be aware of this." - AtmaSakshatkaraPrakaranam
- " A spiritual retreat is where the seekers are seeking God. It is where God is seeking the seekers. It is the meeting place." - Sister Louise Dowgiallo
- " Problems cannot be solved at the same level of awareness that created them." - Albert Einstein

Comic Philosophy

" I don't always know what I'm talking about but I know I'm right. " - Muhammad Ali

" Reality is nothing but a collective hunch."- Lily Tomlin

" If I really cared about what people thought of me, I would never leave my room." - Anon

" Did I do anything wrong today, or has the world always been like this and I've been too wrapped up in myself to notice?" - Douglas Adams

05-06

Maurice Nicoll

This month's Missal takes a look at **Maurice Nicoll** (1884-1953). Dr. Nicoll was fortunate enough to have been the student and colleague of three of the twentieth centuries most remarkable teachers: Carl Jung, G. I. Gurdjieff, and P. D. Ouspensky. Even more remarkable was his own life of teaching, leading groups in England for the much of the second part of his life, and leaving us books that outline and explain the Fourth Way in his own words.
Born at the Manse in Kelso, Scotland, July 19th, 1884, he went on to study at Cambridge, received his medical degree at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, and continued his studies in Vienna, Berlin and Zurich where he became a student of Carl Jung, and went on to write one of the first books on Jungian dream interpretation. He said that encountering Jung was the first important event of his life.
After a harrowing Army Medical Service in World War I in Gallipoli and Mesopotamia he returned to England to become a psychiatrist. In 1921 he met P. D. Ouspensky, student and colleague of G. I. Gurdjieff, and in 1922 became a pupil of Gurdjieff, moving with his wife and daughter to the Château du Prieuré in France where he studied in Gurdjieff's institute. After a year in France, suffering from ill-health, he returned to England and took up with Ouspensky, who in 1931 asked him to begin teaching the Work on his own, persuading Nicoll to start his own groups in England applying the ideas he had been introduced to by Ouspensky, Gurdjieff, and Jung. Dr. Nicoll continued to teach until his death in 1953, having groups in several different residences over the years. His secretary, Beryl Pogson, copied down his weekly talks, compiling them into what later became the five volume work, Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky.

His interest in the esoteric meaning of the New Testament also led to several books, including The New Man. He taught that the New Testament was a guide to becoming, that everything one needed to become complete was found within oneself, and the teaching of esoteric Christianity were clues to this kingdom within. Carefully re-translating the Gospels, his work dispels many misinterpretations of the original text and points out the true esoteric meaning of the words of Christ and the disciples.

Teaching the Fourth Way principal that man as he is an incomplete organism, but can become complete through following and putting into practice the teaching called the Work, Nicoll constantly brought forth the idea that through practical self-observation one could see not only how one was incomplete, but also how one could become. If one was not naturally heading towards realization, then why not? What was blocking you? He taught that negative emotions were the most common cause of our 'being asleep', and that clearing the emotional center in oneself of all negativity was key to contacting higher forces within which could help one to awake.

He often quoted the Work saying "You have a right not to be negative". His teaching stated that we come into this existence with no negative part, but are soon affected by the negative auras of those we come into contact with and depend on. This negative influence, being false, could then be seen for what it is and thus separated from. The trouble is, as he often pointed out, is that we are in love with our negative emotions and take much of our meaning from them. We love the drama they provide, and resist any effort to separate from them. The influences that are constantly coming to us from what he called 'Higher Centers' are blocked by these negative states.

"The Emotional Centre is not born with a negative part — it should not be there, but it is acquired by the influence of people who are negative. By contact with adults a child learns to pity itself, to feel grievances, to speak crossly, to dwell on its misfortunes, to be melancholy, moody, irritable, suspicious, jealous, to hurt others, etc. This dreadful infection of a child is something against which nothing can be done because it is not clearly recognized. This infection forms the negative part in Emotional Centre. And this infection is handed on from generation to generation. "

Another cause of our continual sleep is the belief that simply hearing and intellectually understanding a teaching will bring real results. Nicoll constantly confronted the members of his groups with this fallacy, urging them to take the Work farther by making it an actual part of their lives, rather than merely giving it lip service without putting it into practice. He urged his pupils to practice of self-observation in a real way, seeing that many took it to be a function of the imagination and thinking only, and not the real observation of what one does, thinks, and feels and how they relate in everyday life. He taught that life can be our teacher, and that every moment was an opportunity to awake, through self-observation and honest evaluation of our actual life, thoughts, desires, and fears.

He is perhaps best known as the author of the five volume series of texts on the teachings of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky: Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky. Through this collection of weekly talks we see his unwavering commitment to others and tireless work in pointing out the way home, which lies within. Through his body of work, we are left with an understandable system of how to complete ourselves,as well as a different take on the teaching of Jung, Gurdjieff and Ouspensky. He was said to have a kind and gentle nature in addition to his forceful commitment, and a well developed sense of humor. He kept a quotation from Plato hung in a prominent place in all the homes in which he lived, "Serious things can only be understood through laughable things".

His explanation of the Fourth Way system, with its three types of man: # 1 the instinctive, # 2 as the emotional, and # 3 as mental man, shows us how to become man # 4, the balanced man, in which all functions are working together in a positive connection, linked to higher centers within, placing us in the possibility of moving on to man # 5, that mysterious being all esoteric work alludes to.

12 Concise Super Wisdoms by Nicoll

1. Esoteric teaching is not an imaginary thing. It is the most real thing in the world - more real than a cheque, more real than a house, more real than another person.
2. It is necessary to catch fire. It is necessary to see we are in the presence of something real - yes, real, but finely made, and very gentle, very delicate, and beautiful.
3. Someone said, "I wish for self-mastery." Gurdjieff said at once that this was a real aim.
4. This branch of the Work suffers terribly from lip-service . . . I must confess I am astonished by the inner insincerity of people who profess this Work.

5. It has been said that to remember oneself one must have a sense of something superior to oneself. Self-Remembering is a lifting up of oneself to another set of influences.
6. The object of the Work is to cleanse our lower centers, to clear them out, to open their windows, so that they can begin to transmit these ideas and directions coming from higher centers.
7. All of you who are following the path of the Work, and have long ago understood that it is not something on the blackboard, will find that even the simplest sayings of the Work transform themselves into deeper and deeper meanings.
8. We are surrounded by liberating ideas, whether we feel them or not.
9. The object of self-observation, as it is said in the Work, is to let a ray of light into oneself. The next thing that is said is that when light is let in in this way many things begin to change of themselves. It is the light of consciousness that begins to change things. For this reason it is said in the Work that the light will cure us. Have you ever thought what it means, this extraordinary phrase: "the light will cure us"? When I first heard it said to me by Gurdjieff, it had such an emotional effect upon me that I was unable to speak to anybody for some time afterwards.
10. If a person does not nourish Work 'I's' they become feeble and may even leave us forever.
11. Many people crystallize out in their negative emotions. I advise you to avoid such people.
12. Mr. Ouspensky used to say: "I want examples, not theoretical talk. Give me a good example of self-observation or a moment of work on yourself, a moment of real effort consciously made."

Tricks and Traps

Trap: thinking through a mood. Being unaware of the sometimes subtle presence of a mood can lead us into wrong thinking. Only later will we become fully aware of the mistake. For instance, we may make decisions based on negative attitudes, such as having a bad day at work, quitting the job, and then regretting the sudden loss of income and security. The mood will block the part we played in the causal events, but we may become painfully conscious of this later.
Trick: Wait a bit. If we can remember how the above trick has caused trouble in the past, we may be able to wait out the mood, and not make any important decisions until the storm passes. Even better, we can gain more awareness of ourselves by watching the process, from the onset of the mood during the causal events, how we react mechanically, and are then taken advantage of through our now befuddled mind.

" I will also tell you a secret. We have to will one another: this is the beginning of conscious love. " - Maurice Nicoll

Commentary

Working Within

" How then can we change being? By applying the knowledge of the Work through self-observation to ourselves. And remember that you do not change by being told

what to do. You only change through seeing what you have to do when you realize what your being is like. " - Maurice Nicoll

Sooner or later the task of changing our being, of becoming, moves from simple mental learning through advice and association to the inner task of developing the intuition. How well this works is ultimately about how well we can hold tension and work within. The practical thing to 'do' then becomes the real time observation of our own attention. The work moves within, and is no longer about character building, a better personality, becoming charismatic or invisible. There are several ways to describe this simple trick of watching or chasing your attention: the experiments of Douglas Harding, which show how to look at what you are looking out of, learning to listen with the eyes, to listen with the attention, the two-way seeing or self-remembering of Gurdjieff and the double-pointed arrow of attention, one pointed within, one without, and the art of mindfulness. To be successful in these tricks, we must be able to relax for at least a second from constantly and unconsciously upholding our sense of self. This split second of seeing who or what we really are, is our slipping behind the mind or ego and seeing through it rather than as it. Now, if you have trouble practicing experiments of the type listed above, or are unable to catch the meaning behind them, why is this? What's blocking you?

The ego1-ego2 game is a great enemy in direct seeing. When the exercises are practiced, the ego-mind is rendered quiescent, if only for a split second, but long enough for one to be free from the mind's pressure to create, project and solve problems, drama, or conflicts, such as getting what you want, avoiding what you fear, etc. But in the next instant after the 'seeing' has ended, the mind will rise up and become active once more and the ego-self, largely through memory, will then lay claim to the credit of seeing, dragging us out of eternity and taking away any incentive to actually 'see' again. An insidious trick has just been played on us, for the ego, as ego1, has just laid claim to 'seeing', and places all blame for actions opposed to seeing on a fictitious character it creates and then uses as scapegoat: the hapless ego2. Thus, we are taken out of action and thrown back where we started: identified with the mind in time. Seeing is now relegated to memory only, for we are unconscious of the whole above trick. The ego has thus kept its throne, and we, as awareness, are back asleep.

If we get what's taking place in the above experiments(by seeing it, rather than mentally understanding it), then our intuition will know what to do next, knowing now what the attention is and how it moves from one view to another. Here's a test to see if we really do see this:

Look at a familiar object, say a tree out of your window, and watch the mind as it works. Observe how this mind associates the tree with names, memories, information, etc. Notice how it does this automatically, unquestioned. Now, practice two-way seeing, the listening attention, while looking at the tree. Allow yourself to look back at what you are looking out of, the aware silence, and look forward or out at the object as well. Can you now look at the tree without 'knowing' what it is? Without knowing what you are, simply because you are? The mind is now silent and all is okay, for nothing is separate. No separation of things, no creating of things, is needed; no labeling or judging, qualifying or describing. You are not enlightened or ignorant, for you have no need to create yourself or 'be' anything.

Now, while still observing the tree, allow the mind to work, as it rises up and again starts the process of creating objects with characteristics, separating 'you' from the 'tree', and separating the tree from everything else, as the string of associated concepts

stream forth. Can you see the difference between these two states? Can you see your attention move between these two views? Can you be honest about this? Does your heart have anything to say about value and meaning in relation to these two very different states?

If you can't 'do' the above experiment, or dismiss it as unimportant, what is blocking you? Why is your intuition being shut out, and thus not picking up on this? If you think the above is not important, or can't relate to it, and still insist on someone or some system telling you something practical to do as a spiritual exercise, or if you are honest and admit you just can't follow any of it, the reason lies within, in something blocking you. Perhaps an energy knot in the emotions, most likely hidden, unconscious, but active and alive. This knot blinds as well as binds you to it, keeping you unconscious, so as to maintain the status quo of the tension and energy system of knots known as 'you'.

If seeing still makes no sense, and you are at a loss as to practical method and the next move on your path, this then is what you can do: to become conscious of what is blocking your intuition. Perhaps going back through your life story with its accompanying emotions is in order, to free you of the energy knots that bind your attention. What needs to be done will be seen, if steps are taken to improve the intuition, clarify one's values, and to hold and increase the tension of questioning, of looking. Taking advice and direction from outside as an easy way out of the tension of having to develop one's own intuition ends in robbing one of the grace that comes from within.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " Self-Observation is the knife that begins to separate, to remove, what you take as you, from what is real. Everything real leads to Real I: everything false leads to False Personality. But it is the dislike of being mechanical that gives the force to separate from the false. The illusion that we are conscious cleverly prevents this and keeps us asleep. The self-love will not permit us to realize that we are not conscious. So we justify all our behaviour.
- " If you work on yourself long enough with increasing understanding, you will reach a higher level, however small, in yourself, and you will know at once that the Work is true. The door into this possibility is self-observation, that is, becoming more conscious of yourself, from what you are taught. One can begin to become more conscious of other people, and not only that, but one’s conception of the world in which one lives begins to change at the same time. The second line of work is extremely useful with regard to attaining more consciousness of ourselves through self-observation. As I said, men and women think they observe themselves already. So, if you find a friend in the work, you should ask this friend to criticize you. This belongs to the second line. The result may be quite surprising. If you do not get negative, then you will begin to have more consciousness of what you are like. Some illusions of yourself may even be destroyed. But it is strong medicine.
- " We rarely can pursue our own thoughts. The traffic in the mind prevents us. We do not 'individually' join one thing with another, or see the truth of something for ourselves. The rush of associations, the continual reactions to life, are too

powerful. Few of us will say we have built much inside. We have not recreated - re-presented - the world but left it in the form of a confused sensory image.

- " The point of this Work is to save energy and not to be eaten by identifying. Unless we save energy we cannot awaken, because life and its turning events take our energy at every moment. None of the things that happen on the Earth, due to tyrants, etc. is comparable with the way in which we are used by life whose object is to keep us fast asleep. So it said we are all in prison. But we do not see this. We feel it is someone else's fault. Here we err deeply.
- " I will also tell you a secret. We have to will one another: this is the beginning of conscious love. " - Maurice Nicoll
- " Through many a birth in samsara have I wondered in vain, seeking the builder of this house. Repeated birth is indeed suffering! O house-builder you are seen! You will not build this house again. For your rafters are broken and your ridge pole shattered. My mind has reached the unconditioned; I have attained the destruction of craving. " - Gautama Buddha
- " I was never horribly self-obsessed or wrapped up in my own weirdness, but when my daughter was born, suddenly there was clarity, I wasn't angry anymore. It was the first purely selfless moment that I had ever experienced. And it was liberating. In that moment, it's like you become something else. The real you is revealed." - Johnny Depp, on the birth of his first child
- " Modern death is a matter of bright rooms and hard machines. Live long enough, and you might be filed away in a nursing home, your history scoured away, your life winnowed down to a few items on the table and some pictures of people who don't come around enough.When you are about to pass on, there is no quiet to attend you: busy fuss and professional zeal strive to bring you back, nail you to the soft cross of the rented bed." - James Lileks
- " Firstly, there no such person as Death. Second, Death's this tall guy with a bone face, like a skeletal monk, with a scythe and an hourglass and a big white horse and a penchant for playing chess with Scandinavians. Third, he doesn't exist either." - Neil Gaiman

Comic Philosophy

"*Without a strong sense of humour, we might as well all become accountants, remedial algebra teachers and telephone sanitizers."* - Tom Knapp

"You are not angry with people when you laugh at them. Humor teaches them tolerance."- William Somerset Maugham

"Laughing in the face of danger is not a survival strategy."- Terry Pratchett

7/14/06

Ouspensky

This month's missal takes a look at **Peter Demianovich Ouspensky**. He was born in 1878 in Moscow, where he spent his childhood. Even in his youth, Ouspensky showed much intelligence and curiosity. When he was thirteen he became interested in dreams and psychology and later in higher physics and mathematics. He left school early though, vowing never to take or pass examinations, or earn an academic degree. Instead he went into journalism and began to travel and write. He felt that the professors and universities were killing science in the same way as priests and church were killing religion. He had developed an interest in the fourth dimension from his studies, but did not pursue a scientific career.
The event that set the course for his life was in the spring of 1915 when he met the Russian mystic George Gurdjieff in Moscow. Gurdjieff's ideas had a strong effect on Ouspensky, opening a door to a different way of thinking.

" I realized that I had met with a completely new system of thought surpassing all I knew before. This system threw quite a new light on psychology and explained what I could not understand before in esoteric ideas."

He immersed himself in Gurdjieff's teaching and made every effort to promote it. Nevertheless, the personal connection with Gurdjieff, as intense and productive as it was, proved to be of short duration. Ouspensky began to feel that Gurdjieff was becoming too authoritarian, going back on his previous pledge that no one should believe anything he said without verifying it for themselves. 1918 saw the first separation of the two men, and in 1924 Ouspensky announced that his work would proceed independently of Gurdjieff's. The last time they met was in Paris in 1930.

Ouspensky left Russia for England and spent most of the rest of his life there, giving lectures and forming various groups. He spent the years of WWII in America, coming home to England in 1946 shortly before his death in 1947. One of his and Gurdjieff's foremost students, Maurice Nicoll, led groups in England with Ouspensky's blessing, even after Ouspensky's passing. Several of Ouspensky's most important works, including In Search of the Miraculous, and The Fourth Way, were published posthumously.
The ideas of Ouspensky about man's nature and his possibilities were passed to him from Gurdjieff, and came to be known as the Fourth Way. They center around the ancient saying " Know Thyself". Ouspensky taught that man's great mistake is that he does not know himself, but does not see this. Man is basically asleep, or unconscious to himself, and therefore sees no reason to question his own thinking or beliefs. He taught that there were four levels of consciousness possible to man: sleep, as commonly defined; waking sleep, our usual state; self-consciousness; and objective consciousness. Man thinks he has all four of these, but lives primarily in a state of waking sleep, having only brief glimpses of self- consciousness.

"When one realizes that one deceives oneself, that one is asleep and one's house is on fire, always, permanently on fire, and that it is only by accident that the fire has not reached one's room at this very moment, when one realizes this, one will want to make efforts to awake and one will not expect any special reward. Since we do not realize that our house is on fire we always expect a special reward. What can one do

in sleep? One can only have different dreams -- bad dreams, good dreams, but in the same bed. The dreams may be different, but the bed is the same."

Another of Ouspensky's teachings was that man is not one, but a collection of many "I's", all of which are utterly mechanical, and that man does not, or will not, admit this. By finding or developing the "I" in oneself he calls 'observing I', one could begin to see this, and begin to form a center. To see how one is mechanical, one has only to observe one's contradictions, and how we cannot admit to the useless and negative sides of ourself.
He taught that man has centers, or different functions, which are either undeveloped or doing each others jobs, leading to a wrong working of the machine. By observing these centers, one can become more aware of oneself, and lessen the loss of energy, thereby increasing one's chances for self-remembering, a term for reaching the third state of consciousness, self-consciousness, a state we normally ascribe to ourselves, but seldom really experience. These centers, the moving and instinctive centers, the emotional center, and the mental center, were also used as a way to categorize men according to which center was dominant in them. When all centers were in use, working together for the best interest of the whole man, then he has a chance at becoming philosophical man, a being of a higher order, one who can remember himself.
Some think that Ouspensky himself was too much of the intellect and didn't develop his emotional side enough to bring about a final realization. Much of his teaching was given orally and in person, so we may know little of what actually transpired. We can say that Ouspensky devoted his life to conveying a system of practical psychology to mankind that seeks to bring him to a higher level of being. In his terms, he says that man was not complete, and the Fourth Way was a means to this possibility of completion. While Ouspensky's work did not convey much about that which lays beyond the mind, this description of his last moments by R. Collins shows that he conveyed a deep rapport in his final moments : "On the first of October 1947 he was found fully dressed on the landing in Lyne Place. He took his place on the sofa and called everybody together. He wore no glasses and seems for once not to need them, looking at everyone with great poignancy and benevolence... gradually a deep sense of being together came over all those present. It was clear that his end was near, but this moment was one of extraordinary peace and unity."

A good primer for the work of Ouspensky is his book, *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution.*

Tricks and Traps

Trap: Split Personality. Keeping our spiritual and personal life separate, we fall into a trap. We think that spiritual work is not related to our day-to-day actions and keep the two sides of ourselves, the actual personality and the spiritual ego, separate and unconscious of each other. We are thus capable of being a negative self-serving robot while believing and projecting we are a sincere seeker of Truth.
Tricks: Here are three tricks to bridge the gap between our ego/idea of ourselves and our fact status:

1. Practice a technique for seeing the personality indirectly. In the beginning, we may not be able to see ourselves directly, so the use of techniques such as dream

study or journaling can help get us started on the path of self-discovery. Reading back through a journal can be a shock, we may think we are an earnest, positive and altruistic seeker, when the journal notes may show us to be a negative whiner who thinks only of himself.

2. Group Work. Nothing can help with seeing ourselves quite as much as the mirror of a group. To take advantage of the group setting though, one may need to learn to listen. Even in the work place, we may be getting all the information about ourselves we need, but refuse to hear it.

3. Watch your emotions. Take the time to sit quietly twice a day, first thing in the morning and before you fall asleep, and see what your heart is telling you. Not to the endless justifications or judgments in the mind, but to the knots or tensions in the background. Can you feel these? What are they related to? Can you bring up words to describe these knots? Do you have mixed feelings about the days events? Where are the contradictions?

"Try to understand the necessity for introducing the methods and principles of the work in your personal life and first of all the necessity for right thinking on all personal questions and their possible relation to your work. Without this, you will never reach unity. You cannot allow one part of yourself to think wrongly and hope that another part will think rightly." - Ouspensky

Commentary

Grounding

" Our studies must begin with our selves and not with the heavens. " - Shawn Nevins

There comes a time when our search into the possibilities of our nature must become personal. We must step out of the safe kingdom of our imagination and begin to actually observe our own mind. Now this is a tricky business. Getting personal about our search can mean many things. It does not mean it's all about us, that we are out to become big or perfect, or to focus only on our self-pity, but it means we must become capable of looking at ourselves without the filters of imagination and identification, while at the same time leaving the study of the universe until we know for sure who is studying it.

Imagination can lead us far astray. We will tend to find whatever helps to compensate for our undeveloped sides, while remaining blind to the things we do not like about ourselves. The trick of identification will aid in this hypnosis by helping us to say "I" to every voice that pops up in our crowded head. Here, we find another obstacle to our path in what Ouspensky and Gurdjieff called 'buffers'. Buffers are strange but effective blocks in our mind that keep us from seeing our contradictions. They serve to separate the sides of ourselves that live in opposition to each other. This serves to keep us fast asleep and living in imagination, identified with whatever voice is currently active, and keeps this voice from seeing the other fellows who might have been in control of our machine both before and after he came along. Now this might seem like the stuff of science-fiction, especially if we have an inflated view of ourselves, having perhaps been on the path for awhile, but a little observation of our fellow man will show us differently, and we are built the same as he. If we can muster

a bit of courage, we can even ask our fellows on the path to do us a favor and tell us about ourselves.

With buffers, imagination, and identification, among other things, blocking our path to truth, how can we even start to get a glimpse into our own mind? Anything that slips past the buffers can be explained away with imagination, and we can always use identification with our spiritual ego to smooth over any discrepancies. The study of our mind might have to first be an indirect one until we become convinced of our own self-delusion. By looking within in an indirect manner, we can come to see our contradictions in a way that isn't immediately shut down by the ego's defenses. The study of our dreams is one such way. "Possibly the most interesting first impression of my life came from the world of dreams." This quote from Ouspensky shows how dreams can give us that first step into the mind.

As soon as the observing part of us is convinced that there is work to be done in our own head, we can move on to a more direct study. The art of self-observation is a direct, tricky and absolutely necessary task. The chief trap we can fall into is that of projection. We may think we are observing ourselves by describing or commenting on the actions of our body as we go through the day. This is only the mind projecting a labeling process, after the fact, and then identifying with it. Observing oneself starts with looking for the underlying motivations to these body-actions. Why do we do what we do? Can we see through to the reasons for our actions rather than just describing them? When we can see, in real time, the emotional motivators for our thinking processes that lead to action, then we can say we understand self-observation. Why you do what you do may lead farther within than simple description of your body language.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " Man is a machine, but a very peculiar machine. He is a machine which, in right circumstances, and with right treatment, can know that he is a machine, and, having fully realized this, he may find the ways to cease being a machine.
- " Our ancestors were very rich and eminent people, and they left us an enormous inheritance, which we have completely forgotten, especially since the time when we began to consider ourselves the descendants of a monkey.
- " If suffering did not exist, it would be necessary to create it, because without it one cannot come to correct self-remembering.
- " When a man begins to know himself a little he will see in himself many things that are bound to horrify him. So long as a man is not horrified at himself he knows nothing about himself.
- " Think about death. You do not know how much time remains to you. And remember that if you do not become different, everything will be repeated again, all foolish blunders, all silly mistakes, all loss of time and opportunity - everything will be repeated with the exception of the chance you had this time, because chance never comes in the same form.You will have to look for your chance next time. And in order to do this, you will have to remember many things, and how will you remember then if you do not remember anything now? " - P.D. Ouspensky
- " I cannot and will not think beyond the present moment." - Goethe

- " Wipe out imagination. Stop the pulling of strings. Confine thyself to the present. " - Marcus Aurelius
- " I'd come to realize that if a man is ever going to grasp anything it won't be by learning. His being has to change. You are what you do, not what you know. A man never learns, he becomes. To become, you must find ways and means to change your entire state-of-mind. This in turn will lead to a change of being." - Richard Rose

Comic Philosophy

"Being Politically Correct means always having to say you're sorry." - Charles Osgood

"Programming today is a race between software engineers striving to build bigger and better idiot-proof programs, and the universe trying to produce bigger and better idiots. So far, the Universe is winning." - Rich Cook

"Some mornings it just doesn't seem worth it to gnaw through the leather straps." - Emo Phillips

9/17/06

Gurdjieff

In this edition of the Missal, we finish our series on the teachers of the Fourth Way with a look at its founder, **G. I Gurdjieff** (1877?-1949). Gurdjieff, a mystic, teacher, and personality from the early part of the 20th century, was born in Alexandropo, Armenia. He grew up in Kars, and traveled to Central Asia, Egypt, Rome before returning to Russia and teaching in Moscow and St. Petersburg in 1913.

He began to form a group or 'school' based on a spiritual teaching he called 'the Work'. He claimed he had learned this teaching somewhere in the Caucasus region of Central Asia in the years he spent wandering through the East. The origins were unknown except by his own account, given in his book, Meetings With Remarkable Men. He and his group of followers moved frequently, traveling around Russia and Europe during the tumultuous years following WWl, until settling into an estate, the Chateau du Prieure, near Fountainbleau in France in 1922. He called his new school, The Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man. His teaching methods were demanding, pushing his students into difficult situations in life and at the school. Stories of life at the Institute at Fountainbleu provide a good look at his methods of bringing his students to see themselves.

" Remember you come here having already understood the necessity of struggling with yourself—only with yourself. Therefore thank everyone who gives you the opportunity. "

By this time he had gathered a dedicated following, including P.D Ouspensky and Maurice Nicoll. Following a near fatal car crash, the school faded, and Gurdjieff devoted his time to writing. His books, Views from the Real World, Life is Real Only When I Am, and the weighty tome, Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson, are, in my opinion, somewhat unapproachable. His teaching is perhaps better seen through the work of his students, particularly Ouspensky and Nicoll. His main asset was his effect upon those who met him, for he was said to have power and a commanding presence, leaving a lasting impression and bringing many into the Work from this alone.

His teaching centered around the idea that Man as he is, is not complete, and must work to achieve the state of oneness, of having a permanent "I". As we are, we have many different personality patterns and inner voices, all of which call themselves "I". He called his tradition, the process of becoming one real, permanent "I", 'the Work', and his school or path, The Fourth Way. The Fourth Way was the way of the sly man, while the first he called the way of the ascetic, the second the way of the monk; the third, the way of the yogi.
Another of the main points of the Work was that man is asleep, that he does not remember himself, but lives in dreams and identification with his personality. Gurdjieff emphasized 'self-remembering', a method akin to mindfulness, to help wake the student, and show him this state of trance or sleep. This led to his distinction between man as personality, and man as essence. He said that essence was what we are born with, what is permanent in us. Personality is what we have acquired by accident and circumstance here in this life, and is transient, being connected only with experience. Essence is active in us when we are little children, but soon becomes buried under personality. Paradoxically, we must develop a working personality for essence to later develop, for only essence can be self-conscious. He emphasized that

only a man who was capable, what he called Good Householder, was ready for the Work. Men who were not fit to work were called tramps, those who traveled from one teacher to another but never worked on themselves(dharma bums), and lunatics, those who thought the Work was about changing the world and others, not themselves.

He continued to teach and write until his death in 1949. In his last days, he would host dinner parties, where he would engage his guests in the ceremony of ' The Toasts to the Idiots', in which each guest, or idiot, would receive his dose of confrontation from Gurdjieff himself. The following quote serves to illustrate this propensity of Gurdjieff's to burst bubbles during this later part of his life:

"...whomever I should meet, for business, commerce or any other purpose, whether an old or new acquaintance, and whatever his social standing might be, I had immediately to discover his 'most sensitive corn' and 'press' it rather hard."

Tricks and Traps

Trick: Put your conceptual thinking, paradigms and intellect aside and do the following trick: pick an object in front of you. Where is this object in relation to You, where you are, as awareness? Now pick one behind you, then see where it is in relation to You. Now, close your eyes, and scratch your nose. Where is this happening, in relation to You? Scratch the back of your neck. Look closely, where is this taking place, in relation to You? Hint: having a double arrow of attention is imperative: one pointed towards the object; one back inwards toward the Unknown.
Trap: This one's for all you jaded seekers, so you neophytes, beware. How much value do you place on your self-image as a seeker? Is your pride mainly centered on your spiritual progress? Do you see everything in hierarchies of spiritual attainment? Feel spiritually superior, and like it? Welcome to the trap of the spiritual ego. You cannot keep getting better and better forever, someday you'll have to give it up, and finally get well.

Commentary

"Our aim is to become one, to have one permanent "I". But in the beginning work means to become more and more divided. You must realize how far you are from being one, and only when you know all these fractions of yourself can work begin on one or some principal "I"s around which unity can be built. It would be wrong understanding to unify all the things you find in yourself now. The new "I" is something you do not know at present; it grows from something you can trust. At first, in separating false personality from you, try to divide yourself into what you can call reliable and what you find unreliable." - P.D. Ouspensky

Fisherman, Hiker, Driver: Who Am I?

- from the Monthly Missal of July 2002

Somewhere in the past, I had the good fortune to learn to fish. It started out as curiosity and peer pressure, but mostly came from a desire to spend time in the wilderness. Since my better half at the time thought it inappropriate for a grown man to just hang out in the woods, a socially acceptable excuse was needed... fishing it

was. It went from a part-time habit to a full-time obsession in short order, then vanished as quickly as the marriage. What remains is mostly an inability to come upon a body of water and not look at it through the eyes of a fisherman. As soon as I approach the bank, I notice an immediate change. The fisherman springs up from Nowhere and a aprt of my mind slips into the habits of years stalking trout in countless streams and lakes.

For a time, this pattern was identified with, for "I" became the fisherman. In recent times, I've been able to simply sit back and watch this fisherman as he goes through his well-worn act. He's no longer me, for the "I" thought is no longer present in him. The fisherman is no longer in opposition to his environment, but is lost in it. He and the fishing are one, but who was "I"?

On a recent hike, I had the opportunity to see this character in action, this fisher person, and several more besides. I noticed a person who hikes. It was interesting to watch how he made decisions as to route finding, rationalizing the climbing of "just one more peak", how he resisted the inevitable coming of the end of the day, felt pride in his confidence and skill. Like the fisherman, he was like an old friend of sorts, having once been 'me' too.

Later, when the day was drawing to a close, I noticed yet another 'person' in the entourage: the fellow driving the car. This chap was by far the oldest of the group and the most set in his ways. He had been 'me' at times for most my adult life, and behind the wheel during many episodes, some best forgotten, at least by the insurance industry. Now the strange thing about these persons, or little men, is that at some point I had said "I" to each of them. I had even said "I" to them in turns several times over the course of a day, interspersed with a whole zoo of others. Who are these characters, and what is this mysterious "I" which floats with ease from one person to another? And most importantly, why don't most of us notice this?

The truth of the matter is simple. The fisherman is the response to fishing, the hiker to hiking, the driver to driving. They are the insentient response to a particular set of circumstances, just one side of the coin of a pattern of events. There is no "I" in them. The only thing that is present in all circumstances, and paradoxically free of them, is our simple awareness. We say "I" to the least and greatest of our response patterns, but never question the apparent absurdity. Instead of remaining fast 'asleep', as Gurdjieff would say, become the hunter of yourself. Stalk this "I" thought, see where it leads. To be identified with and trapped in the confines of circumstantial response patterns, one after another, is hell on earth and the cause of our needless suffering. To be free is to reside in that which does not change, yet is aware, and does nothing. Keep watch on this sense of "I", and see where it leads you.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " What do I teach? I teach people how to listen to themselves.
- " You do not realize your own situation. You are in prison. All you can wish for, if you are a sensible man, is to escape.
- " Hard work is an investment of energy with a good return. Conscious use of energy is a paying investment; automatic use is a wasteful expenditure.
- " Without struggle, no progress and no result. Every breaking of habit produces a change in the machine.

- " When one's body revolts against work(physical or mental), fatigue soon sets in; then one must not rest for it would be a victory for the body. When the body desires rest, don't; when the mind knows it ought to rest, do so, but one must know and distinguish language of body and mind, and be honest.
- " Nothing shows up people so much as their attitude toward money.
- " If you help others, you will be helped, perhaps tomorrow, perhaps in 100 years, but you will be helped. Nature must pay off the debt... It is a mathematical law and all life is mathematics.
- " Looking backwards, we only remember the difficult periods of our lives, never the peaceful times; the latter are sleep, the former are struggle and therefore life.
- " From looking at your neighbor and realizing his true significance, and that he will die, pity and compassion will arise in you for him and finally you will love him.
- " I ask you to believe nothing that you cannot verify for yourself. " - G. I. Gurdjieff
- " First, we have to stop waste of energy; second, collect it by self-remembering; then adjust things. We cannot begin in any other way. " - Ouspensky
- " Show me a revelation and I'll show you a traumatic event from which that Light emerged. Show me a true vision of heaven and I'll show you a descent into the anguish of hell wherein that vision was tried, tested and found faithful." - William Samuel
- " The people who complain about not having material for meditation are those who have the most." - Richard Rose

Comic Philosophy

Global Language Monitor defined "truthiness" as meaning "truth unencumbered by the facts."
"Wikiality," derived from the user-compiled Wikipedia information Web site, was defined as "reality as determined by majority vote,".

"Try giving up hope. It turns the bad feeling into emptiness." - Scott Adams

11/26/06

William Samuel

This month's Missal takes a look at **William Samuel** (1924-1996). Samuel was raised in Alabama in the small town of Mountain Brook, near Birmingham. Entering the Army at eighteen, he was commissioned a Lieutenant and fought in WWII against the Japanese in China. He was embedded in the Chinese Army, and experienced the same trials as they, nearly cut off from any supplies from the Allies. He found his translator, a Mr. Shieh, to be a Taoist master, and became his student. They fought side-by-side, but in a strange twist of fate in later years in a later war in Korea, they found themselves opposing each other in battle. Samuel had an experience in the Korean war during a fierce battle that stayed with him throughout his life:

"During the Korean War, an artillery round burst among my men on the left flank. Several bodies were hurled about and I ran to see the extent of the damage and whether the platoon leader was still effective. Sick to my stomach at the sight, I sat down among three of the bodies sprawled along the slope. I became aware of a visual "Presence" hovering beside them. A misty, blue-white light of sorts. A different kind of light, primal, persuasive and powerful. I could not explain what I saw then, nor can I now, but with the sight, and because of the sight, I was absolutely certain within myself I was being shown evidence of the deathlessness of Life -- the survival of the Child, the Soul of men."
" Like Arjuna, in awful combat, I was instructed in certain of the Mysteries and learned the sense of senselessness."
"More significant, that Peace has not forsaken me since those days, at least not when I was mindful of It nor when the chips were down and I called for It. How do I call for It? I bring forth the Child of Me."

Returning to Alabama after his time in the East, Samuel found his spiritual experience's born of suffering in the time of war to be lasting and valuable. He used these lessons in helping others. While many speak of the gentleness of Samuel's teaching, he strikes me as direct and forceful.

" It is interesting that I've never written about those days, even though I've told of the learning events to seekers who have come to visit here in Alabama. I especially relished telling such tales to the metaphysical "absolutists" or to the young zealot idealists who arrived expecting only gentle words of peace from a Godly teacher. Since stories of strife, warfare and suffering are the last thing those people expect to hear from a "metaphysician," that's often what they got."

" Show me a revelation and I'll show you a traumatic event from which that Light emerged. Show me a true vision of heaven and I'll show you a descent into the anguish of hell wherein that vision was tried, tested and found faithful."

Upon returning to the States, he became involved with the Christian Science movement, and became a healer and teacher. By the Sixties, he left the group, no longer wishing to be restricted by the rules of any organization. He continued to write and hold gatherings for willing students in the piney woods near Mountain Brook, and for a time on his houseboat, the Lollygog. "The Universe is my home," he'd say, "but I choose to walk the quiet fields and hills of Alabama."

His writing speaks of a man who learned his lessons through fire and suffering, and later put them to the test in everyday life, and found them true. He speaks directly to the Heart of the listener in a forceful and simple manner, leading them to recognize that their own intuition is the surest path to the Inner Child.
This 'Child Within', Samuel speaks of often. He tells us it is our Real Identity, and its guidance is essential to the true completion of our search.

" The Child and Its guidance are essential in our search. If one thinks his religion, his philosophy, or his theology is the means to finding the FINAL Answer, he is mistaken. The Child of Light and Love is the pathfinder, the guide, the wayshower up the mighty mountain in Kwangse Province. Science, religion and philosophy can take us a great distance, but the Child takes us to Dominion. It is absolutely essential that we actually get in touch with the eternal Child." -
"Now, with absolute assurance, I can tell people, old and young, their lessons can be learned under the most difficult and trying circumstances. Better that we leave our nets after we've learned their lessons. Better that we call on the Child because the Child knows what to do. The Child and the Presence are the same one Presence and It is right here where we are, transcending this world's time and space."

"There is a simple and gentle Light within these pages that will change your life and make all things new. It can! It will! But it is a message only the Heart can find. Search with the Heart and you will find it."

Tricks and Traps

Trap: Bound in the brain box. Our attention is often stuck in less than desirable places, such as the visualizing part of the brain. We can be caught in a continuous loop of worry or daydreaming when our attention is unconsciously fixed in these thought-patterns. We forget that this is a movie of a movie, being formed by our reactions to daily life, and are hypnotized into the forebrain's endless imaginings.
Trick: Use the body, stop the brain. Focus on the senses to stop the loop of thoughts. Look at where you are in the present, what are your muscles doing? Is the thought-pattern in your head causing your body to react just as if the thought-dreams are real? Are you then identified with the feelings this brings up? Be careful here, the point is not to be sucked into a reaction to the body, and become lost in yet another reaction pattern such as sensuality or feeling-worship, but to learn to free one's attention. Where is the true value, in identification or discrimination?

Commentary

Intelligent Spontaneity

Any wine will get you high.
Judge like a king, and choose the purest,
the ones unadulterated with fear, of some urgency about "what's needed ".
Drink the wine that moves you
as a camel moves when it's untied,
and is just ambling about.
- Rumi

I've spoken before about how the listening attention is the gateway to within. This can be also spoken of as the link between the real and unreal, the manifest and unmanifest. The Christian mystics refer to the Son who is the link to the Father. William Samuel speaks of the Child as the pathfinder, and tells us it is essential to actually get in touch with this Child of Light. These refer to an essential part of us, a part that is free from the world, yet sees the world, and can lead us back to our Home in the Father. What is this Child, this intuitive light, this innocence somehow imbibed with wisdom?

One thing it is not, is childishness. It is not needy and wanting its own way, nor dependent on the things of this world for its satisfaction or existence. In fact, the Child is much better described by what it is not, than what it is. Jesus once remarked that we should become as innocent as doves, but also as wise as serpents. We do not use the Child for the further purposes of the ego, but become it. The listening attention is not the problem solving or even the categorizing mind, but that which simply sees or listens, and can link to a higher intelligence. Many of our problems are better solved by asking for an answer from within, then practicing patience until the answer appears. The saying, 'I'll sleep on it' refers to this in a simple way; we ask, then wait until we receive.

Maurice Nicoll speaks of the puer eternus, Latin for eternal boy or child. He calls this the intermediary, the one who connects us with the higher centers within. He refers to our organism as composed of different 'centers' or minds, each having its own purpose. These centers are divided into higher and lower, the lower being what we are ordinarily aware of as mind. The higher centers are said to be constantly trying to reach us, but cannot get through due to the wrong working of the lower ones. This is likened to static, negative unnatural patterns taking up most of the energy of these centers, so that they can no longer hear the higher ones; there is too much interference. Nicoll tells us that " The object of the Work is to cleanse our lower centers, to clear them out, to open their windows, so that they can begin to transmit these ideas and directions coming from higher centers." We cannot hear the Child, who hears the Father, for the mind has become lost in the static of the world, outward turned and saturated with useless worry and dreams, broadcasting its static miasma so nothing else can get through.

This brings us to the first step to the listening attention; the clearing out of this static. Much like a radio which must be tuned in order to pick up the desired station, we must tune our machine, our lower centers, in order to pick up the constant but unheard signal of our higher self. As Rumi says, we have become obsessed with 'what's needed' and have thus lost our innocence. We can no longer sit in silence and listen to what may be speaking to us; a still small voice from within.

Samuel also speaks of the value of trauma or suffering in weeding out the ego's insistence that it is the only source. For most of us, it takes a shock to turn us within. To become aware that there is something higher than ourselves permits the Child to come forth, for we begin to listen in another direction, with other ears. We come to see that there is another source of wisdom other than that of memory or the brain. We learn what intuition is, and how it works.

This clearing out of the 'old man' gives room for the new, the Child. A new kind of intelligence becomes possible, one that is spontaneous, yet wise. We use our attention to not only view the world and its problems, but to also turn back within and connect with our innate intelligence. This double-pointed arrow of attention lends a certain realness. We are no longer lost in the world, for now we have become superior to it, not just in word, but in fact. The ego is seen for what it is through the eyes of the

Child, and is no longer our identity or sole reference. Peace blossoms from within. The Child is born, and the Father now sees His world through the Child.

Bob Fergeson

Jesus said, "If some say to you,"Where have you come from?' say to them,
'We have come from the light,
where the light came into being by itself,
established itself,
and appeared in an image of light.'
'If they say to you 'Are you the light?' say,
'We are its children,
and we are the chosen of the living Father.'
"If they ask you, 'What is the evidence of your Father in you?' tell them,
'It is motion and rest.' "

*s*aying 50, Gospel of Thomas

Quotes -

- " The Child and the Presence are the same one Presence and It is right here where we are, transcending this world's time and space."
- " For all of us there comes a time when we finally get down to brass tacks, living and being the Spiritual Life. Usually, adversity of some sort, health, business, grief, loneliness or boredom, drives us to this decision. Oftentimes it is fear of one kind or another. Perhaps we simply yield to the prodding of others, or to the urge of an intangible feeling within--the "divine discontent"; but whatever the reasons for our action, one fact is certain: the decision that brings it about is very personal. It is an alone experience that takes place within. "
- " All have discovered that, from the moment we act on the decision to discover Reality, we begin to find it. The moment we sincerely begin a determination of the Absolute, it continues of its own accord until Reality is disclosed!"
- " Show me a revelation and I'll show you a traumatic event from which that Light emerged. Show me a true vision of heaven and I'll show you a descent into the anguish of hell wherein that vision was tried, tested and found faithful."
- " The world is not as it appears to the busy, troubled mortal. Behind every appearance--overspreading everything--is a pure and perfect harmony. There is an unseen Perfection-before-words permeating everything. Concrete and tangible confirmation of this fact awaits everyone willing to acknowledge this presence as real and as all in all. How does this confirmation appear? As inner light, as illumination, as understanding, as Self-discovery, as a continuing and expanding sense of all-rightness! " - William Samuel
- " If we become spiritual agents, then our meaning makes us spiritual beings." - Richard Rose
- " I don't believe in destiny. We are not born to become one thing or another, left to follow helplessly a course that was chartered for us by some unseen hand.... The only fate we cannot escape is immortality." - John McCain

- " Wipe out imagination. Stop the pulling of strings. Confine thyself to the present. " - Marcus Aurelius
- " How happy are the wild birds, they can go where they will, now to the sea, now to the mountain, and come home without rebuke." - 17th century Welsh epigram

Comic Philosophy

Madness does not always howl. Sometimes, it is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying, "Hey, is there room in your head for one more?" - despair.com

"When we remember that we are all mad, the mysteries disappear and life stands explained." - Mark Twain

01/14/07

Douglas Harding

The focus of this month's Missal is **Douglas Harding** (1909-2007), a modern day practical philosopher and mystic from England. Harding was born in 1909 in Suffolk, England, and grew up in a strict fundamentalist Christian sect, the Exclusive Plymouth Brethren. The 'Brethren' believed they were the 'saved' ones, that they had the one true path to God. Harding could not buy this attitude of unquestioned belief, and when he was 21 he left, much against his father's wishes, and finished his studies to be an architect.
In the mid-1930s Harding moved to India with his family to work. When the Second World War broke out, Harding's quest to discover his true nature became urgent. He was aware he might die soon, being at that time in the British Army and facing an invasion by the Japanese through Burma.
The "penny dropped" for him at around age 33 and is variously described in two episodes. One day he stumbled upon a drawing by the philosopher and physicist Ernst Mach. For Harding this was the key that opened the door to his innermost identity. For he noticed he was in a similar condition – his own head was missing. At the center of his world was not an appearance but nothing at all. His experience in India in the Himalayas is described in his Rebirthday, brought on by the pressure of impending war and death.
Harding developed what he called the experiments in the late 1960's and 1970's. These are exercises in awareness designed to make it easy to see one's headlessness and to explore its meaning and implications in everyday life. He devoted his life to teaching these exercises, travelling around the globe leading workshops until just before his death in 2007.

"One of the first things I should say is that I find it a most extraordinary thing to exist, to have happened. I don't mean just to be Douglas Harding, but to be at all, to be aware, to be an awareness, or even Awareness itself. What an extraordinary thing and what a pity to come by this awareness, to be aware, and then not to get the taste of it! It seems an awful thing, sad and chicken-hearted and miserable, not to be interested in these matters. So, what I'm up to, at its briefest, is to wake up to the mystery of myself." - Douglas Harding

His approach to answering the question "Who Am I ?" is not to use the verbal-based intellect or astute reasoning, but to simply look, and see for yourself. He taught this by having his students practice experiments designed to show them what they are, in real time, by their own direct perception. Finding out who we really are is a simple thing, Harding noticed, and that we tend to make it too complex. He cut through this complexity and verbal jungle, taking us straight to seeing what we really are, rather than thinking about it. Conceptual thought is left behind, and direct perception found instead.
These experiments are quite effective, provided the student has worked long enough to rid himself of two common obstacles. The first is the belief that someone else, whether society, parents or authority, know better than him. He must come to trust his own seeing. The second is whether he has lost the need to assert himself as knowing everything already. Knowing how to listen, rather than argue, is essential. Our own direct perception is easily attacked by the over-active ego, and soon lost. Hardings experiments are effective only if practiced, not read. The most common mistake of friends and myself was to read them only, and thus miss the point. Also, if

we have not done the psychological ground work necessary to become conscious of and separate from our personality and the affects of our past on our present, the experiments can be less effective and even become traps .

Hardings work, enthusiasm, and dedication over the years never waned. His experiments, ideas and philosophy are practical, concise, and fun. You get the feeling that this guy enjoyed himsemsely and longed to bring this joy of knowing who you really, really are to the rest of us.

"So if we want to be efficient, and live from the way we are instead of the way we are told we are—and the way we are I say is inconceivably blessed, inconceivably happy. I mean, the world is a pretty miserable place in so many ways. I say, there are two worlds and they are vastly different.

There is a world which is seen from a position of deep illusion, and delusion, as if from a lump here, as if from a sticky wet dark eight inch box, with two peep holes in it. It's crazy. But a world seen from that position is a horrible place. It's hell. It really is hell.

Now a world seen from the only place it only can be seen from, namely from this Clarity here, is a loved-world. It is a world I am—I'm taking it in. It's a loved world."

Tricks and Traps

Trap: Compartmentalizing our spiritual life. It's a mistake to separate our day-to-day life from our spiritual one. We tend to put our spiritual goals and aspirations into unrealistic fantasies, separate and apart from the facts of our actual life. Thus, the ego is protected from any real threat of self-observation, and can maintain the status-quo.
Trick: Self honesty and facing the facts. If we observe the pattern of our life, we might see that our spiritual dreams are just that, they don't hold water. We may need to begin by looking at the lives of others who have gone beyond themselves and what they went through, as well as take an honest look at the emotional motivations we have for the spiritual search. Then, self-observation of our patterns becomes possible. The ego is much like an addiction. It will defend itself and refuse to face facts, staying in denial about the gap between what it says and what it does, or can do. Use your friends and your own honesty as a constant intervention, cold water on the ego's feverish dreams of escape and grandiosity.

The best day of my life—my rebirthday, so to speak—was when I found I had no head. This is not a literary gambit, a witticism designed to arouse interest at any cost. I mean it in all seriousness: I have no head.
What actually happened was something absurdly simple and unspectacular: I stopped thinking. A peculiar quiet, an odd kind of alert limpness or numbness, came over me. Reason and imagination and all mental chatter died down. For once, words really failed me. Past and future dropped away. I forgot who and what I was, my name, manhood, animalhood, all that could be called mine. It was as if I had been born that instant, brand new, mindless, innocent of all memories. There existed only the Now, that present moment and what was clearly given in it. To look was enough.
It took me no time at all to notice that this nothing, this hole where a head should have been was no ordinary vacancy, no mere nothing. On the contrary, it was very much occupied. It was a vast emptiness vastly filled, a nothing that found room for

everything—room for grass, trees, shadowy distant hills, and far above them snowpeaks like a row of angular clouds riding the blue sky.
I had lost a head and gained a world.

Commentary

A Formula for Self-Discovery

I'm often asked how a seeker can increase their progress along the path. Sometimes the person may feel stuck, or simply wants to know the most expedient way to increase their vector. Looking back over my own life, I've found that one factor stands out. When I became a conduit for realization, passing it along to others, things took off. It's as if we agree to become a link in a chain, and pass on down the line that which was handed to us from above. This is not only a theory, but something we can, and must, actively do in our day-to-day lives. One may argue that if all is one, then this is just another illusion, but the rationalizations of the ego come easy and keep us stuck in our own mud, while active work may put tension on us in a way the ego can't handle.

I can best relate how this works along the lines of my hobby with photography. I've spent a lot of my time in the great outdoors, and for years refused to share this experience with others due to a certain ego. I felt that if I took pictures of my trips, it would somehow cheapen the experience, take something away from the purity of the pristine settings. Somehow this changed, thank goodness, and I became willing and inspired to do the work to bring a bit of what I was seeing back with me to share with others. I broke down and bought a digital camera, and the magic began. Some inner part of me that had been denied came back to life, and with it a better relationship to everything involved. The entire experience of hiking was somehow changed for the better.

At about this same time, I also bought my first computer and entered the world of email and the Internet. I was able to stay in touch with fellow seekers from around the country, and to share my experiences in the search for definition, as with the photography. Somehow this changed the belief that spiritual work was a solitary affair only, and opened doors of opportunity I had never dreamed of. I started a web site, and became involved with an online confrontation group. I began to move within, the connection was made.

William Samuel talks about much the same thing. He describes getting answers from within as Glimpses, and stresses the importance of sharing these. It's a double-sided coin, much like the chicken and the egg dilemma, in that we must get answers in order to share them, in order to get answers. But the process is not that complicated, if we just make a move. We become a conduit, a transmitter of realization, and the more we give, the more we get.

One trap worth mentioning here is that of keeping this all in one's head. We may think that by getting a few answers in the beginning of our search, we are on the path and need not put out more effort. Being comfortable in our life, we may not wish to rock the boat of our habits, and thus keep whatever intuitions we receive to ourselves, thus miring our spirit in a dream world. Our intuitions bear fruit when they are put into action and tested in life, and when found sound, passed along to our fellows.

All of the above is what might be called a law of manifestation, an equation as Samuel calls it, and it will work for whatever desire applies it, spiritual or otherwise.

If one wants money, success or security, this formula will work as well. This leads to a dilemma for some us in that we may not consciously know what we really want, until we test ourselves by putting the formula into practice. This can be a paradox. If we believe we want enlightenment, and put it to the test through actions in our day-to-day life, we may find that what we really want is freedom from fear or a desire for power. While we have temporarily fooled ourselves, we have at least come to know ourselves better, and have thus made a move along the path of self-discovery. We may eventually uncover an intense longing for home, for something stable and real, which was only allowed to manifest as the mundane patterns of fear and worldly desire. This was long buried, and is what will provide the necessary pull to carry us farther within. To get real answers, we must come to have real and pressing questions.

One thing is for certain, if we do not make a move, a commitment to action, we will not leave the head-in-the-sand false safety of our dreams. A man asleep in his bed in a burning house may dream of oneness and ease as well as anxiety and need. On the other hand, waking up may take effort, be difficult and even unpleasant, but is most necessary, too.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " You are the sole and final authority on what you are looking out of.
- " You're the authority on where you are coming from, on where you are looking out of, and I think you will find, as I do, that every darned thing you have been told about who you are, where you are, is exactly the opposite of the way it is.
- " My experience is that to be truly human, truly individual and authentic as a person in the world, the best thing you can do is to see who you really really are. If you neglect who you really are in favour of that human thing that human thing suffers.
- " All of us are living from who we really, really, really are and we couldn't do otherwise. And if they wish—and certainly most people wish to overlook this fact or to ignore this fact; of what they're looking out of, of who they really, really, really are—it doesn't prevent them living in that place, and so one cannot feel enlightened or superior to them at all. It's just that I happen to be interested in observing what I'm looking out of, interested in making this 180º u-turn to be awake, not only to the object as object, but to the subject as object. In fact, I'm not content with one-way looking but with two-way looking, but other people have the right to delay that. " - Douglas Harding
- " Meditation is the witnessing of experience. Participation in experience is dreaming. Experience is binding. Witnessing experience is liberating. That which we take ourselves to be, the self, is our least witnessed experience." - Bob Cergol
- " A host of influences (cultural, psychological, and physiological) determine what we see and think, and we are rarely conscious of these influences. The lack of certainty regarding all that the mind perceives leads us to meditate on the nature of the mind. What is this flawed glass out of which we peer?" - Shawn Nevins
- " Any product of thought is not proper meditation, as that is of the mind's memory." - Gary Harmon
- " With enough courage, you can do without a reputation. " - Rhett Butler

Comic Philosophy

"A bit of counterpoint lunacy is indeed refreshing." - Jim Burns

" Marriage is like a midnight phone call. You get a ring and then you wake up." - Archie Ferrarina

05/16/07

Joseph Sadony

This month's missal examines the life and work of **Joseph Sadony** (1877-1960). A pioneer in the art of direct perception, he was born in Mountbauer, Germany. He came to the United States as a small boy and spent his youth with his folks in Kalamazoo, Michigan, before they moved to Chicago when he was a teenager. As a young man he walked hundreds of miles through the western Indian Reservations as part of a special investigation for President Teddy Roosevelt. He married Lillian Mary Kochem of Kentucky in 1906 and bought an eighty acre estate near Muskegon the same year. This was where he built his home, Valley of the Pines, which he had dreamed of in detail before seeing it. It was where he would spend his productive life, and build his research labs. Here he wrote, and ran his experiments until his death in 1960.

Sadony had from early childhood a gift of seeing things directly, and for questioning everything, even his own existence. He never bought into the usual definitions of life, and had a hard time with conventional schooling. He dropped out of school for good at age thirteen and never went back, preferring to learn directly and from those who practiced what they taught.

I lay in the dark; then suddenly something happened to me that I did not comprehend until years later, in memory. The vague distress of an internal conflict I could not understand suddenly vanished. In that moment I gained a new sense of identity. Yet I felt like a stranger in the bosom of my own family. Suddenly I didn't know who I was, and lay there in the dark asking myself, "Who am I? Where am I? How did I get here?"

Fervently and deeply I wanted the truth, and I could see that none of the teachers knew the truth; none of the books told the truth. It was nothing but words, and words about words. Brick by brick, word by word, I saw the wall being built around us children to seal us for life into one room of our brain, with only two windows, our eyes, safely guarded with prison bars of words stronger than steel that also kept out most of the light; with every other gate of the mind carefully sealed by a word, so that no feeling could be arrived at, save through a word first, like putting gloves on our hands, shoes on our feet, spectacles on our eyes, muffs on our ears, and a woolen padding on every nerve end so we would be cut off from the quivering, life-giving pulsations of direct contact with the truth.

So I revolted; tore down the wall of words; threw off my shoes, both physically and mentally, and walked barefoot even where the stones were sharp and painful.

He had what most would call an ability to predict the future, though he himself never described it as such. He simply would see or 'feel' the chain leading up to an event and could then point out the event before it happened. He never used his gift to profit or make things easier on himself, except for one unfortunate time when he gave a friend a tip on the future direction of the stock market, earning his friend money, but not a dime for himself. Nevertheless, he found that his power to 'feel' was taken away for exactly one year. He was left to rely on his thinking to carry him through until the sensing returned.

The following is his own account of this 'feeling' and how it worked:

All I knew as a child was that I had some sort of relation with what I could neither see, hear, smell, taste nor touch; and that relation was a "feeling."

But I found that "thinking" and "imagining" first created a false feeling that lied to me. It was only when the feeling came first, without thinking, that the feeling was right. And my thoughts and imaginations were right only if they were induced by the feeling and not by association of thought resulting from what I saw or heard. Sometimes there was nothing in my experience to fit the feelings that came to me. Often I could not understand them at all in terms of word or ideas familiar to me. Still I "knew"; but I couldn't explain it.

What puts the letters of the alphabet together to form words? What puts words together to form sentences of understanding?
No one could answer me. Nor could I. All I knew was that if I stroked a thing with my fingers until I felt that it was a part of me, like my foot, I could "feel" it, just like my foot.

There is only one way my foot can talk to me, and that is by a feeling. It may be pleasant or unpleasant, hot or cold; comfortable, tired or painful. My own memory tells me why, and what it means. I can't see my foot; it's in my shoe. I can't see my foot even if it's bare. All I can see is the dead skin outside. That's all I can see of anything. All we ever see is the dead skin of things. We never see what anything really is. We can only "feel" it.

If people were going to insist on calling that "seeing," very well then. I could "see" better with the ends of my fingers and with my eyes closed. Also I could "hear" better that way.train engineer

To prove it, and to amuse my friends, I would hold my hand high, fingertips in the direction of a distant railway engine five miles away that none of my friends could hear or see. I would say, "It's whistling, only you can't hear it now." Then, "It's coming closer, closer now it's going to whistle: one, two, three" and whooo came the shriek of the engine just after my third count.
"But how did you know?"
"I saw the engineer reach up to pull the whistle."
"But how did you see it? We couldn't even see the train yet."
"With my fingers."
"But you can't see with your fingers!"
"Of course not. But that's what you insist on calling it."

He spent much of his adult life writing, either in his daily column for the local newspaper, or in editing and publishing The Whisper, an independent journal of Prevenient Thought. His book, Gates of the Mind, lays out his view of life and our possibilities, as well as describing his own. He also ran the Educational Research Laboratories in his home in Valley of the Pines as part of making his living, but mostly to advance scientific understanding and to verify his own intuitions. His work was for mankind, and he believed this was the practical way to live.

Self-preservation is not a remarkable phenomenon, but race-preservation is. The man who will fight to preserve himself or his family is not a particularly interesting object of study, but the man who will live his life and give his life for the sake of mankind and human progress is manifesting the mystery that is the religion of mankind. What is the source of his "feelings"?

While Sadony's writings leave us with inspiration, encouragement, and hints as to our own intuitive abilities, he does not give much in the way of a system of how to come to these abilities. We are left to our own determination and desire. He left no school

or followers, but thanks to the recent work of those who understand his work, his writings have been preserved to shed light on the mysteries of our own potential. He continually warned of the dangers of words and the unquestioned concept and belief, and instead points us to going within one's own mind to find and follow our ' feelings' as the way home.

Actually I do not see ten thousand miles away with any form of "vision" whatever. I do not "see" the future. My reception or perception of these things is entirely formless, entirely a "feeling," entirely devoid of image, word, thought or concept. What makes it intelligible to myself or someone else is the activity of my imagination, which endeavors to symbolize, portray or interpret the "feeling."
And what is the "feeling"? That is the one great mystery. That is the quest. That is the source of all inspiration, the fountainhead of all spiritual gifts, the heart and life of all religion. This is the foundation that science has provided for spiritual understanding: a physiological foundation for a nervous organization that responds to an unknown source or sources of energy in the form of "feelings." These feelings are neurological and physiological; not the activity of a special or occult "sense," but the coordinated activity of the entire nervous organization. The reaction is one of selective stimulation of previously experienced and conditioned reflex arcs of memory. The imagination interprets the "feeling" in terms of memories associated with similar feelings. Thus a complex feeling is broken down into its elements by symbolic representation in an imaginative composite of memory elements. Thereby we "understand" it.

Quotes by Joseph Sadony

Tricks and Traps

Trap: confusing verbalized thought with direct experience. Through many years of training, we have come to believe that our thought-concepts, memories and words are somehow as real as direct experience. We may have lost track of direct experience altogether and come to live entirely in our thoughts and personal feelings, cut off from what we might call the 'now' by a gap of time.
Trick: Learning to 'listen' or 'feel'. Instead of unquestioned acceptance of our thought and feeling reactions, try seeing what's being presented to you through the various gates of the mind. The translating of this direct perception into worded thought and images can come later, along with an emotional reaction, but first, what are you perceiving, now?
Tricky Trick: becoming too clever for our own good. We can become so smart that we can even project a concept of 'now' into our own heads and thus believe we have solved the problem of direct experience by referring to this 'now' thought-memory whenever we want to feel we are 'seeing'. Thus, we assuage our 'feelings' and keep our ego on top by yet another conceptual trick.

"Every argument that I ever heard was caused by someone trying to shape the truth by words, instead of allowing the words to be shaped by truth. -
I wanted the truth to select its own words, and not for men to try to shape ideas of truth in my brain with their words. This would not be true, and it was impossible ever for it to be true; for that is not what truth is." - Joseph Sadony

Commentary

The Ties That Bind

"Experience is binding. Intense experience is intensely binding. Observing the process of experiencing is liberating. Your experience generates experience. Experience is to the identity as food is to the body. Your identity weaves itself in a self-perpetuating chain-reaction (identity spins identity)-- so long as the attention is glued to experience -- and so long as the body fuels the reactor." - Bob Cergol

"The things that are holding you up personally are the negative things that have happened to you." - Richard Rose

Sadony talks of tuning the 'human radio'. To be able to pick up 'feelings' within our awareness that preclude our verbal knowledge and give us valuable information. Others speak of uncovering the wellhead to insight, of sharpening the intuition, similar references to getting information directly. How might one go about doing this oneself? Two things are necessary before this is possible.

First, one needs the incentive. After the usual ego efforts have failed, and we find ourselves with our back against the wall, only then will most of us turn within for direct knowledge from a source other than our own associative mind. This explains why failure has been called the best success, and trauma a sometimes necessary force on the path. As long as things are going to plan, why look within for some nebulous voice?

The second condition is to have a clear receiver, capable of being precisely tuned. The old business dictum, 'past performance dictates future performance,' indicates the trouble. Our mind has been formed from associations formed in the past, and as such has no real capacity for new, outside-the-box knowledge. Let's take a look at this and see how we can break free, and tune the receiver.

As personalities, individual selves, we are formed from experience. These experiences create an experiencer who is their sum total, or 'us'. When an experience or action is intense or charged, it creates a hot spot or 'energy knot' which stays charged as long as the experiencer 'believes' in it, thus keeping it alive. These knots are usually unconscious to their owner, and are thus able to stay in the background, acting as a filtering mechanism. All future reactions will be affected by them.

Dispassionate observation is the key. When we can observe our own reactions, without reacting, we are getting a clue as to how to free the receiving mechanism from these knots. To break up these reaction pattern hot-spots, we observe them without reaction, thus breaking the chain, and opening possibility. To observe them dispassionately removes their charge, and thus frees us from their limiting effect. We then have the possibility of freeing the attention from its obsession with the associative mind. This is tricky business, for to be present during an event that usually brings up a hot-spot, and not react emotionally as usual but instead simply observe, is not easy. We must also be on the lookout for other defense mechanisms that will keep these knots hidden and unconscious. Here's where honesty and using others as a mirror comes into play.

How many times have we dealt with situations and people by simply letting the mind run through it's arrogant 'knowing', staying on automatic? How much have we missed by not being able to listen, or by running away into distraction? Can we learn to observe ourselves as we perceive, in the moment? As we go about our day-to-day

routine, instead of either insisting we already know everything already, or putting our hands over our ears and tuning out, could we observe ourselves, and watch the mechanicalness of our mind at work, without emotional involvement? Instead of rushing to defend our sense of self in every moment, could we tune our attention within to something more subtle, something less self-obsessed, and perhaps pick up the still, small voice within? Over time, we may find that this voice has our best interest at heart, even when we as ego do not. Eventually, we can come to observe ourselves in more trying situations, and be amazed at how dispassionate observation clears the machine from static. Our inner self can become our own best friend, if we learn to tune the receiver and listen to our 'feelings'.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " It matters not who in the world of time the mind may be; Truth imprints upon its tablet its own law. If that mind is so constituted, it can no more help reflecting the fact than a mirror can help reflecting the rays of the sun if at just that angle to catch the eye as well as to send the reflection that will come to the human eye that receives it. The receiver is just as important as the sender.
- " He who used Truth as a weapon, makes many enemies, but creates one Friend.
- " Thoughts are wreathes of evaporating intelligence. - Thoughts are composed of what one's vitality consists of.
- " Admiration is an unconsciousness confession of dormant accomplishments in the admirer.
- " The man who lives within the chamber of licentious thoughts, must expect to pay its rent.
- " Be careful not to allow the weather-vane to stick, or it will lie.
- " As we think and act, so are we. Our thoughts leave an indelible mark upon our features, while our actions leave monuments in the graveyards of the memories of others.
- " Just get into the game of being boys and girls. It is the most wonderful game in the world. Even the Master played it when He said "Suffer little children to come unto me. Forbid them not." As little children we can enter the Kingdom of Heaven -- but not as old men and women: for they are left behind to clean the cobwebs of old Mother Earth. " - Joseph Sadony
- " I've discussed the value of failure in creative work. Failure is terribly important.... The notion that failure is a negative thing is wrong." - Emma Thompson
- " No man, for any considerable period, can wear one face to himself, and another to the multitude, without finally getting bewildered as to which may be true."- Nathaniel Hawthorne
- " The greatest of all pleasures consists in the contemplation of truth." - Thomas Aquinas

Comic Philosophy

"Contrariwise, if it was so, it might be; and if it were so,it would be; but as it isn't, it ain't. That's logic."

- Lewis Carroll

"Creative minds always have been known to survive any kind of bad training."

- Anna Freud

07/27/07

Wei Wu Wei

"Only by creativity and the risk of failure can one succeed." - Paul Cornwell

This month's missal looks at the writing and life of Terence Gray(1895-1986), better known in spiritual circles as Wei Wu Wei. 'Wei Wu Wei' published eight books over a period of about 16 years, all in his own peculiar style of 'Zen Buddhism', drawing heavily on the works of Buddha, Lao Tzu, Chuang, Hui Neng, Huang Po, Hui Hai, etc., as well as the teachings of Padma Sambhava and Sri Ramana Maharshi. His interest in self-knowledge came later in life, though the seeds of his search were well planted early on.

He was born Terence Gray in England to Irish aristocrats, and lived his early years in Cambridge. He became an Egyptologist in the 1920's, publishing books on the subject before becoming involved in dance and the theater. He opened the Festival Theatre in Cambridge in 1926, and became a major influence on the dance and art community of the day, along with his cousin, Ninette de Valois, founder of the Royal Ballet. A defining moment in his life came along with the end of his artistic empire when in 1933 the Cambridge Footlights, many of whom where his former students, put on a satirical version of Gray's work. Humiliated, he left for France to take care of the family vineyards and to work with their race horses.

Years later, while looking up at the stars, he decided to become a mystic, and in a sense, Wei Wu Wei was born. He traveled through Asia studying various spiritual works and teachers, including a trip to Ramana Maharshi's ashram in India. In 1958, at the age of 63, the first book appeared, Fingers Pointing to the Moon. He was to write seven more, including many other works appearing in various magazines over the years, but kept to his pseudonym, even using another, 'O. O. O. ' He counted among his friends fellow Englishman Douglas Harding, and French writer Hubert Benoit. He died in 1986 at age 90 in Monaco, where he and his wife had lived.

Please be so good as to believe that there is nothing whatever mysterious about this matter. If it were easy, should we not all be Buddhas? No doubt, but the apparent difficulty is due to our conditioning. The apparent mystery, on the other hand, is just obnubilation, an inability to perceive the obvious owing to a conditioned reflex which causes us persistently to look in the wrong direction!

Wei Wu Wei had a consistent message throughout his work, that of dis-identification with the conceptual mind and its imaginings. The trap of conceptual thought, he insisted, was the biggest obstacle to our becoming free. By taking the thinking mind to be the real 'us', and to believe in its ruminations as reality, is the cause of all our problems. He continually brought the reader back to questioning his own thinking. His times of failure and humiliation earlier in his life could have led him to this questioning, and caused him to search for something more than the compensations of the ego in society.

While he writes adamantly about the necessity of transcending the ego and its rationalizations, he does not offer much in the way of method, and did not teach or lecture in person. He kept to his anonymity till the end. Whether he had come to a final realization himself may be questioned, but his work does show a progress from the theoretical to a more personal style as the years went by. He seems to write with more authority in the later books, with less reliance on quoting and conjecture. His main accomplishment may have been to bring the writings of the Chan Masters to the

public, and to show that failure in worldly life may not be a bad thing, if we long for something permanent and our aspirations go beyond the apparent.

The writer of these lines has nothing whatsoever to teach anyone; his words are just his contribution to our common discussion of what must inevitably be for us the most important subject which could be discussed by sentient beings.

Tricks and Traps

Trap: Cage of Conceptual Thought. We may believe that our theoretical understanding is equivalent to our experience. By being able to juggle word-concepts and understand intellectually the resultant meaning, we think we have solved the problem of existence on all levels. Thus such phrases as "All is One", and "there is no doer" lead us into an intellectual trap of belief in concepts as truth, and we pat ourselves on the back at having realized ourselves so easily.
Trick: Retreat from Error through Humiliation. Through careful self-observation, we can honestly see the disconnect between our thought-life and our factual one. This humiliation lessens the grip of the ego-mind, and lets in a bit of light. Though painful, it begins the process of loosening the concept-beliefs we hold unquestioned about our definition.

"We get into the trap of thinking that the written and spoken word have answers. - The great danger of the written and spoken word is that you will ingest conclusions without the pain of the growth. You can't do it. It won't work. You start to read in order to learn, but the problem is that we all use the written word as an opiate, as an escape from thinking, as an escape from the pain. It is a dangerous trap because in time you are forced to resolve every issue you ever came to in the mental realm. "
- Jim Burns

Commentary

"Although sometimes a traumatic event will help shake up the thinking processes, not all traumas are good. Some traumas may permanently impair the thinking faculties, such as memory. Yet some of the best wisdom comes as a result of surprises."
- Richard Rose

Success Through Failure?

Many of us find that we didn't really start seeking the Truth in earnest until we suffered some trauma or catastrophe that left us with literally nothing else to do. We had to find out what was going on with our life and who we really were, for the previous experience-based system had collapsed. Why is this so common and seemingly necessary in the search for definition? First, let's back up a step or two and look at how we are built, what our traps are, and then we may see the answer.

The personal ego-mind may be said to be composed of two parts: the emotional and intellectual. This 'self' that we call 'me' is upheld at bottom by the survival urge, which is emotional, to say the least. We usually can't see this far down inside until we are face to face with oblivion itself. Most if not all of our beliefs and actions are

emotionally based, and are then carried out and rationalized by the intellect. Few notice this, and many hold the firm belief that they, as intellect or mind, are making their decisions from a rational point of view. But if they looked a little closer, they might see that beneath the veneer of intellectual assuredness they are operating from a combination of fear and desire, which are most assuredly based in emotion. This experience-pattern of intellect fueled by emotion is called 'me' or 'myself', and is the thing we know the least about, having never questioned it in other than a 'self-serving' way. We may berate or praise ourselves, but seldom actually observe same.

This task of self-observation, rather than endless dichotomy, is necessary and darn tricky. It can only be done at first through the memory, second-hand. This is because of the gap of time that exists between the mind and its contents. We may think we are in the 'now', watching ourselves, but usually this 'me' that is watching is itself a mental construct built on an emotional need. The mind is composed of many such constructs, referenced by memory and built with projection, having no part in anything one could call a 'present moment'. Such a present moment, self-contradictory in terms, would only be possible in a dimension of eternity, not in one of time and space. In other words, we may see the thoughts of our intellect as it weighs a situation and then comes to a conclusion, but we may not see the emotional force behind it, or the process of the mind forming the various concepts necessitated by these emotions. We are always a thought behind, acting on the past to build an imaginary future.

Now all of this may sound too complicated to worry with, for it's easier to just believe in whatever theory we've found that flatters us, but the importance in this is the hold it has on our attention. We may think that we are free to point our attention at whatever view we wish, in any direction, but all we really see is the constantly constructed pattern of thoughts built on past experience, fueled by unconscious emotion. This is limited and peculiar to each of us, and completely encompassing.

An event of failure strong enough to change the course of our lives, such as befell Terence Gray, can be a blessing in disguise if we have our feet firmly under us, and have taken the pains necessary to improve our intuition. Then, if we find ourselves unmoored and drifting in a sea of doubt, we will have a chance to look within, for our attention may have been temporarily broken loose from its fixation on our experience pattern, giving us a clear but fleeting moment in which we can turn around, and see what lies within.

This brings up the question of whether one can manufacture trauma for the purpose of finding 'within'. One cannot, for the element of chance that permanent mental damage may occur is too great, if one is not ready. And all of us tend to think we are ready. The best one can do is to find those who have gone before and study their mistakes as well as their successes, while perfecting the intuition and reason. One must become healthy and whole before one can be emptied, for unless one is innocent and of sound mind, what comes to fill one may not be what one needs, for truth and realization.

Another point to be made is that the ego cannot enlighten itself. Any effort it makes will be on its own level, and only serves to further its dichotomy. The best one can do, is to make a commitment to a higher power, to one's inner self, that one will do all one can to further the search. Then one forgets about it. This is to allow the higher power to run the show in the long run, and to not let the ego's scheming interfere. After the commitment is made, and forgotten, we continue to struggle by working on improving the intuition, and doing the best we can with what's available.

We begin to understand that we are struggling in paradox, waiting for an accident; and just perhaps, the inner self will grace us with one, one 'we' will not survive.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- *" There seem to two kinds of searchers: those who seek to make their ego something other than it is, i.e. holy, happy, unselfish (as though you could make a fish unfish), and those who understand that all such attempts are just gesticulation and play-acting, that there is only one thing that can be done, which is to dis-identify themselves with the ego, by realizing its unreality, and by becoming aware of their eternal identity with pure being.*
- *" We do not possess an 'ego'. We are possessed by the idea of one.*
- *" Destroy 'the ego', hound it, beat it, snub it, tell it where it gets off? Great fun, no doubt, but where is it? Must you not find it first? Isn't there a word about catching your goose before you can cook it? The great difficulty here is that there isn't one.*
- *" The only real service we can render to that which we perceive and interpret in phenomenal existence as 'others' is by awakening to universal consciousness ourselves." - Wei Wu Wei*
- *" What do I teach? I teach people how to listen to themselves." - Gurdjieff*
- *" One should judge a man mainly from his depravities. Virtues can be faked. Depravities are real." - Klaus Kinski*
- *" The most propitious use of will is to will for the maximum good for oneself without endangering others." - Richard Rose*

Comic Philosophy

'Nearer my tail to thee', the kitten remarked -
as with a final desperate leap she overreached herself
and fell head-over-heels into the pond. - Wei Wu Wei

"A little nonsense now and then is cherished by the wisest man." - Willy Wonka

" The only normal people are the ones you don't know very well." - Joe Ancis

09/27/07

Benoit

This Missal takes a look at a twentieth century philosopher and doctor from France, **Hubert Benoit**. Best known for his book, The Supreme Doctrine (now entitled Zen and the Psychology of Transformation), Dr. Benoit was a psychiatrist, surgeon, violinist, and writer whose understanding of Zen and Traditional Metaphysics lives on today. Counted among the pupils of Gurdjieff, he wrote on the subject of Zen and its masters, being one of the first to bring this ancient teaching to the West. Born in Nancy, France in 1904 to a well-read family, he entered into the study of medicine. He studied in Paris and specialized in surgery, which he practiced until being gravely injured in the Allied bombing of the town of Saint Lo during the Normandy invasion in 1944. His injuries put a halt to his surgical career, and he became a psychiatrist, practicing for over thirty-five years.
During his long years in a hospital bed recovering from his injuries, he had the chance to fulfill a life-long yearning to understand the human condition. His practice of psychiatry and his books on Zen brought this to fruit. Besides his book The Supreme Doctrine, he published several others including The Interior Realization, which he considered his best. He continued to bring his work to others through his psychiatric practice and his writing until his death in Paris in 1992.

" Imagination does not bring realization, but only the fallacious hope of realization. - It is in the failure to master the imagination that human servitude resides."
- Hubert Benoit

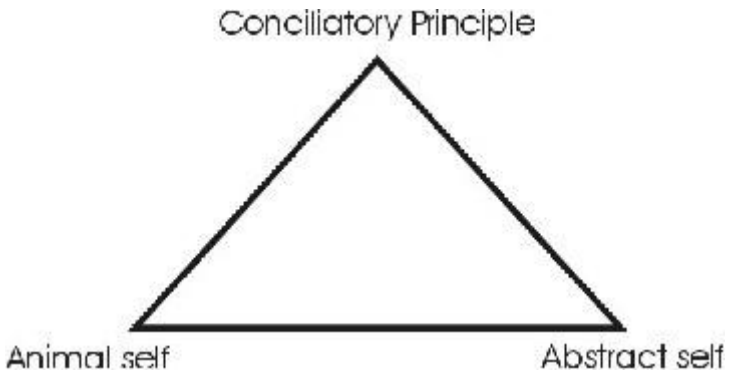
Benoit's understanding of our dilemma is explained in detail in The Supreme Doctrine. He tells us our problems with suffering are facets of our imaging process, the imagination, and never based in the outside world. They start from the misconception that we are a separate creature, an animal and/or abstract self, at risk of complete annihilation at the hands of the not-self, the world. The animal self is at odds with and the opposite of the abstract self. The abstract self lives in the imagination, in the world of ideas, while the animal self is the emotional identification with the body and its needs. One or the other of these selves is dominant in us, and the other is repressed or ignored. The animal self goes about its survival by accumulating wealth and security, using success or failure in the world to gain emotional stability. The abstract self finds its haven in the ideal, it's ego identifying with the intellect and thought. These selves can be either positive(preferable) or negative, depending on circumstance.

When I awoke into my life,
a sobbing dwarf
whom giants served
only as they pleased,
I was not what I seemed.

The Sea and the Mirror - W.H. Auden

Benoit goes on to say that each of us covers the feeling of having been separated from our divine principle(which is not in fact the case) through compensations, tools of the ego to keep us believing our life has meaning outside our true nature. These compensations eventually wear thin, and we keep having to find ever new ways to not

face the truth or facts of our mortal life and our near complete identification with it. The only way out of this trap is by the trick of letting the compensations run their course, or seeing through them at once. Through this loss of footing we come face to face with inner truth through humility. We cannot work at becoming humble directly, for that is yet another form of pride, but we can face our mistakes and humiliations, and thus see ourselves more clearly. This is another of the paths of retraction, a retreat from error rather than a gathering of ego and will. We come to see we are in reality what Benoit calls the conciliatory principle, the top point of a triangle, the base-line being our constant struggle to uphold one or another of the opposite poles. This principal is always present, regardless of our feeling of angst or loss, and comes into play when we realize our helplessness in solving the problem of life through ego and its illusory will. We have never been truly abandoned, but have become lost through identification with one of the inferior points.



I've found Benoit's The Interior Realization to be a compact work containing his major ideas, and a road map to realization if one's intuition is able to pick up on it. The Supreme Doctrine offers much more detail, but is rather weighty, to say the least. Art Ticknor's excellent explanation of Benoit's compensations and general ideas is worth a look, found at: http://www.selfdiscoveryportal.com/bzrecap.htm.

Tricks and Traps

Trap: confusing intuition with magical thinking. Wishful thinking is sometimes confused with intuition, for it provides an excuse for lesser or negative emotions to manifest. We may believe we are receiving higher hints about our actions, when in reality it's just an emotional obsession using our inability to reason clearly to get its way.

Trick: Look below the thinking/feeling for the motivating emotion. Double check the so-called intuitive message for hidden appetites or negative moods. Is it reasonable, and does it have your best interests at heart? Does it hint at the promise of something for nothing, an easy way out of decisions and commitments, perhaps distracting you from having to look at yourself?

Trap: Ignoring the real thing. We may also fall off the other side of the wagon by rationalizing intuition as muddled thinking, and not worth hearing. If we have never put in the effort to find our intuition, and don't have the energy to see why we should, laziness and pride may become our motivators instead.

"Many attractions in life are simply bait dangled before the eyes." - Richard Rose

Commentary

Something for Nothing

"We are what we do, not what we think we do."
"The fact that you don't act means you don't have conviction."
- Richard Rose

I've found as I get older that some of the seekers I meet are getting long in the tooth too, and suffer from a lack of conviction(inability to act) brought on by a combination of age and success in life. They have time and money relative to their youth, but are reluctant to use them towards their spiritual path. Perhaps this is not done consciously, but could be that a life-time of work and struggle, not only in the outer world but also in the realm of personality, vanity and ego along with the effects of aging, have left them almost unable to act any other way. The strange thing about them is their 'conviction' of commitment to the spiritual path, and the simultaneous lack of ability to act in that direction.

The following is a list of characteristics peculiar to this type of fellow and some questions for him in the hope he will see, and resolve, his paradox:

- You have heard that all is One and there's nothing to be done, and have used this to cleverly rationalize your inability to act towards spiritual work.
- You have heard that one must work on oneself even while going about daily activities, but have used this too as a rationalization to avoid actual involvement in spiritual work, especially with others.
- You find the view pleasing from resting high on the shoulders of those seekers who have gone before. Why do you refuse to carry someone yourself, to continue the chain?
- Your spiritual work consists mainly of reading and ruminating, along with some so-called self-observation while going about your business. Seldom does it involve actual work, even less work with others, and never work for the Work.
- Your comfort zone has been made secure by years of effort. Do you think you will make the trip within to the Truth by this continued comfort, both mental/emotional and physical?
- Any suggestion of change is met with cleverness, for you have become averse to anything that might rock the ego from it's throne.
- This vanity of being always right even extends to your ideas about the ego itself, as evidenced in your insistence that you will 'destroy the ego', thus entering further into dichotomy.
- Most of this occurs because of a deep-seated vanity that you are special, and thus have no need to involve yourself with the struggles of the less fortunate.
- When facing confrontation about your lack of action, you put on a polite yet knowing smile. Your sense of superiority carries over into spiritual work, and is defended by very subtle yet effective masks.
- You gravitate towards those that flatter your vanity, and if the going gets tough, you get gone.

- This vanity is your biggest block, and keeps you from your inner self, though you think just the opposite.
- When your superior attitude is pointed out, it is rationalized by declaring that underneath you still suffer from a feeling of inferiority. While this may be true, it is seldom worked on, and never resolved.
- If a meeting or retreat is attended, it's usually only once, for if there is no immediate profit from it, you feel there is no reason to go again.
- The idea of work being profitable only after years of constant effort has somehow slipped your mind. Possibly because your vanity says you have 'been there, done that', now it's time to relax and reap the rewards.
- You have found in business how to work smarter rather than harder and this gives you an edge over the competition, but what is it you actually do with this new found time?
- You expect teachers and fellow students to cater to your schedule and seem to have no sense of how much actual work and effort they have sent your way.
- Do you have an understanding that they are actually working, in actions as well as words, to get you to do the same?
- Do you think you could reverse the habit of feeling you deserve something for nothing, and start paying, with your actions, for what you take from teachers and fellow seekers?
- Something for nothing is a valid method of work, but only if it involves between-ness. You trade your 'something', the vanity of the ego and its suffering, for the inner self, which knows its own nothing-ness.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " Man is of the nature of God, but in a state in which this is not apparent.
- " The Gospel tells us that we must be reconciled with our brother before we pray; the balancing of our being in the conditions of everyday life represents this reconciliation. This means that a man may have to work long and laboriously on his ordinary nature before undertaking the work of transcending it.
- " Asceticism has in itself no efficacy -- at any rate where timeless realization is concerned. Nevertheless a certain asceticism may be necessary for the achievement of the inner state of maximum calm, without which the exercise cannot be properly carried out.
- " 'Moral' suffering working on the image-plane is closely bound up with the play of the imagination. It is in the failure to master the imagination that human servitude resides.
- " Imagination does not bring realization, but only the fallacious hope of realization." - Hubert Benoit
- " If the only prayer you said in your whole life was, "thank you," that would suffice. " - Meister Eckhart
- " An individual who hates his parents is probably more likely to become like them as the years go by. This individual would be better off if he were to respect them as struggling human beings caught in the flow of life. In this way, he can study his own inherent weaknesses and try to escape." - Richard Rose

- " Every man can be happy, and it is our duty to seek and find how." - Joseph Sadony

Comic Philosophy

" Dangerous, stupid work leads to discovering who you are." - Swain Wolfe

" Humanity isn't worth it -- this place is a Hellhole. Forget it and struggle for the Truth." - Richard Rose

12/20/07

Art

This Spring's Missal takes a look at **Art** and how it can be a medium for conveying insight. Many of the sages both ancient and modern struggled to convey their understanding to others,. The use of painting, stories, and movement to illustrate the silent unknown reality has been used as well as the mediums of prose and poetry. We'll take a look at some of the men who have struggled to transmit spiritual insight through their work, and why they believed it important.

William Blake was a visionary mystic of the late18th to early 19th century. He was a major poet, profound thinker, and one of the most original English artists of any age. A visionary from childhood, Blake struggled to reproduce his visions in various forms, from painting and prose to hand colored etchings with poetic text. Blake believed that the inner world of his visions were of a higher order than that of physical reality, and that ideals should be taken from that world of inner vision rather than from the world of matter. Blake lived his life as a poor artisan, and was not recognized as a major poet and artist until long after his death. Even though he was never a commercial success, he worked tirelessly right up until his death in 1827, convinced that mankind would profit from his efforts. He realized tension was necessary for creativity and spiritual progress, and never hesitated in his efforts to pass on his insight to others through his poetry and etchings.

" Is he honest who resists his genius or conscience only for the sake of present ease and gratification? " - William Blake

Ansel Adams was a photographer and pianist of the twentieth century, a pioneer in black and white photographs. He began his adulthood with the intention of being a concert pianist, but turned to photography when the ruthless business atmosphere of professional music became apparent. He was tireless, almost obsessed, with his work and would spend countless hours in the lab developing techniques to get just the right look to his pictures. Commercial success eluded him until the last years of his life, his work being driven by his need to convey a sense of the timeless to others. A review of the remarkable Ric Burns documentary on Adams from The Spiritual Teachers web site conveys this drive:

As a young man hiking in the Sierra Nevada mountains, Ansel Adams saw something that he would spend the rest of his life trying to convey through his photographs:

" I was suddenly arrested in the long, crunching path of the ridge by an exceedingly pointed awareness of the light. The moment I paused, the full impact of the mood was upon me. I saw more clearly than I'd ever seen before, the minute detail of the grasses, the small flotsam of the forest, the motion of the high clouds streaming above the peaks. I dreamed that for a moment, time stood quietly and the vision became but the shadow of an infinitely greater world, and I had within the grasp of consciousness a transcendental experience. " - Ansel Adams

Paul Rezendez is a photographer on the East Coast of the United States, and ran a nature and tracking school, all conveying his sense of the 'wild within' to others. While his work is mainly known through his extensive photo collection, his thoughts

on the why and wherefore of his art strike a chord. His definition of what he calls 'the wild within' is reminiscent of John Muir, and what I refer to as the 'listening attention'. On the wild within: " An uncultivated quality of attention that has within it no intention for anything to be other than what it is; an awareness that is the stillness of our innermost being."

" For me, photography is about awareness, about direct observation, uncluttered by thought. This awareness helps put thought in its place so it doesn't interfere with observation, yet is still there for its technical expertise. We usually think that thought orders awareness, but for me, it's the other way around, awareness brings order to thought. Creativity blossoms not from thought, but from awareness, something I see as an essential ingredient in any art form." - Paul Rezendes

The common thread among these men is not only their gift of insight, but their keen awareness of how this insight must be shared. In spiritual work, we may hear pleasant words such as 'all is one, there's nothing to be done,' and use them as a rationalization for laziness, pride, and fear, taking the path of no-action rather than non-action, and entirely miss the point. Non-action refers to our sense of self, not our deeds. Awareness and action do not interfere with one another. By conveying our sense of the infinite to others, we help to lift them from their identification with action, personality and the world, and thus bring them and ourselves a bit closer to true non-identification, and our Home within.

"The gross heathenism of civilization has generally destroyed nature, and poetry, and all that is spiritual. "

"Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in where nature may heal and cheer and give strength to the body and soul." - John Muir

Tricks and Traps

Trap: Feeling you are all alone on the Path. When insight is present, you keep it to yourself, for you think there is no one else to share it with. This can spring from either pride, being that you think we are all one(without actually seeing this) and that your experience must be kept pure and isolated. Or, you suffer from self-pity and fear, forming the belief that anything you know isn't or shouldn't be worth knowing, by you or anyone else.

Trick: Walk a mile in their shoes. By being able to step into another person's head and see their position, we become better at seeing our own. Thus, we realize that there are only so many varieties of heads, and that our own particular version isn't so special. We may even come to see that all of the above stems from self-love, an infatuation with our beloved ego in all its aspects, both negative and positive. By the attempt to see clearly what another is facing, we break the spell of self-identification and find ourselves in a place of universal being, above the trap of 'thing-ness'.

Commentary

We're All One

"We change personalities like chameleons to fit different social situations, hoping that others will buy our goods. How much time and energy is spent thinking about projecting the right image? We all have common ground. No one individual is inferior to another. Why should anyone meekly accept another's beliefs or theories or propositions out of fear? When trying to understand someone, look past his personality and try to get the whole picture." - Richard Rose

We often hear the comment that we are all one, suggesting that somewhere in the human experience there is a commonality, a oneness linking all individuals. While this sounds good and is easy to believe, how do we experience it in a real way, other than as a platitude or pleasant concept?

When I first attended the meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous, I came with a lot of ego, feeling that I was THE drunk, that my stories were much more hideous than the ones I was hearing from the other members. I felt I had had it rough, had drunk more, been more depressed, etc. Another member next to me saw this clearly, and kindly told me to 'look at the similarities, not the differences'. This advice somehow made its way through my ruffled feathers and hit home. I came to realize that everyone who came to these meetings felt the same as me, feeling that they were the only one in the room who truly knew what being a drunk was about, that the rest of the crowd's experience was somehow less than theirs.

This is a classic illustration of the ego at work. It must be right, 'better than' or 'worse than', whether that entails being the worst drunk or the best success. It separates itself from others in order to maintain its illusions of grandeur, for to be the same as everyone else would call into question its specialness. Maintaining control at all costs in its illusory world does not allow for others to enter except on their knees or as gods.

I began to see that if I followed the advice of looking for the similarities in my fellows, I came to see that we were all under the gun. The pressure of life and society had led many of us far afield; into fearful isolation, lost in the attempt to fit in at all costs. Any inner wisdom we had when a child was lost in a blitz of 'should'ves, would'ves, could'ves', 'if only's' and 'but's' so that we no longer knew where or what we were. We had looked outside ourselves for guidance, and had found it in endless mirror images of our own frustration and longing, our so-called fellow men. Could there be a way back to something more basic, to an inner wisdom common to all? If our outer problems were similar in pattern and limited, stemming from an ego-need to 'be some-thing', could there be a common foundation beneath us all based on other than fear and desire? I was sure there was, and began to look in earnest.

The guidance that led me in the right direction, back within to my own source, came at first from others. At least it appears so to our mind, being pure paradox if looked at too closely. All I knew for sure was that there were others who had found something, and some of them had opened their mouths, took up their pens or brushes, and told of it. I began to listen rather than argue or agree, and the effect was noticeable. In fact, the hardest part was just the learning to listen. I had been taught that one only engages in conversation in order to get to the part where it's your turn to talk, the listening part had until then been only waiting in disguise. This ability slowly increased until I could hear myself, and what a shock that was. Not as much in what I

heard, as in that I was no longer identified with what was doing the talking. I found I could turn the listening within and occasionally get insights about what to do next in order to further the process.

While this sounds like a pleasant journey, it came to catharsis when I realized without a shadow of a doubt that I was Universal Man, that what looked out from my eyes was the same awareness that looked out from all. This was traumatic, for it called into question any idea of individuality, and was a death sentence for that which until then had said "I". Relief came only later, when I realized I was free from 'me', that individual who didn't even exist except as a pattern of experience, frustrated and reactive only, may he someday rest in peace.

When we allow ourselves to see through another's eyes, 'walk in his shoes' so to speak, we find we become better at seeing ourselves. When we can understand, just a bit, some of what the men who have returned Home have struggled with their words and art to convey to us, we become better able to see our own inner world, with its symbols, patterns, and paradox. Beneath our struggling personalities, which must fight to keep their heads above water, there lives another, wiser self. This has been called soul or essence, wisdom or universal intelligence, and it waits beneath the waves of our selfish turmoil. If we take the time and effort to find the beachhead in us where thought and the formless collide, we might meet this Self. Then the words 'we are all one' will no longer be food for the ego alone.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- *" I saw no God, nor heard any, in a finite organical perception, but my senses discovered the infinite in every thing, and as I was then persuaded, and remain confirmed; that the voice of honest indignation is the voice of God, I cared not for consequences but wrote."* - William Blake
- *" When words become unclear, I shall focus with photographs. When images become inadequate, I shall be content with silence."* - Ansel Adams
- *" Every person who ever accomplished anything, and it is always one individual that accomplishes anything, masses of people don't make breakthroughs, would have far rather have been dead if he could have gotten away with it. It isn't worth it in any respect. It takes a crucifixion to generate an inner experience."* - Jim Burns
- *" When you teach your child the name of the bird the child will never again see the bird. "* - Krishnamurti
- *" Outside is pure energy and colorless substance, all of the rest happens through the mechanism of our senses. Our eyes see just a small fraction of the light in the world. It is a trick to make a colored world, which does not exist outside of human beings."* - Albert Hofmann - discoverer of LSD
- *" You have been imprisoned in an emotionally-based daydream state of thought most of your life. You have not realized it. "* - Roy Masters
- *" When people forget who they are, then fear seeps in."* - Swain Wolfe
- *" Why, then, O mortal men, do you seek that happiness outside, which lies within yourselves?"* - Boethius

Comic Philosophy

"If I had the chance I'd ask the world to dance, and I'd be dancing with my self." - Billy Idol

"There is nothing worse than a sharp image of a fuzzy concept." - Ansel Adams

Ansel Adams on being asked which to save first from a burning house - the wife or the negatives..."My wife - she could help me get the negs out! "

03/05/08

J.G. Bennett

This issue of the Missal takes a look at the life and learning of **J. G. Bennett**(1897-1974). Bennett was a British mathematician, scientist, and author. He is perhaps best known for his many books on psychology and spirituality, particularly the teachings of G.I. Gurdjieff. Bennett met Gurdjieff in Istanbul in 1921, and later helped to co-ordinate the work of Gurdjieff in England after Gurdjieff's arrival in Paris. He also was active in starting the British section of the Subud movement, and co-founded its British headquarters. Born in London, England, Bennett spent his early childhood in Italy, where he developed a skill in language that would serve him later in his travels and studies.

While in the Royal Engineers in WW1 in 1918, he was blown off his motorcycle by an exploding shell. Taken to a military hospital, operated upon, and apparently in a coma for six days, Bennett had an out-of-body experience that convinced him that there is something in man that can exist independently of the body. "It was perfectly clear to me that being dead is quite unlike being very ill or very weak or helpless. So far as I was concerned, there was no fear at all. And yet I have never been a brave man and was certainly still afraid of heavy gun fire. I was cognizant of my complete indifference toward my own body." This set his life on a new course - he described the return to normal existence as the return to a body that was now in some sense a stranger.

After the war, he remained in Turkey as an intelligence officer and thus met Gurdjieff and Ouspensky. Bennett became determined to pursue the search for a deeper reality, a search he would continue for the rest of his life. He didn't meet Gurdjieff again until briefly in1923 at Château Le Prieuré in France, and then again just before Gurdjieff's death in 1948. He continued to pursue his search while earning a living, and in 1946 bought Coombe Springs in England, founding the Institute for the Comparative Study of History, Philosophy and the Sciences.

This work of seeing oneself and of determination not to pretend with oneself is necessary if we are to make a step. It is possible to make an extremely good imitation of the Work that can deceive other people and can deceive ourselves, and yet leaves the real root of the matter untouched.

After the deaths of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky, he set out on a search for the roots of their teachings, and traveled the East in search of teachers in this lost school. Frustrated with his search, he returned to England and took on the work of keeping Gurdjieff's teachings alive, as he understood them.

In 1956, Bennett was introduced to Subud, a spiritual movement originating in Java. For a number of reasons, Bennett felt that Gurdjieff had expected the arrival of a teaching from Indonesia, and in spite of deep reservations, Bennett was 'opened' by Husein Rofe in November of that year. Bennett regarded the latihan, the spiritual exercise of Subud, as being akin to what the mystics call diffuse contemplation. It has similarities to the Quaker tradition, and depends on a passive 'receiving' from a higher power of what might be called Grace. He also felt that it had the power of awakening conscience, the organ that Gurdjieff regarded as necessary for salvation.

There is one Source of Help that stands beside and abides within us. All that we have to do is to learn how to ask and to receive the help that is offered.

By 1960, Bennett had come to the conclusion that the practice of 'latihan' alone was inadequate, and he resumed the work that he had learned from Gurdjieff. By 1962, after devoting himself selflessly to its growth and expansion, Bennett left the Subud organization, feeling that a return to the Gurdjieff method was necessary, although he maintained to the end of his life that he had derived great benefit from Subud.

By the autumn of 1960, the realization came to me that I had ceased to work on myself and had relied upon the latihan to do what I should be doing by my own effort. Without telling anyone, I resumed the discipline and the exercises I had learned from Gurdjieff and almost at once I found that my state changed for the better. The truth is that if our work on ourselves depended on spontaneous noticing, it would go too slowly.

Meanwhile, Bennett had made contact with the Shivapuri Baba, a Hindu sage living in Nepal. Bennett was impressed with the vitality and simplicity of the Shivapuri Baba's teaching, and later referred to him as his teacher. Bennett undertook to propagate the Shivapuri Baba's teaching, and made various attempts to incorporate it into his own work.
In the summer of 1962, Bennett gave a seminar on Spiritual Psychology in which the various elements he had received (particularly from Gurdjieff, Subud and the Shivapuri Baba) were integrated into a coherent psycho-cosmology. This marked a major step in his understanding of a comprehensive methodology that combined both active and receptive 'lines of work'. He came to understand that both direct methods and psychological work were necessary to move the Work along in the short time we are allotted.
Soon after, he became acquainted with Idries Shah, an exponent of Naqshbandi Sufism. Shah claimed to be a representative of the 'Guardians of the Tradition'. Bennett was astonished to meet a man claiming to represent what Gurdjieff had called 'The Inner Circle of Humanity'. Bennett eventually turned Coombe Springs over to Shah, who promptly sold it, and thus ended an era.

What is the difference between the kind of work that is imposed on us by the fact of existence, working to maintain one's own existence, to feed and to care for one's body and this Work? The difference is that the conscious work is not something that one is aware of instinctively. It is something that one is aware of because of one's human nature. But here something difficult enters as to the circumstances that make this work possible. It is certainly very close if not identical with service, but here we have something special. If we look at the way that Gurdjieff presents this notion of "Conscious Labour and Intentional Suffering" we can see that invariably, it is concerned with serving the future.

When the youth of the Sixties and Seventies began to question society and its goals, and following the prompting's of a still, small voice from within that said, "You are to found a school," Bennett saw an opportunity to again form one in the tradition of Gurdjieff and his Institute at the Prieuré, and so in 1970 began his International Academy for Continuous Education. Although various spiritual leaders had urged him to strike out on his own path, it was not until near the end of his years that he felt fully confident to assume the mantle of the teacher. Bennett relates how Gurdjieff had told him in 1923 that one day Bennett would "follow in his footsteps and take up the work

he had started at Fontainebleau." Bennett proposed that there should be five experimental courses each of ten months duration. The courses proved fruitful, and many people have continued, as he had hoped, to work with the ideas and methods he presented. He died in 1974, shortly after the start of the fourth course.

More than seventy years have passed since I began to ask questions and remember the answers. I asked my mother: "Why can't we see God?" to which she replied, "I expect He doesn't want us to."
This did not satisfy me then, but it satisfies me now.

Tricks and Traps

Trap: Unconscious motivations. We can hardly be said to understand others or ourselves if we are unaware of the true motivating factors operating on us from behind the scenes. While this trap is hard to point out convincingly without personal examples, observing our fellow man's blunders and mistakes gives us pertinent clues. In the realm of nature and sex we can see many examples of our doing something without understanding why other than the rationalizations of pleasure and fear. Seeing the consequences is only in hindsight, after the fact, or in having the pleasure of saying "I told you so' to our unfortunate companions.
Trick: Seeing the gap of time. Even science now admits that 'we' make decisions, move our limbs, and even see our world after the fact. There is always a gap of time between what happens and our ego's insistence on being the decider and doer. A little humility brought on by the true realization of this can do a lot to dispel the notion that 'we' as ego are in control and thus completely aware of why we do what we do.

Commentary

Double Trouble

The great difficulty in spiritual work is the ego. Whatever efforts or plans we devise to get beyond ourselves are started and carried out by that which we wish to transcend, and have the undesired effect of strengthening the very obstacle we seek to overcome. This is made even more insidious by the ego's natural ability to split itself in two, and thus ceaselessly chase its own tail while proclaiming its progress. Ego(ego1) as problem solver berates itself(ego2) as problem creator, and around and around we go. Any system or discipline is subject to the ego's trickery, but struggle we must. The very tension we produce from the conflict, if stored and transmuted, may provide the catalyst for an unexpected change.

Noticing two distinct camps in the field of spiritual endeavor over the years, I've come to see that a two pronged approach yields the quickest and best results. Let's take a look at these two methods, their strengths and weaknesses, and why both are necessary.

The first could be described as a passive listening, exemplified by systems such as Subud. When Bennett says," There is one Source of Help that stands beside and abides within us. All that we have to do is to learn how to ask and to receive the help that is offered.", this is what he refers to. Many teachers have expounded the merits of what might be called 'direct looking at the Source'. Douglas Harding's system of

looking at the looker, of seeing what you are looking out of, is another example. It has been said that realization dawns in a quiescent mind, one that is not filled with 'knowing', but is empty and sees its own nothingness. Gurdjieff said that we must start from passive Do(first note of the scale), meaning we cannot begin by projecting our destination and then going about making that desire-concept manifest. We must look for what IS, not for what we think we want or desire. This works on the ego's insistence that it 'knows' and is in charge as the doer, and undermines its authority.

While the above illustrates the good side of direct seeing, it also shows the inevitable downside. Many use this passive looking as an excuse to keep spiritual work only in the head, and therefore not allow any real change. They can become addicted to such platitudes as 'there is nothing to be done, for there is no doer, so just relax' and thus take themselves out of the search too early. The ego will grab hold of such sayings and use them to keep its power, and the game is soon over. We must hold tension if we wish to transcend our present state, not give in to laziness or fear. If our 'looking' is only in the thoughts and memory, no change occurs. If what we see is not admitted, our seeing stays in the head, and ignores the heart.

The second prong is the opposite of the above, being a psychological analysis of the mind. One begins to observe oneself, one's actions, thoughts, and motivations. Slowly, a picture of how one's head is put together comes into focus. We begin to see we are not what we thought we were, but are mechanical, a machine, governed by unconscious factors that don't always have our best interest at heart. We also see how our fellows are built the same, and see their flounderings as mirrors of our own. This also plays against our belief that we are an individual in charge of our actions, and distinct from all others. We see instead that we are just a bundle of reactions built up by life, and have no real being in a true sense. This too goes against the ego's insistence on being the real "I", capable and always right.

Here again, the danger lies in two facets. First, we may not take the above personally, but keep it safely tucked away in the intellect. We may see how the personality in others is flawed, and talk about our own, but somehow always manage to rationalize it away as regards ourselves. The ego will not let it go too deep, but keep it in the realm of theory and the 'other guy'. The saying 'the truth shall set you free, but first will make you miserable' applies here too, as well as to the path of direct looking. If we do not take what we see about ourselves to heart, if we cannot be self-honest, the ego will remain untouched. No pain, no gain.

The other trouble is that if we do not bring honesty and direct looking into play with our observations of self, we may come to like the game, and thus engage in a different form of tail-chasing: that of endlessly analyzing ourselves. We can also fall into the trap of becoming negative and judgmental, thinking that the search is about labeling and building hierarchies, in which we are always above and beyond. This is ego at its best, is tiring, and without good end.

The marriage of reason and intuition brings forth fruit. Any path that promises realization without loss of self, meaning difficulty and suffering, should be considered circumspect. And any system which promises to find Truth through the thinking mind only should dealt with just as warily. While some have made the trip using only one of these paths, most of us do not have the time and endless energy this may require. The ego's traps of desire and fear, pride and self-pity, can take any method and use it to take us farther afield. We need all the help we can get, use what you have.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " There is one Source of Help that stands beside and abides within us. All that we have to do is to learn how to ask and to receive the help that is offered."
- " The truth is that if our work on ourselves depended on spontaneous noticing, it would go too slowly."
- " It is not that feeling can control emotion. It is that consciousness can control energy. People think they can control thoughts, emotions or the body. It is not functions that we can control, it is the energy behind them. The secret of control is over energy, not over manifestations.
- " When you say "I know!" you close a door. When you say: "I don't know. I wish to know," then you open a door. "
- " Are our actions the same at all times, whether people see us acting or whether they don't see us acting? Are our thoughts the same as they would be if other people really could know what we are thinking? In other words, how far are we true people, and how far are we false people?" - J. G. Bennett
- " Chastity is more a state of mind than of anatomy.
- " In the modern technoindustrial culture, it is possible to proceed from infancy into senility without ever knowing manhood.
- " The basic question is this: Why should 'anything' exist? 'Nothing' would be tidier." - Edward Abbey
- " With commitment, all the rules change." - Robert Fripp
- " All is vanity and vexation of Spirit. " - Boethius

Comic Philosophy

" The very poor are strictly materialistic. It takes money to be a mystic. "

" When the situation is desperate, it is too late to be serious. Be playful." - Edward Abbey

06/12/08

Boethius and Marcus Aurelius

This month's Missal looks at two Roman philosophers, Marcus Aurelius and Boethius. Though they lived nearly three hundred years apart, their lives, spiritual and earthly, were similar, leaving a legacy which survived the dark ages, giving a light of progress for later times.

Marcus Aurelius (121-180) is sometimes called the last of the five 'Good Emperors', and his rule covered the last years of Rome's Golden age. He was well educated and showed an interest in philosophy in his youth. His reign as emperor was one of intelligent reform, though he spent much time in the field in the various border wars, and Christians were still legally persecuted under his reign.
While on campaign between 170 and 180, Aurelius wrote his Meditations in Greek as a source for his own guidance and self-improvement. This remarkable little book bears his chief legacy to future generations. In it we find the culmination of Aurelius's life, a fine example of Stoic philosophy and spirituality.

A noble man compares and estimates himself by an idea which is higher than himself; and a mean man, by one lower than himself. The one produces aspiration; the other ambition, which is the way in which a vulgar man aspires.

Aurelius lived a life of relative austerity given his position as lord of the Roman Empire. He took from life the lessons it taught, not as a means of ambition in life, but as a way of explaining it from a higher view point. He left a legacy of virtue and moral values usually unheard of from one in his position. He did not believe in life after death, feeling that all things in this world are disintegrating, ourselves as well, though he still lived an ethical life. He viewed death as a release from life and its desires, which he saw as misery and a trap. He died from the Antonine plague, believed to be measles or smallpox. His Meditations was first published in modern times in 1558.

To desire is to be permanently disappointed and disturbed, since everything we desire in this world is empty and corrupt and paltry.

Boethius (480–524 or 525) was a Christian philosopher of the 6th century, best known for his work The Consolation of Philosophy. He, like Aurelius, was born into Roman aristocracy and enjoyed a life of privilege. He rose through the ranks to become consul to Theodoric the Great, the Arian emperor in the later day Roman Empire. Being well versed in Greek as well as Latin, he took it upon himself to translate the works of Aristotle and Plato into Latin, a task he only partly accomplished. In later life his prominence evaporated when Theodoric accused him of treason and conspiring with the Byzantine Emperor in Constantinople against him. Boethius attributed his imprisonment to slander from his rivals and court intrigue.

While in prison he composed his great work, The Consolation of Philosophy, as a dialogue between himself and the 'lady of philosophy' who consoled him in his time of woe. He wrote of the impermanence of life, and its resemblance to a wheel. The high are eventually rolled over and the low exalted, change being the only constant.

"Inconsistency is my very essence," says the wheel. Raise yourself upon my spokes if you wish... but don't complain when you are plunged back down."

Boethius set down what he had learned in life, and prison, leaving for others a guide to something higher than this life of desire and fear. For him philosophy was the guiding light, rather than earthly pursuits. He left a remarkable collection of work, his Consolation being one of the most popular books of the Middle Ages. His later life of prison and torture, and eventual execution, led him to search within for meaning, and he left a record of what he found. He is considered a saint by the Catholic church, his feast day being October 23.

In other living creatures the ignorance of themselves is nature, but in men it is a vice.

Both of these men, though Roman aristocrats, found something beyond themselves, and somehow resisted the path of worldly temptation common to their lot. They left a record of their findings, and lived lives true to their beliefs. Marcus Aurelius, the Last of the Good Emperors, and Boethius, the Last of the Romans, found consolation in something beyond. We might do well to take a look at how and what.

Bless me in this life with but peace of my Conscience,
command of my affections, the love of Thy self and my dearest
friends, and I shall be happy enough to pity Ceasar. These are,
O Lord, the humble desires of my most reasonable ambition,
and all I dare call happiness on earth; wherein I set no rule
or limit to Thy Hand or Providence. Dispose of me according
to the wisdom of Thy pleasure: Thy will be done, though in my own undoing.

- Boethius

Tricks and Traps

Trap: mood identification. Becoming completely identified with our moods is a dangerous and expensive game. We believe in every thought the mood generates, for the intellect becomes a slave of the mood and it's negative emotional state. Once the mood gets hold of us, it's nearly impossible to break directly, we usually need an outside force, such as a change of scene or a friend.
Tricks: watch the thoughts and their targets, and keep plugging. Many times we believe the mood is caused by others, and waste valuable energy resenting them and their actions. If we watch the thoughts carefully over the course of the mood, we may see that the target of our resentment changes, and that anyone, even ourselves, will do. This gives a clue as to what is wrong: the mood is primary, not the target/victim. We may then get the insight that we're identified with a negative emotional state, rather than facts.

"Always do sober what you said you'd do drunk. That will teach you to keep your mouth shut."- Ernest Hemingway

Commentary

No-Mind: A Trilogy

" When Freud coined the phrase that the ego was 'the true seat of anxiety', he was giving voice to a very true and profound intuition. " - C. G. Jung

For this month's Commentary I've pulled three essays from the files, hoping to illustrate the problem of the mind or ego in our search for Truth. Being such a slippery devil, able to assume any shape, even split itself in two, we usually find our attempts to become objective to the personal pattern a vain struggle of the ego against itself.
Hope you find this useful. - *Bob Fergeson*

On Negative Emotions

Negative emotions are such because they are created by a false self, or created individual, and directed towards another false, created object or individual. Even if this emotion is 'love' or what's commonly called compassion, it is still false because it puts the particle against the universal. A created, separate object, or creature, placing another false object in a position of value, by definition places all other objects in a position of less value, and is thus negative as regards the whole. If we take a million such creatures loving a million self-projected creations, the conflicts thus generated are staggering. Now we begin to see why we live in a world of strife and misery. Every object which declares itself to be the designated giver or judge of love sets itself against another million such objects and their loves.

Only the Real can Love, and can only love Itself, or what is also Real. A created, and thus false, self can only love it's own creations, also false. The ego-centric position is thus negative, as it sets itself up against everything and declares itself to be individual and singular. We cannot truly love another if what we are is not real, and the object of our love is not also real. Love IS, individuals are not. The real in us can only love the real in another. The only way to experience a true positive emotion is to die, die to the created false self. Love wishes to manifest, to act. It does not wish to act at the expense of, or for the building up of, an individual thing. There are no individual things. Earnest investigation of any thing, whether physical or mental, will show that there is nothing there but what the mind creates. Honest investigation into the mind itself will produce the same result: nothing. A positive emotion can only be experienced or observed, it cannot be created and then directed towards another creation by a creature.

Finding the Inner Self

Two things can help us in making contact with the inner self. The first is the complete acceptance that we are mechanical, along with a willingness to listen to that which is not. We see we need help. The ego will resist any effort which would lead to its demotion, and the idea of actually listening to the still, small voice within will be tested at every turn.

The second is the storing of energy through conservation. We will need power, strength, and clarity of mind to pass through the valley of death and return to tell about it. The temptations and dissipations of a sensual lifestyle, the toys of

adolescense, must be put aside. We have time and energy for only one endeavor at a time. Our vitality will be needed to develop the intuition and the capacity for clear reasoning, rather than buying fun tickets for the amusement park of illusion. The capacity and willingness to listen to the Inner Self comes at a price.

Through this two-pronged approach of accepting our mechanical nature while storing our vitality, we build the possibility of coming into contact with that which lies beyond. Until we see that the mind in time is merely a tool, and not us, we will pass by the portals to the Inner Self, and our true nature.

Before we can develop a connection with our inner self, or true intelligence, we must be shown the stark fact that such a connection does not yet exist. In other words, we must see ourselves as we truly are, a SMAARP: a self-maintaining accidental associative reaction pattern, a robot. This robot may have the programming to make its way through life in a reasonable fashion, but it is sorely lacking in answering the fundamental questions about reality, Truth and our origin and destiny. Nature will assist the majority of mechanical men on their journey through life. It will not help with matters outside its domain. For this, a form of intelligence on a higher order than associative reaction is needed.

Food for Thought

Over the years I've noticed a strange phenomenon that has provided much food for thought, and eventually led to some understanding of the process of consciousness, or the reflexive mind. Looking at the mountains that surround my town, sometimes I've seen a glorious vista, a scene which causes my spirit to soar. At other times, I've seen piles of dirt and rocks. Usually, it's somewhere between the two. Rather than look at this from the point of view of states of mind that can color our thinking, I'd like to take a look at the mind itself, as an object of awareness.

What are we looking at when we see a scene? Are we gazing at the actual light rays bouncing off the object? Are we seeing a vision produced by the mind? Or are we focusing our awareness on and through the mind itself? If our awareness is located inside the mind, lost in the bi-polar brain as consciousness, then this consciousness sees only its self-created reflection. Being a reflected light in the duality of the mind dimension, this consciousness can only gaze at its own projections or reactions. The simple reception of the senses, and the projection or reaction of the mind to these sense perceptions, which can change with the wind, happen simultaneously, and so cannot usually be differentiated. Hence, we can look upon a scene and see two different things. One is simply the perceptions picked up through the senses, brought into focus and made apprehendable through the brain. The other is the creation of the reflexive mind, a reaction or thought pattern based on the individual character and mood of this mind or consciousness. In the first type there may be no understanding, but the possibility of the unknown remains, for no judgment or reflection has yet taken place. In the second, what we could call the 'known' associative pattern, there is no awareness of the process, as it happens. How can we retreat from the reactive consciousness and find a truer place beyond the realm of the insistent mind? Can we begin to see the consciousness itself rather than just the objects of this consciousness?

Effortless meditation techniques combined with deep productive thinking can help us learn to listen and see, rather than only insist we know. A result of these two types of meditation is to see the consciousness itself, which has an immediate effect. If we can see the mind creating its own reflection and judging it to be real, then we have

stepped back into the listening attention. In this silent mind, the awareness not only looks upon the view of the senses, but also becomes a passive listening, a looking back towards Awareness itself, so as to allow the possibility of the unknown. This dual gaze stops the projecting process and brings us into a quiet place of possibility, where there is no longer a reflexive mind. Here, there is no 'consciousness', for there is no 'I' or mind to be conscious of itself, for the reflexive pattern has suddenly ceased. Awareness has become free from the reflections of the dual mind, leaving us in a position to receive, rather than endlessly creating a parade of reflected images.

The very idea of this place of silence can be very disconcerting to the mind that still insists it 'knows'. We are so in love with our own creations, we never sense that they are only projections or reaction patterns. To see and admit that we don't 'know' is the first step beyond this mind. By making the mind itself the object of consciousness, we leave consciousness, and retreat from the circular pattern of reflexive thinking to enter the quiet realm of possibility and the Inner Self.

- Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " The first rule is to keep an untroubled spirit. The second is to look things in the face and know them for what they are.
- " To the wise, life is a problem; to the fool, a solution.
- " Our life is what our thoughts make it.
- " Nowhere can man find a quieter or more untroubled retreat than in his own soul.
- " It is not death that a man should fear, but he should fear never beginning to live." - Marcus Aurelius
- " Why, then, O mortal men, do you seek that happiness outside, which lies within yourselves?
- " Nothing is miserable unless you think it is so.
- " For in all adversity of fortune the worst sort of misery is to have been happy.
- " All is vanity and vexation of Spirit." - Boethius
- " Quiet is the absence of sound, silence the presence of silence. - Silence is a bridge between worlds. - Silence is not silent.
- " Suffering of quality is invisible to others. - We have the right to choose our form of suffering." - Robert Fripp
- " Soon the child's clear eye is clouded over by ideas and opinions, preconceptions and abstractions. Simple free being becomes encrusted with the burdensome armor of the ego. Not until years later does an instinct come that a vital sense of mystery has been withdrawn. The sun glints through the pines, and the heart is pierced in a moment of beauty and strange pain, like a memory of paradise. After that day . . . we become seekers." - Peter Matthiessen

Comic Philosophy

" The object in life is not to be on the side of the majority, but to escape finding oneself in the ranks of the insane." - Marcus Aurelius

"When we remember that we are all mad, the mysteries disappear and life stands explained." - Mark Twain

09/21/08

Padre Pio

This season's Missal takes a look at Pio of Pietrelcina, or as he was commonly known, Padre Pio (1887–1968). Padre Pio was a Capuchin priest from Italy who is now venerated as a saint in the Roman Catholic Church. He was born Francesco Forgione in Pietrelcina, Italy , and given the name Pio when he joined the Capuchin Order. Raised in a poor family by illiterate parents, he claimed to have experienced heavenly visions and ecstasies in his youth, and to see and speak with Jesus, the Virgin Mary and his Guardian Angel as a child, and assumed all people could do so. After hearing a young Capuchin monk, he decided to enter the order at the age of fifteen, though he had only three years of formal schooling.

"There was something which distinguished him from the other students. Whenever I saw him, he was always humble, recollected, and silent. What struck me most about Brother Pio was his love of prayer." - fellow student

At the age of twenty-three, Padre Pio was ordained to the priesthood. His time as a monk was one of hardship and ill-health. He once said that his health had been declining from the time he was nine years old. His illnesses remained a mystery to his doctors, though Padre Pio never become discouraged. He took it as a gift from God, and understood the value of suffering, of milk from thorns.
Spirituality for Padre Pio centered on the celebration of the Holy Mass. His Mass could sometimes last several hours. He entered into an ecstatic state; long pauses of contemplative silence at various parts of the Holy Sacrifice. The parish priest in Pietrelcina called Padre Pio's Mass, "an incomprehensible mystery."

"God knows that I want to say Mass just like any other priest, but I cannot do it." - Padre Pio

Before he was thirty years old he had already reached the stage of the spiritual path known as the "unitive way", union with God. He prayed almost continuously. His parishioners were deeply impressed by his piety, and a steady stream of the faithful began seeking his advice. For many even a few moments in his presence proved to be a life changing experience. To his spiritual children he would say, "It seems to me as if Jesus has no other concern but the sanctification of your soul."
The bleeding wounds of Christ, the stigmata, appeared on Padre Pio's body in 1918 while he was praying, he was thirty-one years old. He bore the wounds for fifty years, though he hid them out of piety and embarrassment. He also became noted for an uncanny ability to bi-locate. There are several witness accounts of him being in places far from Italy, interceding on someone's behalf. When asked about this, he replied that it occurred "by an extension of his personality." His reputation as a healer also grew and thousands came to see him and be blessed.

"I am dying of pain because of the wound and because of the resulting embarrassment which I feel deep within my soul. . . Will Jesus who is so good grant me this grace ? Will he at least relieve me of the embarrassment which these outward signs cause me."
- Padre Pio*, at the onset of the stigmata*

He had five rules for spiritual growth: weekly confession, daily Communion, spiritual reading, meditation, and examination of conscience. He compared weekly confession to dusting a room weekly, and recommended the performance of meditation and self-examination twice daily: once in the morning, as preparation to face the day, and once again in the evening, as retrospection. His advice on the practical application of theology he often summed up in his now famous quote, "Pray, Hope and Don't Worry" .

Tricks and Traps

Trap: Wishful Thinking. The ego's penchant for always being right can lead us into projecting desired outcomes onto our future, regardless of the facts or probabilities. This can be either a positive or negative dream depending on our current mood. It also has the effect of keeping us out of the present moment, and cut off from any pertinent information.
Trick: Self-Remembering. Call it what you may: self-remembering, meditation, being-in-the-now, looking-back-at-what-you're-looking-out-of, or the listening attention, it's the cure for desire and fear based thinking. Just be sure you're looking into the cloud of unknowing and not the fog of neediness.

" Everyone has a strategy they're pursuing to get what they want out of life. It may be conscious or largely unconscious. Becoming conscious of your strategy is a step in the direction of waking up."
- Art Ticknor

Commentary

Pride or Love?

" The things that are holding you up personally are the negative things that have happened to you."

" The person who has an ability to love has a much greater chance of immortality." - Richard Rose

The ego can only be right, whether negative or positive, and thus gives us a good clue as to its shenanigans. Usually the only way we can rise above it is by a sort of surrender, meaning we are overwhelmed by some realization from above, and haven't had the time to question it too much. Sooner or later the ego will make a move to take over any behavior we might manifest from a higher field, but our spiritual education may advance a notch in the process, if we pay attention.

Once I was working for a corporation, large enough to have several departments and it's share of office politics, and got such a lesson. It took a long time to become clear and sink in, but it was not forgotten. I had risen to the head of my department rather quickly by default, and soon had a large group under my wing, something I was not all together happy with. My boss, who headed both my department and another was a good man, who was rising through the ranks by choice rather than accident. He lived in a motel room most of the week, for his wife and home were several hours

away in another town. He didn't like the days of separation, but made the sacrifice for the relationship's long term goals.

As the year drew to a close, an end of season party was held with all the departments present. Ours was new to the company, having just been acquired, but had had an outstanding year, beating most others in sales and profit. My group and I sat together at a large table and listened as the various bosses gave their speeches congratulating their workers. We waited in anticipation as my boss took the podium. He gave a glowing account of the other department he ran, but not a single word on us. Our jaws dropped as we realized we had been ignored completely. I looked at the shock and disappointment on the faces of my crew who had worked so hard, and couldn't believe it. Soon this shock turned to anger and resentment. How could he treat us this way? We had given him and the company our all, and now not even one word of recognition, nothing. How dare he.

Leaving the banquet with the words of disappointment from my crew ringing in my head, I began to stew. As the night wore on, I lay there thinking of all the reasons for getting even, and how I would show him what for. I decided to quit, to walk out. When morning came and I finally rose from the sleepless night of plotting revenge, I stomped into the office, gave my boss a piece of my mind, then went down the hall and did the same with his boss. Before leaving, I told my crew leaders what I had done, and was amazed to see the look on their faces. Instead of being grateful they were crushed, saddened by my leaving, and perplexed at my behavior. Instead of basking in the glow of justified pride, I left bewildered and in doubt. I began to realize I was wrong.

As the weeks rolled on and the realization of what a mistake I had made by letting my pride override common sense, the situation came to a head in a dream. My old boss appeared to me, and instead of his usual corporate demeanor he was very humble and calm. He apologized to me, and explained his actions. He said he was so in love with his wife that he couldn't see beyond his own nose, and had only done what he thought was best for her and their relationship. I suddenly understood, as much from his presence as his words. He had acted out of humility and love, and though the results of his actions might have had different and unforeseen effects, he had not harbored any intent other than love. While the saying about good intentions does apply here, in my heart I knew I had wronged him, not the other way around. I awoke feeling quite humbled, and with a clearer view of myself, one that was not too flattering.

I had acted out of resentment and reaction from negative incidents, in my past as well as ones present, and had been blind to the motivations of my naive but good-hearted boss. While he had been unaware of the needs of some of his charges, he had acted innocently. While it may seem at first glance that there wasn't much difference between us, if we put intuition and reason into the game in a conscious manner, we might see the spiritual value. My motivation was pride, in that I felt snubbed by his actions, and also of fear, of losing face in front of my crew. His actions were naive, but from love, and had intuition and reason played a bigger part, no telling the good that might have come. Had intuition and reason played a part in my negative role, only more pain, nothing higher. My boss and I had both been pawns in the game of life, but he had taken the higher road, the one with spiritual possibility, the path of love.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " Pray, hope, and don't worry.
- " Prayer is the oxygen of the soul.
- " Take care of your spirit, flee idleness and all immoral conversation. . .always remembering the words of the apostle, that our virtue is preserved in very fragile vessels.
- " Don't lose heart if it is your lot to work a lot and gather little. If you considered what one soul alone costs Jesus, you would never complain.
- " Do you know what religion is? It is a school in which every soul must be trained, smoothed and polished by the Holy Spirit, who acts as a physician to our souls until, well smoothed and polished, they can be united and joined to the will of God. . .Religion is an infirmary for the spiritually sick, who wish to be cured and must therefore undergo the pains of surgery. " - Padre Pio
- " The point of reading is not to see the connections between Eckhart Tolle and Ramana Maharshi, how the work of Douglas Harding complements that of Richard Rose, or tally how many teachers use the phrase "awareness." The point is to find a practice and do it. Find a teacher that resonates with you and plunge in, do the work until you run into a wall, then try again." - Shawn Nevins
- " The energy spent on active inner work is then and there transformed into a fresh supply, but that spent on passive work is lost for ever.
- " We can only strive to be able to be Christians. " - Gurdjieff

Comic Philosophy

"The self considers itself to be a very special person." - Daniel Gilbert, Stumbling on Happiness

12/15/08

Shakers/Quakers

This missal takes a look at two similar religious groups, the Quakers and Shakers.

Quakers

The Religious Society of Friends, or Quakers, was founded in England in the 17th century. A Christian religious denomination founded by people who were dissatisfied with the existing denominations of Christianity, the Society of Friends is counted among the historic peace churches. The United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, or Shakers, is a religious group that originated also in England in the 1700's. The Shakers developed from the Quakers, but tended to be more demonstrative in their worship and ceremony. Both groups have tended away from a hierarchical structure or even creeds, but rely on individual inner revelations. This central concept of the "Inner Light", and belief arising from personal conscience and "God Within" separates them from the traditional Christian categories of Catholic, Orthodox or Protestant.
George Fox is generally credited with being the principal co-founder and important early figure in Quaker history. He rebelled against the religious status quo of his time by proposing an unusual approach to the Christian faith. Fox believed that direct experience of God was available to all people, without mediation. He gave up his trade as a cobbler and began to tour England as a dissenting preacher, for which he was persecuted and eventually imprisoned for a time. William Penn and Oliver Cromwell were contemporaries who viewed Fox with respect, apart from the mainstream who tended to view him as heretical. He kept a journal which was only published after his death, giving a good view of his personal journey.

"Christ has come to teach His people Himself." - George Fox

Worship for Quakers, or Friends, is roughly divided in two kinds: unprogrammed, and programmed. The unprogrammed form is the most original and is spontaneous and for the most part unrehearsed. Friends enter the hall in silence, and begin an "expectant waiting" for inspiration. When someone is inspired to talk, called "vocal ministry", they are also expected to give the source for their message, whether self of God. These talks are followed by periods of silence, with no debate or cross-talk. The meeting is ended when one Friend shakes another's hand. Programmed meetings were started to deal with larger numbers of members and follow a Protestant-type format.

Shakers

The Shakers were formed as a Quaker related group in the home of Jane and James Wardley in the early 1700's from the teachings and format of the five French Prophets or Camisards, militant Protestants from the Cévennes Mountains in the south of France. Wardely practiced this "possession by the spirit", and in 1747, Mother Ann Lee first made contact with his group. She later emigrated to America were the movement took hold, eventually having some 19 communal settlements with 200,000 members. Today only a handful of members survive in the one remaining active group.
Mother Anne was to some the second coming of Christ in its feminine aspect, and she generated the start of the movement in America. She emigrated from England to New

York in the 1770's to avoid persecution. Her group engaged in ecstatic dancing or "shaking" during worship, which gave them the name 'Shaking Quakers'. After reaching New York, they were called Shakers. They differed from the Quakers mainly in their belief in celibacy, and having nothing to do with marriage or raising children. The Shakers relied on orphans to gain young members to their groups. Early Shaker worship services were unstructured, loud, chaotic and emotional. However, later on, Shakers developed precision dances and orderly rituals, and wrote thousands of religious songs. The Shakers believed in the value of hard work, and everyone learned a craft and did their chores.

Some of the mainstays in Shaker life were expressed as follows:

1. Duality of the Deity, composed of a male and a female element
2. Ann Lee as the Second Appearance of Christ
3. Equality of men and women
4. Celibacy
5. Community of Property
6. Withdrawal from the World
7. Pacifism
8. Spiritualism
9. Open confession of sin
10. Worship expressed in dance and in march

Their belief in celibacy and hard work could have attributed to their slow disappearance, for by this century they were on the wane, and had only four members left in 2006.
Both of these groups believed and practiced a form of direct communication with a higher power. The Shakers took it further by finding ways to strengthen this connection. By taking personal responsibility for their beliefs, mainly that of the possibility of direct contact with God, they eliminated the illusion that a priest class was necessary for the individual to find his Source. All worked in equality, and worked as well on themselves, believing there was a higher life or existence possible if one turned within.

"Put your hands to work, and your heart to God."

"Labor to make the way of God your own; let it be your inheritance, your treasure, your occupation, your daily calling."

- Mother Anne Lee

Tricks and Traps

Trap: "Living in an emotionally-based daydream state of thought. " - Roy Masters. Unless our hitherto unconscious emotions cease to be our prime motivating factor, we are not capable of reasoned thought in any way other than rationalization for unchecked feelings.
Trick: Common sense. A period of meditation, morning and night, can clear the mind and allow common sense and reason to help. Feelings are a tool, much like

reason, and should be double-checked before rushing to assuage them. Check your mind at least a few times a day. Are you sure of why you do what you do? Are there pressures of guilt, fear, or desire beneath your actions?

" He had five rules for spiritual growth: weekly confession, daily Communion, spiritual reading, meditation, and examination of conscience. He compared weekly confession to dusting a room weekly, and recommended the performance of meditation and self-examination twice daily: once in the morning, as preparation to face the day, and once again in the evening, as retrospection." - Padre Pio

Commentary

The Love of Tail Chasing

"Every child is seduced into taking part in our game of life.
He loses direct-mind ability when he identifies with and participates in this dimension, and tries to manipulate it for his own petulant form of counter-seduction."
- Richard Rose

Trying to find the real part of ourselves with and from the ego is much like trying to save the economy by boosting spending. Both are based on the faulty assumption that one can find a solution by only acting on the level of the problem. A good economy is not caused by consumer spending, the spending is the result of the good economy. Likewise, the ego is not the cause of our awareness, but the result of it. This is much like the proverbial dog chasing its tail. We, as ego, see another facet of this ego, and chase it, thinking(from ego) that we have now found our ego and can finish it off, thus freeing ourselves. Silly, but true.

This problem gets its start back in our early childhood when some form of outside pressure caused us to forget ourselves, and react. We reacted to the pressure as if it was more important than us, and thus forgot our home in unmoving awareness. This change in value and direction was just the start. We then slowly but surely identified with our evolving outer mind, a creature that believes the problem of coming out of ourselves through pressure, and seeking meaning from the same realm as this pressure, could be solved by ever more clever reactions to that pressure. We became as the pressure wished, formed in its image, and were soon lost in the outer world. The inner self, our former identity, was lost, and we took our pressure-formed pattern of experience to outside forces, to be us. We come to feel we have lost something vague yet important. The mistake of looking to correct our pain from and on the same emotional level as our pain, spins us in an ever more dizzying dance.

We engage in this tail chasing in ever more fanciful ways as time and pressure dictate. Our past creates our future as we carry it into our present. We can more easily see this dance in our fellows, and even use the resulting judgment as another way to absolve ourselves to our own illusion of forward motion. Only when we become so furious in our whirling as to crash in a heap do we pause and reflect. We may then get a hunch that our movement is circular, rather than linear. The frustration from realizing the apparent helplessness of this dance might cause more missteps, giving us the striking notion that we cannot get anywhere by whirling in circles of emotionally-based thought and reaction, no matter how clever or profound.

What then? Perhaps in seeing the apparent hopelessness of finding the Truth through worded thought and self-belief, we may also see the need to marshal our scattered forces, and much like an athlete or soldier faced with an arduous goal, use them in a coordinated plan. If we are emotionally inclined, we must study reason, as much as we may despise it. If reason is our forte', we must humble ourselves to learn intuition and feeling.

Now comes the open secret. No matter how efficient and forceful we become, no matter how we believe and emulate the wise, we cannot force the outcome. So why struggle at all? In the struggle we generate a directed force, a vector. Through the diversion of vitality otherwise dissipated into worldly pursuits, we strengthen the mind, while at the same time saving the energy needed for its eventual demise. By looking into the seeming blackness back and behind our sight, we develop a direction, so that we might begin to move within towards our own unmoving center. We catch our tail in order to find it part of us, and ultimately realize that the 'us' which chases the tail, the tail, and the chasing, to not be us at all, yet is. A paradox all the way, but how else could it be, if you think about it.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " Be still and cool in thine own mind and spirit.
- " Keep within. And when they say, 'lo here', or 'lo there' is Christ; go not forth; for Christ is within you. And they are seducers and antichrists, which draw your minds out from the teachings within you.
- " You will say, Christ saith this, and the apostles say this; but what canst thou say? Art thou a child of Light and hast walked in the Light, and what thou speakest is it inwardly from God?
- " Take care that all your offerings be free, and of your own, that has cost you something; so that ye may not offer of that which is another man's, or that which ye are entrusted withal, and not your own." - George Fox
- " Life is neither good or evil, but only a place for good and evil." - Marcus Aurelius
- " When we become victims of pressure, decisive action becomes more and more impossible, for the law of life demands that we bring forth that what we have, or lose it altogether. Standing firm in our awareness of what is wise each moment, with patience, develops a tenacity to face any consequence and gives us the foundation we need to meet greater problems. " - Roy Masters

02/12/09

Maharishi

This missal takes a look at effortless meditation, TM, and its founder **Maharishi Mahesh Yogi.** Many of the effortless meditation techniques in use today found their modern popularity through Maharishi and his transcendental meditation technique. Maharishi(1918–2008) was the disciple of Swami Brahmananda Saraswati, known as Shankaracharya (Guru Deva) from 1941-1953. In the late 50's he began traveling, teaching his meditation and setting up centers for instruction. He became well known after meeting the Beatles, and continued to have celebrities and the well known for students.
The Transcendental Meditation Program has grown into a world wide organization claiming to have taught over 5 million the Maharishi's technique. Many others have their own versions of this teaching, claiming 'effortlessness' as their goal, and even the method. While the TM group and others may have taught many to remove stress from their lives and helped them in coping with the modern world, the money involved and the weight of such a large organization makes one wonder about the claims to spiritual attainment.

In the Maharishi's own words, transcendental meditation is *"a simple, natural program for the mind, a spontaneous, effortless march of the mind to its own unbounded essence. Through Transcendental Meditation, the mind unfolds its potential for unlimited awareness, transcendental awareness, Unity Consciousness — a lively field of all potential, where every possibility is naturally available to the conscious mind. The conscious mind becomes aware of its own unbounded dignity, its unbounded essence, its infinite potential. Transcendental Meditation provides a way for the conscious mind to fathom the whole range of its existence — active and silent, point and infinity. It is not a set of beliefs, a philosophy, a lifestyle, or a religion. It's an experience, a mental technique one practices every day for fifteen or twenty minutes."*

When asked why private instruction, with a fee, was necessary, he answered *"What happens is that the mind, in its active state, learns to experience its own less active states, experience its progressively minimized active states, until eventually it cognizes the transcendental state of consciousness. But in learning to do this, we must remember that the mind has usually been allowed to wander around so long in the realm of knowledge or power or the pursuit of happiness that it must be taught how to know itself again. That's why teaching becomes necessary."*

"Through Transcendental Meditation, the human brain can experience that level of intelligence which is an ocean of all knowledge, energy, intelligence, and bliss."

His teaching became increasingly concerned with world peace and harmony, with mass meditations to promote this, even to the extent of trying to influence elections. In his early days he seems to have been more concerned with the spiritual side, before the organization became so affluent. I've met one of his students from the earlier days, and he feels the Maharishi's teaching was then focused primarily on effortlessness.

The idea of meditation being 'effortless' is much talked and written about, but also much misunderstood. In my experience, this 'effortless-ness' can mean two very different things. On the down side, it can be a cop-out from the very work necessary for most of us to obtain our true state as the effortless observer. One cannot find truth

by wishing it in the imagination, no matter how much thinking and talking one uses. Maharishi himself said that " to realize this(the effortless state of realization), one has to be liberated from unnatural programs, performances and experiences". If the ego wishes to escape these traps of the mind, it may latch onto an easy way out through the very imaginative projection system that got it into trouble in the first place. This is not transcendence.

"The important thing is this: to be able, at any moment, to sacrifice what we are for what we could become."

Most of us have had tastes of this transcendence, through trauma, drugs, accident, or the presence of another, but finding it again in everyday life requires the removal of what masks it: the negative reaction pattern of the over-imaginative thinking mind. As the Maharishi also talked about, in transcendence we fulfill desire at its source in the present, rather than through compensation after the fact. For most of us, this requires much effort in clearing the field. Paradox is also a good sign, it indicates we're getting close to the limits of the mind.
In the quest for effortlessness, it may be best not to confuse our desire to be free of tension, with the means to rid our minds of this tension. The hidden emotional patterns formed throughout our life time may be the stuff of dreams, but only wishing for their disappearance is yet more dreaming. During our meditation we may come upon these patterns, and find by consciously facing them we dissolve them, ridding ourselves of the very energy knots that disturbed our mind in the first place. Intuition can see how this happens. We may also catch glimpses of effortless-ness, and thus finally see how meditation works.

Tricks and Traps

Trap: The Imprint of Stress. We grow up in a hierarchical structure, whose function is to pass along stress in order to get through the day. This may leave an indelible but unconscious imprint on our emotional state. We find ourselves automatically drifting into this same point in whatever hierarchy we find ourselves in in the present, whether it be family or the work environment. The following illustrates the structure and flow of stress and emotion.

The boss stresses out the worker,
who then argues with his spouse,
the wife yells at the son,
who calls his sis a louse.
The sister smacks a brother,
who's had enough of that,
so he kicks the dog, who runs outside
to bite the boss's cat.

They all declare they hate it so,
but round and round this world they go.

Trick: Conscious Review. In order for meditation to be effective, we review the negative hotspots in our past until we can get some emotional distance on them. We may then begin to see our meditation progress more rapidly, when the inner turmoil

has been consciously dealt with. The resentment and need to blame has been faced, and thus faded from our emotional state, leaving a clear field.

Commentary

Fear of Effort

" Man must develop a system of work, and work with persevering dynamism. Our immortality is dependent not on our ability to extend our personal illusion indefinitely but to transcend it."
- Richard Rose

One reason many find the idea of effortless meditation so appealing is their fear of effort and its consequences. They may have come from a negative environment, causing them to feel any decision or effort would lead only to more negativity and failure, thus forming in their thinking a desperate need to avoid all real involvement or responsibility. The appeal of an ashram lifestyle, with no stress or effort required other than pleasant dreams would certainly seem like a good compensation for the unrelenting emotional reaction patterns still active in their minds.

Modern psychiatric drug therapy works in much the same way. The persons conscious mind is kept separated from the turmoil of the unconscious emotional state through manipulating brain chemistry. While both of the afore mentioned methods for avoiding one's self are valid for those in dire need of rest and recovery, they eventually rob us of any chance for spiritual realization if continued unabated. We cannot believe we will find the truth by wishing ourselves into bliss, or by hiding behind a wall of drug induced safety. But if we have the intuition there is another way out of this prison of dreams, sooner or later we will need to face what might lie within the labyrinth of our own minds.

There's a story of a man whose fears boxed him into the point where he could no longer leave his house. He was convinced that if he set foot outside, he would surely die. He couldn't stand his hell any longer and decided death was preferable to the living dungeon of fear and isolation he found himself in. The method he chose for his suicidal delivery was to go outside, get in his car, and drive. He was convinced this would lead to certain death. To his surprise, nothing happened, he just kept driving. The spell was broken and he eventually came to lead a normal life.

We too may feel that the world is hell and our involvement in it our downfall, a valid intuition. But if this only leads to boxing ourselves up in a tiny part of our mind, afraid to face the fears of its own making, we've only fallen for the trap of fear and laziness. When we've had enough, and even death seems preferable to this dungeon of thought and feeling, we may decide to leave the mind, good and bad, whatever the cost. What a surprise when from our new vantage point we find it to be nothing more than a very well developed dream machine, with proper uses to boot as well as its dungeons and dragons. Facing our fear of falling, we leave the nest; transcending our mind, we learn to fly.

This soaring above the field of play requires a certain effortless- effort, much akin to simple attention, and a paradox to the mind. This attention is not identified with the objects it sees, but is free in its very watching. It is effortless, but not asleep to itself, and most importantly, it does not indulge in the emotions of fear and desire it may see below, having come to rest behind and beyond the mind and its feelings. It is found not by pulling the covers over our heads in the vain hope things will get better

because we wish it, only, but because we face our mind and its creations, and get to the bottom of it. We get out of bed, leave the house and take a drive, and lo and behold, we become that which contains the playhouse, rather than the character involved therein. Find out who you really are, rather than indulging in what you've been told you should be.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " Having the Kingdom of Heaven within you, you have no right to suffer in life, you only have to enjoy the grace of God.
- " Nothing from outside can stop a man from enjoying lasting peace and permanent joy in life, for it is the essential nature of his own soul.
- " Whatever we put our attention on will grow stronger in our life." - Maharishi Yogi
- " Correcting oneself is correcting the whole world. " - Ramana Maharshi
- " What I suspect we need is not any kind of path or discipline, but a collection of tricks or devices for catching the Dark at the corner of the eye, as it were, and learning how to spot its just-waiting-to-be-seen presence, combined with strategies for stopping the hyperactive survival-programmes from immediately explaining the perception away." - John Wren-Lewis
- " Life is empty and meaningless. It is in emptiness that we create possibilities for extraordinary results. " - Aron Ralston

Comic Philosophy

" Yo, yee Pharos, let us walk through this barren desert in search of truth, and some pointy boots, and maybe a few snack crackers."
- Southern Culture on the Skids

Idiocy: never underestimate the power of stupid people in large groups.
- George Carlin

04/13/09

Dialogue

This month's Missal examines the art of spiritual communication in the form of Dialogue and confrontation. Meeting in small groups, online discussions, and scheduled meetings, this technique can be invaluable for the earnest seeker in search of a better look at himself. The meetings are somewhat paradoxical in that there is no goal other than self-discovery. A topic may be chosen to get things moving, but the purpose is not one of reaching consensus or compromise, but of receiving a glimpse into the unconscious motivations of one's own mind. The idea is not to prove a point or to persuade, but to reveal the workings of the ego in the minds of the participants.

The renowned physicist **David Bohm** became interested in how people might work together to move beyond the trap of thought and its potential to fragment and delude. To find a way to probe the fundamental problems of existence, he became involved in conversations with **J. Krishnamurti** in Ojai, California, and developed an idea for meetings he called Dialogue. He refined this technique with colleagues Donald Factor and Peter Garrett as a leaderless, agenda-less large group inquiry into the motivations, assumptions, and beliefs underlying our thought and communication. Together they published Dialogue, A Proposal in 1991.

" Dialogue is a way of observing, collectively, how hidden values and intentions can control our behavior, and how unnoticed cultural differences can clash without our realizing what is occurring. It can therefore be seen as an arena in which collective learning takes place and out of which a sense of increased harmony, fellowship and creativity can arise." - David Bohm, Donald Factor, and Peter Garrett

" A key difference between a dialogue and an ordinary discussion is that, within the latter people usually hold relatively fixed positions and argue in favor of their views as they try to convince others to change. At best this may produce agreement or compromise, but it does not give rise to anything creative." - David Bohm & David Peat

Another method of using a group setting to further one's discovery of one's self, is confrontation, or friendly questioning. This method is practiced in the TAT Foundation's groups and meetings, and was pioneered by founder **Richard Rose**. These meetings are held in person as well as in regular online groups. The meetings use questioning of the participants to reveal the underlying motivations for their thinking and acting, and can have profound results if the participants gather in a spirit of friendship and determination in finding the truth about themselves. As in Dialogue meetings, speaking is not mandatory, and periods of silence often reveal answers. As one becomes more comfortable and trusting, active participation can take place. A monitor is used in confrontation to ensure the questioning does not turn towards personal agendas, and to keep the propensity for giving advice under wraps. The group challenges the thinking revealed by the members in a manner that points out the hidden beliefs that drive them, leaving the members with a better view of their own minds.

" The meetings are a mix of discussion and questioning with the overall aim of understanding ourselves and our minds better. Meetings begin with an open discussion of the topic for the week which serves as a catalyst for self inquiry. After

the initial discussion the meeting moves toward questioning one another. This often takes place in a conversational format and the point of the questioning is to help each person retreat from untruth in themselves - to see where their own thinking might be clouded by desires or fears, where they might be rationalizing or if they might have unchallenged assumptions and convictions. The meeting is not intended for people who want to get together and idly talk about philosophy as an exercise and demonstration of their intellect. Meetings embody the spirit of friendship and are for people who want to take an honest look at themselves and confront the questions that are bothering them and who have a suspicion that the answers lay within. Many people who participate in this process over time will find that their thinking becomes more clear and that they understand themselves and others better." - Jeff Crilley

Both Bohm and Rose saw the necessity in using group work to reveal the mind. They saw how most of us need help from our fellows on the long journey from particularized thought to universal silence. To travel from incoherent, individualized, and often obsessive thoughts, to the realization of the meaning of silence and common purpose, is jump-started with group effort. The unconscious and largely negative thought patterns that run our lives are at first seen as both the problem and solution. After this seemingly endless tail chasing has run us up the creek of thought without a paddle, we may come, through the help and energy of group work, to see that the solution lies above and beyond the level of the problem.

" Thought is creating divisions out of itself and then saying that they are there naturally. Thought is constantly creating problems that way and then trying to solve them. But as it tries to solve them it makes it worse because it doesn't notice that it's creating them, and the more it thinks, the more problems it creates. What is the source of all this trouble? I'm saying that the source is basically in thought. Many people would think that such a statement is crazy, because thought is the one thing we have with which to solve our problems. That's part of our tradition. Yet it looks as if the thing we use to solve our problems with is the source of our problems. It's like going to the doctor and having him make you ill. In fact, in 20% of medical cases we do apparently have that going on. But in the case of thought, its far over 20%."
- David Bohm

Thought can only be resolved from the realm of no-thought; life and action only understood from the dimension of silence and stillness. The group setting of Dialogue and confrontation lends the help of a higher dimension to the individual mind, revealing what it is by showing what it is not.

" I do believe there's a system that searches for the Truth, and it's a process of challenging everything. It's good to challenge a person's thinking.
You get them out of their daydreaming by saying,
" Hey -- what are you thinking? Why are you thinking it? " - Richard Rose

Tricks and Traps

Trap: Self-Pity. In the endless game of ego-maintenance, we bounce back and forth between the poles of getting what we want and being denied same. Thinking relief

from the ego's deflation cycle comes from wallowing in self-pity until a change of circumstance breaks the spell, we fail to rise above the trap.
Trick: Help another. The relief can come from helping others. When we look at the problems of our fellows, we see the issues without the threat of ego-deflation and thus get a clearer view. If we put the adage "We are all One" to the test, we see that the tension in another is ours as well, and its release, our relief. We then realize that helping another is helping oneself, and when practised, we feel how it works. If we turn the lesson on ourselves, we may see that viewing our problems with a bit more objectivity is more efficient, and thus has the added effect of freeing our fellows from having to deal so much with our mess as well.
Trap: You like it. We might come to like the feeling of ego inflation we get from being such a wonderful helper, and forget to see what the above has actually been pointing to: we are not that which does good or bad, but that which observes.

Commentary

Identification

" The view is not the viewer." - Richard Rose

In the search for our true identity, no problem is more pronounced than that of confusing what we see and what sees it. We become so hypnotized by the endless parade of images we come to feel at one with them all. We lend meaning and value to what we see, until we believe we have become what we see. The mass of experiences we give meaning to are the pattern we come to call our 'selves', and any new experience that happens along is judged solely by how it flatters or threatens this pattern. We have come so far afield from anything even close to what we really are, it's no wonder the journey home is difficult, and so paradoxical.

In any instance where we might attempt to see who or what we really are, the mind calls forth an associated image and then judges it's relevance. We then say "I" to it, if it fits the bill. We are forever looking out of ourselves, for ourselves, and relying on what's not us, to tell us what is. This process of projection, judgment and subsequent identification is never questioned in and of itself, only endlessly refined. In an average lifetime, it's quite easy to never run out of things to be, the choices are legion.

Let's examine an inner dialogue of the sort that self-examination can produce. You hear that you should just look back at what you're looking out of. OK, you say, there's nothing there? Exactly. You now feel confused? So you think you're a feeling? Who's feeling this feeling? You are? Look behind the feeling. Again, nothing. Now you feel stupid? Well, maybe, but let's keep looking. You remember something you read, what your teacher said? No, very quick, before the image/feeling can take over. What do you see? Still nothing? If you can hold onto this instant of seeing 'nothing', for even the split-second before an image/feeling fills the space, you're on the right track. If something in you feels vaguely threatened by this, that's good news. Keep looking.

We find when trying to examine ourselves directly, we can't help but put associative images up on the inner screen of our mind. Let's try a little trick. Look at an object in front of you, preferably something still and relatively common. Just look at it. No judging, projecting, thinking, relating, associating, feeling, remembering; just look. If you can do this for even an instant, things may become clearer, calm and still. This is the absence of the projecting mind. What's left? Nothing much. Only you, the

eternal observer of mind and matter, the infinite witness of feeling and believing. Behind the precious intellect, beyond the hallowed hall of feelings, lies the listener. This unlimited clear space has room for all, and need for none.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " Thought runs you. Thought, however, gives false info that you are running it, that you are the one who controls thought. Whereas actually thought is the one which controls each one of us.
- " Of course, one of the main legitimate functions of thought has always been to help provide security, guaranteeing shelter and food for instance. However, this function went wrong when the principle source of insecurity came to be the operation of thought itself.
- " We haven't really paid much attention to thought as a process. We have engaged in thoughts, but we have only paid attention to the content, not to the process." - David Bohm
- " Thought is generally considered to be a sober and weighty business. But here it is being suggested that creative play is an essential element in forming new hypotheses and ideas. Indeed, thought which tries to avoid play is in fact playing false with itself. Play, it appears, is the very essence of thought. This notion of falseness that can creep into play of thought is shown in the etymology of the words illusion, delusion, and collusion, all of which have as their Latin root ludere, "to play." So illusion implies playing false with perception; delusion, playing false with thought; collusion, playing false together in order to support each other's illusions and delusions. When thought plays false, the thinker may occasionally recognize this fact, and express it in the above words." - David Bohm & David Peat
- " Watching the thought processes will stimulate us to purify and clarify them. And analysis will, with increased clarity, enable us to see the anatomy of thought more clearly.
- " At the same time that we examine ourselves psychologically, we should examine ourselves directly. There are important questions, of which we should always be aware. We should now look at thought itself, and look for the relationship between awareness and thought." - Richard Rose
- " What I mean by realization is living, being energy that is aware or awake to what is, or to what is arriving in the moment. An awareness that is at rest and has no intention for anything to be other than what it is. Although it is at rest and has no intention, it can have a dramatic action on the movement of thought in a person's life. This action takes place out of time, and without a doer. It is an action that does not come from a center, nor is it linear. In other words, it is not a reaction. When a person is realized, this awareness is the unresisted perspective in a person's life, a perspective without a center, and without fear or pride. " - Paul Rezendes
- " No brims nor borders such as in a bowl we see, my essence was Capacitie." - Thomas Traherne
- " Make peace with your past so it won't screw up the present. " - Regina Brett

Comic Philosophy

If a relationship has to be a secret, you shouldn't be in it. - Regina Brett

I sometimes lie awake at night trying to think of something funny that Richard Nixon said. - Lyn Nofziger

06/30/09

Dreams and Journaling

This missal examines two related indirect methods of self-discovery: dreams and journaling. Many of us have encountered the slippery nature of our own ego. We often fall prey to the ego's ability to split itself in our search for our inner guide, and find our intellect and feeling easily fooled. By using a third party such as journaling or dream work, we can step outside of the many facets of ego and gain an impartial view of the creature we call ourselves.
Many find dream work and journaling through the advice of others, or are simply fascinated by web sites and the writings of famous authors. If one has the intuition that these tools could be of service in getting a glimpse of themselves unafforded by normal consciousness, consider yourself lucky, and get to work. The realization that much of what we think about ourselves is fantasy, wishful thinking and hearsay is not flattering, especially at first, but leads to an adventure like none other: the discovery of ourselves as we really are.

Journaling could be thought of as the waking states form of dream work. We write about what we see inside our head, and ponder why we do and think the way we automatically do. We can even write out our fantasies and daydreams, treating them as dream material for clues as to our inner fears and desires. The journal serves as an impartial record, to correct our memory and provide relevant material. Reading through a journal after many weeks can give a shocking view of one's state of mind of the time, when the current process of rationalization and projection looses its focus. We can get an idea of what state of mind we might currently have, as opposed to the story we usually tell ourselves.
Journaling should be a long term endeavor, for many patterns and moods endlessly repeat. We may tend to forget this, thinking that the mood or state was temporary, or the pattern of thinking only a one shot affair. Journaling can reveal these patterns over time, and even return us to the forgotten wisdom of old, showing how the 28 day pattern of the moon and the cycles of the seasons affect us, and are part of our own makeup.

"A journal helps greatly so that you're not dependent on a memory that's subject to painting the picture erroneously. The journal should document what beliefs you have about what you are, which ones you've worked on and have seen through, and which one you're currently investigating." - Art Ticknor

"Journal writing is a voyage to the interior. " - Christina Baldwin

" When my journal appears, many statues must come down." - Arthur Wellesley

Dream work is a similar endeavor, but a lot of honest work is needed in the understanding of it. The reward can be greater as well, for in our dreams we may loose the ego safeguards that protect our precious self-concepts. The study of our dreams can be a first step into the mind, and a doorway to our unconscious. Our true motivations, the discovery of energy knots and hidden egos, can also be found through dreams. The business of modern life with its hectic demands on our time and minds, leaves us little space to reflect and listen to our inner self. The down time of sleep is when the inner self can have a field day through the means of dreams.

Much can be said about dream interpretation. The single most important aspect of this is to remember that you, and you alone, are the judge of what they mean. Your dreams are just that, your dreams. While there are symbols common to all of us, we may have very different associations regarding them. Depend only on your own 'felt validity'. You will come to know when a dream is dead right in showing you something about yourself.
To start, remember before going to bed that you wish to remember your dreams. A nightly meditation practice can help relax the mind before sleep. Place a pencil and paper or tape recorder next to the bed, or use your laptop with dream journaling software. If you wake during the night, write down any dreams so far. In the morning, schedule enough time not only to write down the night's dreams, but also to sit with them for awhile and put the dream into memory. .
Dreams as a great way to clean out the inner ghosts by becoming aware of them. We may become aware of these mind patterns only through the relatively safe haven of dreams, then carry the knowledge into day-to-day life. When writing in the journal, remember to title the dream, and stay in present tense. Remember, you are the ego-character in the dream, there is no real stable 'you' character, so to speak, just different roles you identify with. The dream, and life, must be interpreted from an outside viewpoint, not from only the view point of the ego-dreamer. Both sides must be understood. What patterns continually come up? What is the mood of the dream, the feel? The feeling state associated with it is important. What in daily life has a similar feel? Keeping a dream journal for a length of time is essential too, as the repeating patterns of dreams over time tells us much.

"You are always the final judge of what to believe they mean. By working with dreams, we can transcend mere opinion — yours, mine, and society's—about how to live. One huge reward is to discover in dreams our own interior source of wisdom."
- Dr. Ron Masa

" While men are dreaming, they do not perceive that it is a dream. Some will even have a dream in a dream, and only when they awake do they know it was all a dream. And so, when the Great Awakening comes upon us, shall we know this life to be a dream. Fools believe themselves to be awake now." - Chaung-tzu

Dream interpretation can be a fascinating adventure, making our nighttime hours an exciting source of self-discovery. Help in interpreting the information can be had from many sources, so put on the dreaming body and see what's happening inside the world of your own mind.

Tricks and Traps

Tricks: Here are three tricks to bridge the gap between our ego/idea of ourselves and our fact status:

1. Practice a technique for seeing the personality indirectly. In the beginning, we may not be able to see ourselves directly, so the use of techniques such as dream study or journaling can help get us started on the path of self-discovery. Reading back through a journal can be a shock, we may think we are an earnest, positive and altruistic

seeker, when the journal notes may show us to be a negative whiner who thinks only of himself.
2. Group Work. Nothing can help with seeing ourselves quite as much as the mirror of a group. To take advantage of the group setting though, one may need to learn to listen. Even in the work place, we may be getting all the information about ourselves we need, but refuse to hear it.
3. Watch your emotions. Take the time to sit quietly twice a day, first thing in the morning and before you fall asleep, and see what your heart is telling you. Not to the endless justifications or judgments in the mind, but to the knots or tensions in the background. Can you feel these? What are they related to? Can you bring up words to describe these knots? Do you have mixed feelings about the days events? Where are the contradictions?

Commentary

On Nostalgia and Desire

The cycle of desire and fulfillment may seem a trap of monumental proportions, but as all traps built in the framework of the mind, it has no inherent reality. Let's take a look at this cycle of desire, fear, and fulfillment, and how an ache of the heart turned within is our release.
We see that if we want something and then get it, we feel better. After years of this cycle, we fall for the trick of believing that getting what we want is what life is about. And what would make us happy would be getting what we want, when we want it, all the time. We fail to look closer and see what has really taken place. Fulfilling desire simply puts it to sleep, and leaves us in the state of no-desire. It causes no fundamental change, and sows the seeds for our future discontent. If we saw behind the circumstance, we would see that the state of no desire, or pre-desire, is what we long for, and would no longer move from it out into the dual dimension of pleasure and pain, the so-called reality of life. This state of peace has been there all along as our true nature, lying much closer than any pleasure object of the world. But this peace is not peace of mind. The mind is motion, and does not manifest in stillness. This state of no-desire is stillness itself, beneath and primal to mind, and is our rest.
This trap of desire and its fulfillment also involves forgetting. We forget we are fulfilled as we really are, within, and thus move away through temptation and trickery. Not from being pushed, but from being fooled. We have become mesmerized by the world and its sensations, and have forgotten the peace that lies within. A potent cocktail, equal parts faulty memory and a profound propensity towards fantasy and projection, mixed with fear of unfulfilled desire and death, topped off with a passion for grabbing onto everything that feels good, keeps us on the endless loop of turning our attention out into the world for fulfillment, coming back into ourselves to rest, and then going back out again. We have become identified with the world and it's dual nature, and have forgotten we are complete and forever in the state of fulfillment within, our true home. We are not an animal at heart, though we have come to believe this.
This leads to the longing of nostalgia and how we confuse the circumstances of our childhood events with a purer state within that was also present at the time. It is innocence and lack of guilt that we truly long for, a state before temptation and the chasms of the mind led us out into duality. We long for our childhood or nostalgic

scenes, not because these props and times can provide peace, but because our inner state at the time was one of peace. We paint this inner state onto the scenery and confuse the two, fooled again. We mistake the event for the feeling, much as we do the act of fulfillment of desire with the state of no-desire. Nostalgia in its pure spiritual state is not the desire to live in a root-beer commercial, which might be nice, but the longing of our heart for its true state of oneness. Our inherent inner peace passeth all understanding, for to ego and mind, it's completely unbelievable.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " It is only when we realize that life is taking us nowhere that it begins to have meaning." - P.D. Ouspensky
- " We live in a fantasy world, a world of illusion. The great task in life is to find reality." - Iris Murdoch
- " Poetry is the journal of a sea animal living on land, wanting to fly in the air. " - Carl Sandburg
- " One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious." - Carl G. Jung
- " Creative Writing is one of the most powerful tools available to explore our interior. Often, we don't know how we feel until we write it down. Writing is a rare tool that allows us to dis-cover and to ex-press what is within. Once we have put our thoughts in writing, we can re-view them as if they belonged to another. Ideas that are outside our head allow us to apply the full resources of perception... in ways usually reserved for outsiders." - Dr. Ron Masa
- " Working with dreams" means remembering and exploring the dreams from sleep with an eye to their deeper meanings. Each one of us is uniquely blind to the deeper meanings of our own dreams, and dream work helps us see what amazing gifts are there, just below the surface of "manifest content" and obvious appearance. - Jeremy Taylor
- " Felicity, the companion of content, is rather found in our own breasts than in the enjoyment of external things; and I firmly believe it requires but a little philosophy to make a man happy in whatever state he is." - Daniel Boone

Comic Philosophy

"Politics is supposed to be the second oldest profession.
I have come to realize that it bears a very close resemblance to the first."
- Ronald Reagan

"You can lead a man to Congress, but you can't make him think"
- Milton Berle

08/20/09

12 Step Program

This edition of the Missal looks at the 12 Step recovery program and it's spiritual aspect. The 12 Steps had their beginnings in the 1930's when AA was getting started. A group of recovering alcoholics, including Bill W., were attempting to put the principals of their program in writing. They had come through their experiences with alcohol addiction with the knowledge that a spiritual element was paramount in any lasting recovery. They also realized the spiritual element was the governing factor that gave an addict a new chance at life without obsession, and had to be renewed or practiced daily.
12 Step groups exist for many types of addictions or obsessions, including narcotics, over eating, gambling and even shopping. The groups focus on their particular obsession, only. AA only allows alcoholics into its closed meetings, for example. While this may seem unnecessary or trivial, it serves an important purpose. It keeps the member from losing focus on their main problem, through rationalization, distraction and denial. The families and loved ones affected by alcoholics and addicts have also formed groups using the 12 Steps, such as Al-anon and NA-anon. These groups realize that a family state of mind can foster addictive behavior, enabling the addict through the help of those he loves.

Admitting that one cannot control one's addiction or compulsion;
Recognizing a greater power that can give strength;
Examining past errors with the help of a sponsor
(experienced member);
Making amends for these errors;
Learning to live a new life with a new code of behavior;
Helping others that suffer from the same addictions or compulsions.

- American Psychological Association

The basic principals of the 12 Steps are admission of the problem, that a higher Power exists and can help, honesty with self and others, and helping our fellows in similar situations. The founders of AA soon saw that the addiction was three fold, affecting body, mind and spirit. The physical problem was referred to as an allergy, to describe how an addict's body is affected so readily, and must have the drink or drug, or suffer. The mental addiction is manifested by the addicts insistence that repeating the same behavior will have different results along with the inability to stop in spite of resolutions, promises, negative consequences, etc. The spiritual malady exposes the root of the problem, being an extreme self-centeredness, an obsession with self. This illness of the spirit is changed through a surrender or deep humility, followed by a growth of conscience and sense of moral values. The person manifests this in his life through a willingness for self-sacrifice and unselfish constructive action, especially in the direction of helping those with a similar malady as his own.

1. We admitted that we were powerless over alcohol.
2. We got honest with ourselves.
3. We got honest with another person, in confidence.
4. We made amends for harms done others.
5. We worked with other alcoholics without demand for prestige or money.

6. We prayed to God to help us to do these things as best we could.

Early steps of AA, remembered by Bill W.

The problem of how to become honest is more difficult than one might think for an addict whose intellect has been mainly used to rationalize any form of behavior in the name of his obsession. This ability of the mind to fool itself necessitated that the addict have a clean and sober friend to check his thinking. This friend is another alcoholic with more experience in the 12 Steps, called a sponsor or accountability partner. This use of another trusted partner to hold one accountable is a good trick or tool to keep the mind from buying into its own obsession-fueled imaginings related to the mental problems mentioned above.
The writer Wei Wu Wei once remarked that our problems stem from doing everything for our "selves", and there isn't one. Paul Hedderman calls this kind of thinking "selfing", where the mind's activity is spent, or misspent, upholding its idea of itself. Hedderman points out that since such a thing as self doesn't exist, the mind isn't thinking of a real object, but is creating an illusion as it thinks, "selfing". Obsessive thinking such as this brings misery upon the person involved, and escape from it becomes paramount. A drink, a drug, a compulsive behavior, they all serve as relief, a medicine for the sick mind. The price becomes higher than we can afford sooner or later, and the cure becomes the disease. Until the underlying problem is dealt with the person will turn from one escape to another. The alcoholic gives up drinking to become obsessed with money, the drug addict becomes a fanatical preacher. The 12 Steps offer a way to deal with not only the apparent obsession or medicine/disease, but to get down to the root cause, that of identification with a dysfunctional personality or ego. One could say that the principals of the 12 Steps could be used as a spiritual path for freeing oneself of the this identification, even if the ego was healthy and functioning. But without the fire of misery and pain from addiction and disease providing incentive, few would be willing to make that move.

Tricks and Traps

Trick: Getting sober takes a lot of help. We count on others to help us get sober from the high of self, but seem to forget this once we're back on our feet.
Trap: Once sober, we forget. Once we get back on our feet and full of energy, we tend to forget how we slipped in the first place. Sobriety tends to make us cocky and feel we're invincible, thus we make the same old mistakes and fall down harder than before.
Trick: Stay in the fold. When you're on top, stay humble by helping those less fortunate, and keeping the friends who helped you close at heart.

- Four Versions of The Serenity Prayer -

For every ailment under the sun
There is a remedy, or there is none;
If there be one, try to find it;
If there be none, never mind it.

- Mother Goose

Lord, grant me
Serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can, and
Wisdom to know the difference.

- Reinhold Niebuhr

Father…
Guide me that I might see clearly.
Bless me that I might understand.
Strengthen me that I might live my understanding.

- Robert Cergol

May we have the clarity to see what
is required of us,
the courage to accept it,
and the capacity to discharge it.

- Robert Fripp

Commentary

Finding a Teacher

Finding a true spiritual teacher is much like finding a good job. With the advent of the internet the search can be conducted primarily online. With the wealth of information the internet brings, it is now easier to discriminate between spiritual teachers before meeting them, sort out the good and bad, and review their systems. Some only work through email and the phone, making traveling long distances to make initial contact unnecessary. Do your research, ask questions, and the right teacher can be found.

Find your true interest. What branch or style of esotericism appeals to you and your long term goals? Any experience with teachers in the past by you or your friends can help pinpoint your search. Detail what interests you about spritual work. What are your strengths and weaknesses in the realm of science, reason, and intuition?

Do your research. Spend time on the internet and find the pertinent information on your interests. Researching a teacher should be done with the same discrimination and effort you would use in a job search or selecting a university. If you find a teacher that appeals to you, make contact with him and begin a dialogue through email or phone.

Find out the costs. A good sign if a teacher is on the level or not is how much, if anything, they charge for the teaching. While most teachers should and do ask their students to pay their own way, taking a profit in spiritual work implies a motive other than the passing of knowledge. Ask him what following his teaching will entail in terms of time and money.

Inquire of the teacher's students, both past and present. Find out how they found the teacher and why they follow him. Don't be afraid to find out the dirt and details, many teachers conceal their true motivations behind a mask of disciples and ritual. On the other hand, respect the teacher and his commitment. Many donate their time and effort to teaching, and have a busy schedule balancing work and spiritual interests.

If possible, meet the teacher face to face. No true teacher should have anything to hide about his teaching, and should provide some opportunity for students to meet with him. Many hold conferences or retreats where the setting is conducive to meeting them and students can get to know the teachers methods and beliefs. Ask her what you can expect to gain from the teaching, what she has to offer, and how she came to to be a teacher.

Tips:
Take advantage of a teacher's website. Sign up for their forums and message boards, and get to know the members.
Attend conferences and retreats with the teacher. Acquaint yourself with him and his students and get a feel for them.

Warnings:
A reliance on too much secrecy and ritual could be a warning sign that the teacher and his group are not what they advertise. Be careful if they are vague about the teaching and its results, and charge exorbitant fees.
Teachers who have real knowledge to impart have no need to surround themselves with flattering students and disciples. If the group surrounding the teacher claim his secret teaching is only for the elite or inner circle, be careful.
Excessive praise from teachers promising an easy path are warning signs also. No metaphysical teaching worth following is that easy.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " The good is often the enemy of the best.
- ".... nobody invented Alcoholics Anonymous. It just grew... by the grace of God." - Bill W.
- " The best way to get out of something is to realize you were never in it." - Paul Hedderman
- " You can act your way into the right thinking, but you can't think your way into the right action." - William James
- " Whenever a civilization or society declines or perishes there is always one condition present - they forgot where they came from." - Carl Sandburg
- " When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything in the universe." - John Muir
- " No authentic messenger of truth ever tries to reform society, teaching only individual and inner change to those who want it." - Vernon Howard

Comic Philosophy

Twelve Steps of a Relapse

1. I decided I could handle any emotional problems if other people would just quit trying to run my life.
2. I firmly believe that there is no greater power than myself and anyone who says differently is insane.
3. I made a decision to remove my will and my life from God, who didn't understand me anyway.
4. I made a searching and thorough moral inventory of everyone I know, so they couldn't fool me and take advantage of my good nature.
5. I sought these people out and tried to get them to admit to me, by God, the exact nature of their wrongs.
6. I became willing to help these people get rid of their defects of character.
7. I was humble enough to ask these people to remove their shortcomings.
8. I kept a list of all the people who had harmed me, and waited patiently for a chance to get even.
9. I got even with these people whenever possible except when to do so would get me into trouble.
10. I continue to take everyone's inventory and when they are wrong, which is most of the time, I promptly make them admit it.
11. Sought through the concentration of my willpower to get God, who didn't understand me anyhow, to see that my desires were best, and He ought to give me the power to carry them out.
12. Having maintained my emotional problems with these steps, I can thoroughly recommend them to others who don't want to lose their hard-earned status, but wish to be left alone to practice neurosis in everything they do for the rest of their days.

from *Serenity Found*

10/23/09

Puer Aeternus

This month's Missal examines the archetype of the puer aeternus, or eternal boy. Maurice Nicoll referred to the puer as the intermediary, the child who links us to the eternal. Carl Jung, and later his student Marie -Louise von Franz, wrote of the problems faced when one became wholly identified with the puer archetype. The puer is defined in mythology as the Divine Child, who represents potential for growth and hope for the future. In modern psychology it describes the man-boy, who will not grow up and face life and its responsibilities but remains emotionally a child, often unhealthily attached and dependent on the mother.
The puer is, as all archetypes, deeply polarized. His opposite is the rational intellect, the man of action who produces, rather than the idealistic dreamer. The problem for the person deeply influenced by the puer archetype is how to balance these two forces without becoming identified with them, the puer being the positive identification and the disciplined intellect manifesting negatively as the shadow. This change, the boy becoming the man, whole and active in the world, is salvation for the puer, for he then transcends the archetype and becomes capable of manifesting his own talents in life rather than only dreaming of living.

" Christ's 'Except ye become as little children' prefigures this change, for in them the opposites lie close together; but what is meant is the boy who is born from the maturity of the adult man, and not the unconscious child we would like to remain."
- Carl Jung

The puer could be said to be the generating principle behind creativity, manifesting in a positive manner when the rational intellect is active and the emotions grounded. While Jung and von Franz thought the 'cure' for identification with the puer archetype to be work and responsibility, it might be better defined as creative production brought to fruit in the world. The puer is not something to be cured or gotten rid of as much as something to be transcended and then harnessed. The young man captivated by the puer energy has no real understanding of how things work, of long term effort and its role in manifestation. His unconscious identification with his body traps him in a dream world from which usually only trauma and defeat can lead him out. When he understands that the puer is an archetype or ideal, and the body a tool for manifestation, and loses the ego that attaches him to the two, he can then move forward into life, emotion, and actual creativity. The ability to create is only possible in someone who sees others as important as himself. The puer is so self-absorbed he can find no reason to give of himself through effort, yet alone create.

" Creativity represents a miraculous coming together of the uninhibited energy of the child with its apparent opposite and enemy, the sense of order imposed on the disciplined adult intelligence. " - Norman Podhoretz

For the young man caught in the bardo of the puer, the unnatural bond with the mother is his enabler. He has no pressing need to go out and work or produce, for his physical needs are met, whether by his mother, the government or university, girlfriend or spouse. The enabler needs the puer just as much as he needs her, for she feeds on his raw creative energy, and since he only uses it to increase his sense of self, it flows to the nearest taker. As the years roll by, the puer becomes more and more unable to deal with life, and may take refugee in drugs, alcohol or strange behavior,

become a member of a cult, or run from one mother figure to the next, ever growing weary from his lack of purpose. If he is lucky, he will find enough trauma to shake him from his slumber and break the spell of his identification long enough to get a glimpse of himself.
While trouble and waste of energy can be attributed to those lost in the puer archetype, it has a great advantage for those who can balance it with a disciplined intellect and love for their fellows. The puer's creative energy is behind most accomplishments in art and philosophy, and brings light and song into the drab world of work and decay. As Nicoll pointed out, the divine child within is our intermediary with the eternal realm. He can see both worlds and will shows us the inner one if we wish. The intellect may play its part in manifestation and discipline, but it cannot travel out of the mind, into the realm of the unmanifest, the puer's home.

" One can partly foretell what a puer aeternus will look like and how he will feel. He is merely the archetype of the eternal-youth god, and therefore he has all the features of the god: he has a nostalgic longing for death; he thinks of himself as being something special; he is the one sensitive being among all the other tough sheep. He will have a problem with an aggressive, destructive shadow which he will not want to live and generally projects, and so on. There is nothing special about him whatsoever. The worse the identification with the youthful god, the less individual the person, although he himself feels so special."

- Marie-Louise von Franz

Tricks and Traps

Trap: Caught in an ideal. We may think because we believe in an ideal such as the betterment of our fellow man that we are somehow automatically above the fray, that our every action is justified, because the means justifies the end for the chosen few.
Trick: Walking the walk. The above thinking will quickly lead everything we do into building up the ego, and keep us from noticing the difference between our ideals and our actions. If we live the life we believe, we must have no glaring contradictions between what we say and tell others, and what we ourselves do. Self-honesty can go a long way in showing us how our fact status and our story may be two very different things. The shock of seeing this could go a long way in waking us up.

Commentary

What Do You Love?

Progress on the spiritual path can be thought of in terms of value, or love. What is most important to us is what we value the most, what we really love. The path of self-discovery can be seen in these terms. We observe ourselves, and discover what our true motivations are, leading us to see what we value. Another way to see this is by checking our fact status. What we actually do everyday tells us much about what we value, and perhaps shows us the gap between our personal storyline and our actions. If this fact checking and self-observation are carried far enough, we may begin to get a look at something called our 'self' or personality, and begin to see its illusive nature. We may be forced to admit to its exalted status as our real true love, despite our ego's protestations to the contrary. Using this shock as further fuel for the search, we

become a bit more honest in our future assessments. If self-inquiry is carried even further, through this process of elimination we may find something more real to love than this 'self'. Back beyond our mind's motion, something still and silent lies. If you find a love of truth, rather than fiction, it may take you there.

Finding this still-point depends largely on our state of satisfaction with our beloved 'self'. If this state becomes one of dissatisfaction, we have the incentive to look for something more stable. Hearing from others that have gone before that there is something somewhere 'within', and that it is worth any effort to find it, also adds to our incentive. By looking at what we love, we can come to love the truth, and find there is something worthwhile inside us other than mind-motion and change. Let's take a look at how this path might turn out, and some of the pitfalls and signposts along the way from love of 'self', to Love Itself.

We hear of this so-called still-point, called by such names as silence, stillness, the center, the Source, what we really are, etc., and wonder. If our intuition is not clouded by the dissipation's of relentless pleasure seeking and the resultant fear, we may discover a longing, a nostalgia deep within that tells us we may have once known this silence, and still love it more than we might know. This longing is fed too, perhaps, by being tired of the jostling effects of life, its traumas and endless no-win scenarios, leading to death and dissolution.

So, we read the books and search the Internet, finding many who tell of the way back to this stillness. They vary from the intellectual work of Hubert Benoit, to the practical experiments of Douglas Harding. We find the paths back to this center also called by many names: 'the inner movement', 'self-remembering', a 'double-pointed arrow of attention, one directed in, one out', 'observing the observer', or 'looking back at what we are looking out of'. Many speak of 'silence', and even the many forms of silence. From this information alone, we may not come any closer to really knowing this still-point, but if we persist in looking, we may get lucky and discover much that it is not. We begin to see that it cannot be something of the mind, for we find the mind is motion. We may be fooled into thinking that the stillness is something we can manufacture, that it's found only in ashrams or monasteries, or that we can force it onto the relative world through controlling the environment. Or we may decide to create it within by controlling our mind, forcing it to think only what we have been told we should think, and discover that this too is folly.

When the still-point is finally reached, even if only for a moment, it is unmistakable. If we have allowed ourselves to hone our intuition and clear our thinking, we will find that this silent place within is not just a concept, but very real. The movement necessary to turn our attention back away from the outer and inner movies of the mind and senses is found to be also something real, and not a thought or concept at all. We find too, that we forget, and are carried back into the mind at every instant. But if our love for the silence is true, it will turn us back into it again and again, provided our previous experience with the mind and its motion has been enough, or too much.

This is where what we value or really love comes in. If our meaning is taken from the changing scene of the relative world, we will keep our attention directed towards it. We will turn away from the silence within, and our longing will be for the excitement and changes of the mind. We may declare our love for the center, but our attention will long for the agony and ecstasy of the world of form. Boredom with silence too, means our value has not yet moved inward from the world to truth, but remains trapped by the colorful kaleidoscope of the mind, and the energy releases of the body.

This part of the journey is a journey within. We retreat from our former love for motion and change, and move inwards toward simplicity and truth. After the still-point has been found, and correctly valued, our attention is then turned round, and we begin a new phase, one of our new love being tested. While we continue to hold a part of our gaze on the still-point, it being what we really are, we also turn round and engage in the world of action. This is to test our love, to see if the trials and tribulations of the outer world can knock us off course, and change our point of reference. If we come back to the center, time and time again, during and despite every trial, we find we are becoming less of the world and more of the silence. In any situation in life, no matter how difficult or how often we forget, if we eventually return to the still-point as our anchor, we find we are becoming one with it. We become that which we love.

Bob Fergeson (this article was originally published in the Missal of November, 2004)

Quotes -

- " Creativity represents a miraculous coming together of the uninhibited energy of the child with its apparent opposite and enemy, the sense of order imposed on the disciplined adult intelligence. " - Norman Podhoretz
- " Happy is he who still loves something he loved in the nursery: He has not been broken in two by time; he is not two men, but one, and he has saved not only his soul but his life. " - G.K. Chesterton
- " One must ask children and birds how cherries and strawberries taste. " - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe
- " The great man is he who does not lose his child's-heart. " - Mencius, Book IV
- " To the psychotherapist, an old man who cannot bid farewell to life appears as feeble and sickly as the young man who is afraid to embrace it.
- " Whoever carries over into the afternoon the law of the morning... must pay for doing so with damage to his or her soul.
- " When you come to think about it, nothing has any meaning, for when there was nobody to think, there was nobody to interpret what happened." - Carl Jung
- " Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up. " - Pablo Picasso

Comic Philosophy

If children grew up according to early indications, we should have nothing but geniuses. - Goethe

If you think you're too small to be effective, you have never been in bed with a mosquito.- Bette Reese

01/11/10

Tension

This edition of the Missal highlights **tension**, and its use on the spiritual path. The containment and use of tension to bring about spiritual exaltation has been practiced for centuries. Fasting and celibacy have long been used to this effect, creating and storing tension normally dissipated in everyday life. The energy saved and stored by reducing the drains demanded by nature can be re-channeled into answering spiritual questions. The normal system of following desire and avoiding fears can be lessened, and the energy and time redirected into the questioning process of self-discovery. This is a reversing of the energy vector by turning it away from the game of life and pointing it within, gaining insight into why we do what we do, and ultimately who we really are.
For some, this process starts when life begins to be seen as a no-win situation. This may be brought about by trauma, sickness, insight or even a dream. We see that death levels the playing field, and life has no meaning in and of itself if looked at closely and with dispassion. This questioning of life itself can create a tension, furthering the search for truth.

" We look out the window at this point and observe the world as a sorrowful slaughterhouse, a place of blood and carnage, wherein the most noble efforts of nature and the whole system of Tension lead and evolve only to semen, blood, and blockheads." - Richard Rose

The practice of using tension to further an aim can be seen as triangulation. We move along a baseline between fear and desire, maintaining through tension a seeming balance between the two forces. If we question the process in its entirety we may see the futility of the system, and thus move up and out of the trap. From the higher vantage point we see that the game of striving for what you want and avoiding what you don't ultimately collapses with old age and death. This point can be thought of as the apex of a triangle, above the line of desire and fear, the place where life is lived for a higher purpose. We then are taking care of our life in order to keep it functioning well while pursuing our search for truth, rather than to feel good and not feel bad, only. Life becomes a field for education, rather than a party.

" If you feel the need for entertainment or escape, you are asleep." - Richard Rose

If we keep up the pressure by continuing to question life as well as ourselves, we stand a chance at actually transcending both. We find ourselves in a place where life, and the function of it we used to call "me", is seen as a self sustaining process which may actually function better without the ego's endless meddling. We can then take the energy we formerly used in maintaining the "me" or "I", and allow it to flow in the direction of our search for Truth and may come to understand that action and awareness are quite capable of not interfering with one another. Action can continue unfettered while being impartially observed, while awareness also does not need a "doer" to function. The spell of identification with life leads us to think we must keep it afloat by sheer mental and emotional effort, and we also have been led to believe that awareness must somehow be created or enabled by some clever act of thought. The endless play of tension between the opposites is life itself, the dance of the viewer and his view, and its transcendence is freedom.

" Tension is the prime element in any spiritual exaltation. Sometimes the tension is accumulated and unconsciously endured over a period of years... Life is tension at work." - Richard Rose

Tricks and Traps

Trap: Believing in escapist fantasies. Many of us escape from life's pain and frustrations by traveling to a dream world in which there is no resistance to our being fulfilled. We think that "if only" we could somehow find this place of least resistance, we would then, and only then, be happy. The actual net effect of this is to keep us out of the present moment and longing for a future where we will finally get what we want, but which can never be. "Poor pitiful me.....if only...."
Trick: Learning the value of tension. To get in shape, we subject our bodies to forms of tension by working out. The mind and emotions are no different. Without practical problems to solve, our intellect is never improved. Without failure and trouble, our emotions are never tempered. Without struggling with great perplexity, our intuition is never called upon to speak.

I've found when viewing landscape photos that the mind plays a trick. I look at the beautiful scene and imagine myself there, carefree and full of wonder. But if I look at the same type of shot that I myself took, say of a mountain vista, I can see the trick. I can remember that when taking the photo, I was actually cold, uncomfortable, the wind was biting, I was hungry, sore, and bone tired. It was not the nirvana of the senses that the vista suggests. Our imagination loves to play this trick. It conjures lovely scenes and leads us to believe there will be no tension there, no resistance. Such a place is seldom found outside the mind's fantasies, and even if it were, we would soon stagnate and grow weary of its bland, one dimensional lack of substance.

Commentary

Containing Tension

"We are cowards, and what we witness about us is a dynasty of fear in a play house of desires." - Richard Rose

Most of us go through life with no clear awareness of our limited time and energy, but instead continue to plan and plot our way along as if nothing will ever really change. We live to have fun, known as the pursuit of happiness, making our forays into the world of pleasure from a base of imagined security. Driven by the fear that our security is tenuous at best, we rush to have even more fun, before the circle of our dissipation and paranoia collapses in on itself. We never question our motivations or bother to define what we mean by happiness, perhaps because of an inner intuition that that would take the fun out of it. Let's take a look at what this pursuit really is, and how it can be turned from a struggle downhill into frustration and bitterness into a change of being.

This pursuit of happiness can best be defined as the pursuit of a fading memory, a memory of a time when some outside agent gave us a thrill of such magnitude we

can't forget it, or else it relieved our anxiety so well as to leave us in a state of unusual peace. Being creatures of habit, we try repeating the same sequence of events that gave us the previous result. This cycle is sooner or later found to be one of ever-decreasing returns. We find the thrill or release lessen, while the inducing agent is needed in ever greater quantity. We never question the process itself. We never wonder why we even need an outside agent in order to feel happy, at peace, or complete. Only when the agent turns on us, and becomes the deliverer of pain and misery instead, do we stop. Even then, we still seldom question the process, but think we can beat the system by getting a new, improved agent and becoming cleverer in its application.

"As incredible as it sounds, an unhappy man does not realize that happiness is better than unhappiness. Knowing only his own concealed anguish, he worships it, which is the same as self-worship. " - Vernon Howard

This unconscious trap of worshipping our own weakness keeps us from becoming strong. We fail to realize that the tensions we feel, as anxieties or prompting's, are the very things that will free us from all need, if we stand up to them. By giving in to every prod and poke that comes into our consciousness, we give away our time and energy to nothing, and keep nothing with which to build our mental strength and intuition. Through resisting these daily irritations and promptings, we save our vitality and time, which can then be put to use on the spiritual path. We also become something, something that has a greater capacity. We can think clearer, have more time for study, and come to have a resistance to the inner noise, which used to send us running for distraction or numbness. We will have increased our capacity for storing tension dramatically, much like putting our money in a bank that pays high interest, to be used for something of true value when the time presents itself, rather than spending every dime in our pocket, and relegating ourselves to living paycheck to paycheck. Eventually, we will also have gained enough inner quiet to possibly hear something from within, giving our intuition a chance to be heard.

"Be very careful that you do not unconsciously assume that nervous tension is power. This is vital. Watch yourself the next time you work toward some goal. Look very closely to discover tense feelings and nervous thoughts whirling around inside. Do not let them deceive you into assuming that they are creative forces; they are not. They are thieves of genuine powers. As always, your awareness of their thievery is your first fine step toward casting them out. " - Vernon Howard

The energy we feel as excitement or thrills, is not the energy we are after. This is just the frenzy of a nervous mind, of thoughts and needs wanting to take advantage of us in exchange for a brief moment of peace when our stolen energy is gone. True strength and peace is in an increased capacity for tension. By increasing this capacity, we increase our resistance to the effects of life. We become calmer in the face of stress, and can think clearer under pressure. By virtue of our increased intuition, we may even begin to see through many of the traps we formerly succumbed to. Our patience will increase, and we will not panic and run when unflattering truths about ourselves come into the light of day. We will be able to sit and meditate for the lengths of time necessary to gain insight into these truths about ourselves, no longer giving into distraction, fear or pride.

Through this reversal of the trap of dissipation into the discipline of containment, we gain a chance at freedom, and have become something more than a utility of forces unseen. We now have the possibility of using our limited time and energy in real ways in the pursuit of self-discovery. Our imaginary life of having our cake and getting to eat it, too, becomes instead a life with a true direction, towards truth and self-knowledge leading to real happiness. The Kingdom of Heaven is truly within, and we will not find it by taking our pleasure and meaning from without, from the world and its ceaseless change and pain.

The next time you feel an inner prod, an urge, an itch from below which you know can only be scratched at the price of your peace of mind, do not think that relief is in doing what it wants. Try resisting, turn away. We graduate from crawling by gaining enough strength to stand up and walk. Walking upright depends on having enough capacity for tension to resist falling down. Be patient, and learn to walk without wobbling. The view is better and you can cover greater ground. By this resistance, become something greater than the world, and take your meaning and definition from the silent strength you then find within.

"To avoid action, thou must first determine for great action." - Richard Rose

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " The average state of Man is that he thinks he is what he is not and he thinks he is not what he is.
- " No one can grow in a psychological or spiritual sense unless his self-liking is disturbed.
- " Truth lies between the opposites. "- Maurice Nicoll
- " Common sense tells us that the things of the earth exist only a little, and that true reality is only in dreams." - Charles Baudelaire
- " People are able to continue living or tolerate life by putting serious thoughts as far back as possible. Something inside the individual does not wish to examine its potential for oblivion. The human mind does not want to see anything negative about itself.
- " We are unaware of this life of make-believe, simply because we live it as reality." - Richard Rose

Comic Philosophy

"To err is human, to forgive divine." - Alexander Pope

"To err is human, but it feels divine" - Mae West

04/25/10

The Listening Attention

This Missal re-examines the listening attention. This childlike awareness lies buried under the so-called consciousness of our experienced-based personality. A non-judgmental attention which serves as a link between the manifest and unmanifest, it enables us to see both inner and outer, and thus come to an understanding of what we are. This attention has been mentioned often in esoteric literature, being called "seeing", "The Child", and the "Intermediary." All point to the same innate yet living awareness found within us all.

While all of us are born with this innate spontaneous awareness, it is soon covered over by the environment and the necessities of life. We develop a personality, an interface with our circumstance, and forget the original innocent state of being. Paradoxically, this is how it should be. Life, nature, and necessity will have their day, the experiences of life will create the experiencer. We will need a healthy mind and a well-formed personality to keep us energized and capable on our journey. Nothing can be accomplished from an ego that is not practically grounded, even though we may come to transcend it. Later, after we have taken enough knocks to the head, we come to long for the simplicity of the forgotten child within. It may take awhile to see clearly what this longing actually points to.

Coming to a point in life where we realize that no matter how clever our ego becomes, no matter how astute we are at outwitting others and perhaps ourselves, we find we are running in circles. This limitation of the ego can be the source of tension to drive us inward in search of something better, something different. We may remember a sense of wonder, of completeness, something we had before time reactions of thinking and feeling took over. After the ego has formed, another adventure awaits, that of returning through our mind of thought and experience to a new yet old way of seeing. This basic attention is aware, but not conceptually based, and is the door to the divine realm within.

The following illustration shows us the difference between the old man and the child, the ego and the listening attention. Our path from innocence to the old man is formed naturally by the actions of nature and environment, but the return to innocence is not guaranteed. It is not made through belief or wishful thinking, by reading of it in books and then declaring ourselves to be the One, and thus nothing needs to done. It is also not a path of endless 'learning', of continual becoming, getting better and better forever. It is a paradox; a path of hard work, but one where we arrive where we began.

Once upon a time, two friends were having coffee together, looking out the window at the trees. One remarked that a certain tree was called a western cedar, and that he could identify it without fail. Suddenly, a look of sadness crossed his face. "I can't look at that tree without seeing it as a 'western cedar'." He had realized that words and thinking were his only view, that something important within him had been lost. The other friend had quite a different expression. He saw the trap his buddy was caught in, and had a glimpse of the way out. As he gazed at the tree, he noticed he could switch back and forth between two radically different views. One, the paradigm of words, thoughts, and feelings, laid a thick veil over the tree, declaring it was a concept based on experience. This was the view in which his friend was trapped. It was nearly solid, and kept the actual perception of the 'tree' hidden beneath a cloud of thought and memory. The other view, the one he realized he had almost forgotten, was one of wonder and clearness. There was no 'tree' or anything else, but there was. Everything was as new, but not differentiated. He knew not what he was looking at,

but this in itself was all that was needed to know enough. The view was simple, obvious, and without description. It left room for possibility, being infinite in scope. There was no memory or experience to rob him of the moment. He never forgot the gift of honesty his friend had given him. By admitting his dilemma of mind, the trap of ego and conditioning, the friend had shown him the trap of experience, and the freedom of the listening attention.

It starts with the work of self-observation. We begin this looking at ourselves when we begin to doubt. This doubting may begin through trauma, or through the prodding of our intuition. It may come from being humbled and realizing we are not in control. Whatever knocks the ego out of the way just long enough to allow a glimpse beyond, is our saving grace, though we may not see it as such at the time. Our obsessions and desires, our fears and craving for security, will be dearly threatened. In their place may come a sense of a higher power, something greater than ourselves as bodies or minds. Now the work starts in earnest, for we see that our mind will defend itself, and its ways are a slippery labyrinth indeed.

In the spiritual search, the quest for true self-definition, we soon come to the realization that our best efforts, and even our very selves, are mechanical and reactive. A different level of seeing is needed, a pure awareness that is not itself a product of the world or mind, but primary to the reaction pattern we call ourselves. A listening which is attentive yet not reactive, and unaffected by circumstance and the constant changes of thought and mind.

I believe it was the Hunas who said the human being had three bodies. One, the middle self, was what we have become through experience, being the personality or individual mind formed from life. This is the most unreal of the three. The higher self is the real one, but is lost from direct view. It cannot be reached through the middle self, but only through an intermediary, the lower self. This self is simple, primary to the cogitations of the mind, but has a direct connection to the higher. It can receive from the higher. First, we find the child within, then, by becoming this direct seeing, this listening, we find our way back to the higher awareness within, to what we really Are.

" The child-like state is the state that every human alive is trying to get to. When I was about twelve, I came to the conclusion that adults were insane. They were as rammy as billy goats, and so is everyone I've ever met. Until I meet an adult with the flowering feeling and drive of a young child, I will know I've never met a sane person." - Jim Burns

This path back to our original awareness is one of retreat rather than one of addition. The psychological work involved is the removal of false concepts and beliefs that cloud our vision. Retreating from what we find to be less real requires a development of the intuition, and a healthy body and mind. We cannot take our obsessions along with us if we hope to find the Truth. On the other hand, awareness is not dependent on action, meaning we can be aware of ourselves, and what we are doing. Acting the part of a saint does not make one aware. We struggle to see ourselves until we are forced to give up, and through this surrender become the very awareness we have been trying to grasp, thus letting go of our vain attempts to control and change. We let the innate powers within us that are programmed to take care of our body and mind

run the show, for we are now free from grasping at outside illusions to give us meaning and peace. We have found ourselves and no longer see the world as greater than us. Our meaning is our Self, and our seeing is our being.

"Now, with absolute assurance, I can tell people, old and young, their lessons can be learned under the most difficult and trying circumstances. Better that we leave our nets after we've learned their lessons. Better that we call on the Child because the Child knows what to do. The Child and the Presence are the same one Presence and It is right here where we are, transcending this world's time and space."
- William Samuel

Tricks and Traps

Trap: Identified with an 'outside' state of mind. Much of our thinking may not be our own, meaning we may still be under the influence of an old state of mind we picked up from an outside source, such as parents, school, job, spouse, or friends. This pervasive background will color all our thinking, and most important, we are probably unaware of it.

Trick: Using the listening attention to catch a glimpse. Try a simple trick to see if you are a victim of identification. You'll have to be quick and subtle, and look closely at your own reactions. When watching the news, browsing the web, or out in public, look for your mind's reactions to incoming perceptions, to the first unqualified reaction you see before you have a chance to edit. Any surprises? We can catch a state of mind in two ways: one is that we see the first reaction to be based on a way of thinking/feeling that later is proven to be false, or not factual. Two, we may get a glimpse of things as the child in us sees them, and see that this is a more accurate perception, but one we refuse to hold to, for it contradicts our 'knowing' or cleverness. What defines your perceptions?

Commentary

The Gumb

"It is absolutely essential that we actually get in touch with the eternal Child."
- William Samuel

I've found dreams to be a valuable source of self-knowledge through the years, and a great trick to get around the ego's ruthless tactic of editing out anything truly useful in our search. The following dream is no exception. I was in isolation, a spiritual retreat, and had a curious dream. I wrote it down, and later, when back from the retreat, took the time to research the information. Even now the dream stands out, for it describes a fundamental aspect of us all, one that I continually find described by others in their own words, too.

The dream revolved around a character called the 'gumb'. This term was accepted by me, as witness to the dream, being part and parcel to the world the dream presented. Only later in so-called waking life did I find the term curious. The character it described was an ordinary sort of fellow, of average height, build, and appearance, but

his manner was most unusual. I was shown a series of vignettes where these characteristics were illustrated, as the dream narrator filled in the details.

In the first scene, the gumb was attacked with spears by a swarm of meanies. Being outnumbered and with no visible means of defense, I was flabbergasted at the result. He was able to simply wave off the spears, and continue on his way unharmed. Next, his bug-like adversaries built a series of walls from cement blocks in attempts to hem him in. Again, he simply waved his way through, never breaking stride. He never lost his cool or reacted emotionally in any way to these situations. He didn't indulge in having his feelings hurt or stop to place blame, he just kept moving. He did not attack or retreat but held to his way, without hurry or delay.

While I watched in amazement, the narrator filled in the story. He told me the man was called the gumb. The reason he could not be hurt or stopped was because he did not carry a watch, and was not afraid to gamble. I remembered these words, and later, back in the world of organized information, I wrote them down and began the search for this word 'gumb'.

While later on I found several different versions and roots of the word, the initial search was by far the most informative, and I believe, the most accurate. It resolved the dream for me. I found the word 'gump' in a large dictionary, and was surprised at the result. The word was Scottish in origin, and originally meant fishing in the dark, to search for with the hands, to grope and catch fish under banks or stones. It was said it later came to mean searching for insights, having no fear, and not being overly concerned with the outcome. To muddle through difficult situations thanks to a series of lucky chances. It is the root of the modern term 'gumption', meaning the courage to act, and the practice of common sense and presence of mind. The meaning of not wearing a watch and not being afraid to gamble began to make sense.

The gumb's way of living contrasted heartily with my own, for I was fear-based and living from a state of mind handed down through generations having lived in fear and desire as their basis, too. Now, don't get this wrong, no one in this line of misfortune is to blame, for no one was aware. They were not aware that they were identified with a particular state of mind. This state of mind called the shots, and even defined perception at a basic unseen level. It gradually covered over the innocent perception of the children of each succeeding generation with a fog of fear, judgment and desire, and transformed them into identified, reactive-oriented robots, each with a pride-based ego that they were aware individuals with a handle on their lives, and the meaning of it all. What a trap, and what a joke. No wonder the image of the gumb and his way of action was so appealing.

As time went by, I discovered this path or way of being in the writings of others, and in the actions of a few. William Samuel's Child within, Richard Rose's between-ness, Douglas Harding's headless seeing, the Puer or Intermediary of Maurice Nicoll, and many other examples of this pure state of being. While this listening attention, as I've come to call it, is not the final state, it is the door. It is the timeless portal between the manifest and the unmanifest, the gateway to within. It is how to live in the world, but not be of the world. The ego state of mind may be good at managing the world of daily affairs, but it cannot go beyond. The child within us transcends the world, being our link to the formless. We then see why the ancients called it the Son, and that the Son and the Father are One.

The path to becoming the listening attention begins with self-observation. The hard work of 'seeing' what we really are, and what we are not. Later, we may find that we were the Child all along and had just become lost, but without this journey into time and space, we would not value our true state. To begin the homeward journey, look

quickly, subtlety, without the editing of states of mind. In the moment of perception there lies a door, an attention that does not define, but simply sees. The nostalgic longing we feel at times for a better life, a real home, is a thread back to this child within. Follow it, and discover your own inner child, the gumb.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " The Child and Its guidance are essential in our search. If one thinks his religion, his philosophy, or his theology is the means to finding the FINAL Answer, he is mistaken. The Child of Light and Love is the pathfinder, the guide, the wayshower up the mighty mountain. Science, religion and philosophy can take us a great distance, but the Child takes us to Dominion. It is absolutely essential that we actually get in touch with the eternal Child." - William Samuel
- " Use the "Who am I?". Focus the attention on sensation and feeling, not on thoughts. Do not focus the attention on emotions per se, but on the sensation of having the feeling – both the sensation of having the feeling and the source of the feeling. Thoughts generated by this attempt are the reaction to this "direct looking," and the "looking away" is experienced as a rush of ensuing thoughts." - Bob Cergol
- " Stop talking and thinking, and there is nothing you will not be able to know. " - Seng Ts'an
- " Active receptivity is needed, not a passive agitation." - Ravi Ravindra
- " Contemplation is that condition of alert passivity, in which the soul lays itself open to the divine Ground within and without, the immanent and transcendent Godhead. " - Aldous Huxley
- " When I want to understand, look at something, I don't have to think about it - I look at it." - J. Krishnamurti
- " We look back and analyze the events of our lives,... these are intellectual questions. There is another way of seeing, a backward-and-forward-at-once vision, that is not rationally understandable. The spirit approaches the matter differently." - Rumi
- " Most people don't know how to listen because the major part of their attention is taken up by thinking." - Eckhart Tolle
- " Let there be a silent understanding and no more. Away with all thinking and explaining." - Huang Po
- " Allow the Source of Being to maintain contact with you: ignore the impressions and opinions of your customary self. If this self were of value in your search, it would have found realization for you. But all it can do is to depend upon others. " - Amin Suhrawardi
- " Find the obstacles that you must learn in order to avoid them in the process of reversal. Allow the Ego to be eliminated as it is the main obstacle.
- " You quit and let things happen, you let the door open, you stop the obstruction, you eliminate the ego. The ego is one of the biggest obstructions to the achievement of anything." - Richard Rose

Comic Philosophy

"Democracy is the theory that the common people know what they want and deserve to get it good and hard." - H.L. Mencken

" If nothing else works, a total pig-headed unwillingness to look facts in the face will see us through." - The Black Adder

" Creative minds always have been known to survive any kind of bad training." - Anna Freud

" The road to truth is long, and lined the entire way with annoying bastards." - Alexander Jablokov

09/18/10

Rumi

This Missal is about the great poet and mystic, Mevlana Jelaluddin Rumi. Rumi was born in 1207 in Balkh in what is today Afghanistan. At an early age his family left Balkh because of the danger of the invading Mongols and settled in Konya, Turkey. Rumi's early spiritual education was under the tutelage of his father Bahauddin and later under his father's close friend Sayyid Burhaneddin of Balkh. He became a learned scholar and teacher in the Konya spiritual community, learned several languages and became familiar with the main religions of the time. He was married to Gevher Banu with whom he had two sons, Bahaeddin (Sultan Veled) and Alaeddin. Years later, after Gevher Banu passed away, he married Kerra Hatun, and had two more children; another son, Muzafferreddin Emir Alim and a daughter Melike.

I honor those who try to
rid themselves of any lying,
who empty the self
and have only clear being there.

At age 37, his scholarly life began to change when he met Shams of Tabriz, a wandering mystic. Shams lit Rumi's inner flame and a great friendship came into being. The two were rarely separate, lost in sohbet, the mystical union. The time spent together was short, however, for Shams eventually disappeared, leaving Rumi a changed being. Where the teacher and scholar had been, now there was a lover of God, lost in his Beloved. He began to write poetry and twirl in meditation(sema), founding the Mevlavi Order of Sufis, and to teach the sema, or twirling. The last years of his life were spent dictating a six volume book of poetry, the Mathnawi, to his friend Husam, a work that took twelve years and created one of the most beautiful and inspiring books of poetry in history. Rumi died on the 17 of December, 1273 in Konya, leaving a legacy of Love and Friendship that has survived for hundreds of years.

Your prayer should be,
" Break the legs
of what I want to happen.
Humiliate my desire.
Eat me like candy.
It's spring, and finally
I have no will."

The sheer volume of Rumi's poetry is as staggering as its depth and amazing beauty. He beseeches the reader to find spiritual discipline, rid themselves of the ego, and most importantly, find the Friend, Rumi's term for the Beloved. His poetry is full of imagery and metaphor to convey his understanding of spiritual realms in a graspable language. He did not use literal meaning often, but relied on imagery from nature to convey the concepts of higher mind. Another facet of his poetry that is somewhat lost to those of us who cannot read the originals, in Farsi and Arabic, is the rhyme and rhythm of the work. Coleman Barks, in his many translations of Rumi, has succeeded in retaining some of this artistic beauty. While the original English translations of Arberry and Nicholson were true to the meaning, it's been said they were translated into Episcopalian, losing the fresh spontaneity and rhythm of the original.

For the seeker working through the intellect, Rumi may seem an improbable, childish path, but to the student of the heart, it can be a door to love and understanding. Rumi's poems are best studied in a manner free from judgment and preconceived ideas, leaving their meaning to flower in an open heart.

Selections of Rumi

All day I think about it, then at night I say it.
Where did I come from, and what am I supposed to be doing?
I have no idea.Name of God repeated to infinity in Kufic script,spiritual films
My soul is from elsewhere, I'm sure of that,
and I intend to end up there.

This drunkenness began in some other tavern.
When I get back around to that place,
I'll be completely sober. Meanwhile,
I'm like a bird from another continent, sitting in this aviary.
They day is coming when I fly off,
but who is it now in my ear who hears my voice?
Who says words with my mouth?

Who looks out with my eyes? What is the soul?
I cannot stop asking.
If I could taste one sip of an answer,
I could break out of this prison for drunks.
I didn't come here of my own accord, and I can't leave that way.
Whoever brought me here will have to take me home.

This poetry. I never know what I'm going to say.
I don't plan it.
When I'm outside the saying of it,
I get very quiet and rarely speak at all.

Let body needs dwindle and soul decisions increase.
Diminish what you give your physical self.
Your spiritual eye will begin to open.

When the body empties and stays empty,
God fills it with musk and mother-of-pearl.
That way a man gives his dung and gets purity.

Listen to the prophets and not some adolescent boy.
The foundation and the walls of the spiritual life
are made of self-denials and disciplines.

Stay with friends who support you in these.
Talk with them about sacred texts,
and how you're doing, and how they're doing,
and keep your practices together.

Inside this new love, die.

Your way begins on the other side.
Become the sky.
Take an axe to the prison wall.
Escape.
Walk out like someone suddenly born into color.
Do it now.
You're covered with a thick cloud.
Slide out the side. Die,
and be quiet. Quietness is the surest sign
that you've died.
Your old life was a frantic running
from silence.
The speechless full moon
comes out now.

Tricks and Traps

Trick: Identification. "Whatever you say 'I' to, you take as being you and with that you are identified. You make it the same as you. Whatever you make the same as you, you make one with yourself. This is identifying. The process is not deliberate. It happens automatically and instantaneously. It is bound to happen automatically and instantaneously to everyone who takes everything that goes on within him or her as himself or herself. This mystery is not realized. The majority cannot see it. Some never can see it. If you begin to see, you see to your amazement that is a trick. It is indeed a trick. It is one of several quite simple and quite successful tricks that keep up the central mystery that Man is asleep but can awaken, and yet knows neither."

"The only remedy is to let a ray of the light of consciousness into yourself. This means to observe yourself - and to observe means to see things in yourself and to see eventually that many different 'I's live in you and use your name and voice."
- Maurice Nicoll

Commentary

An Intuitive Approach

" The discovery of the truth is the discernment of the false. You can know what is not. What is - you can only be. Do you understand that the mind has its limits? To go beyond, you must consent to silence." - Nisargadatta

I've often seen, and experienced myself, that seekers get stuck. We can become trapped in a rut, unable to move, spinning in the circles of habit and pattern. The contact with the inner self (higher power) is lost, our intuition plugged, and we can no longer see the way. Realization seems a hopeless pipe-dream. There are two types of non-movers: Those who insist they no longer have anywhere to go, that there's nothing to do but let happen what happens; and those who admit they're stuck, but can't see why. The first group may be giving in to laziness, pride, fear, or rationalizing a desire other than self-discovery. The second group is also prey to the same traps, but just a little more honest. They may take action to help themselves out of their trap,

while the first group will likely have to be shaken awake a bit more traumatically. Lets take a look at a plan of action for those who are stuck, yet wish to move.

The inner self is only interested in resolving our inner conflicts, in bringing about understanding of ourselves: Realization. It is not interested in the ego's agenda, or perpetuation and fulfillment of desires or fears, but in our understanding these so as to remove our attachment to them. The only problem is, why do we so love our problems? What we're not aware of can still affect us, and block our connection with our inner self. If our underlying patterns of motivation are not made conscious, we cannot move. Without meditation and silence as a background, our thoughts and habit patterns, fueled by unconscious motivations, can run us into the ground. Meditation and silence can be doorways to the unconscious, the hiding place of our blocks. We can't know ourselves completely (die before you die) and thus become free until this 'unconscious' is brought forth into our awareness.

How to get this unconscious material into consciousness? We can't listen and receive if we're constantly creating and projecting. We can't observe or be aware of what's behind us: Unconscious motivations, habits, energy blocks, knots, drains, etc., if we are busily creating more of the same. We need to learn and value the art of listening and observing. As Rumi said," Become all ear." In our modern world, much value is placed on activity. Even in our leisure time, we feel a pressing need for distraction. The wonders of silence and stillness are often overlooked, even feared, as we rush to produce and consume. How can silence and listening, both inner and outer, help us to find answers, peace, and wisdom?

First, we have to tell the inner self we are willing to listen. We make a commitment, stating our intent to find the truth about ourselves, regardless of the cost. Then we forget it, and let the wiser power within set the stage. Then, we learn how to listen. There isn't anything we have to become, or create, for we are already what we seek. We must die to what we are not. The work is in facing the facts of how we've allowed ourselves to become attached to our own false creations, physical, emotional, and mental, through ignorance. Basically, listening in silence is a way to quit the defensive position and allow the truth to manifest, to begin the letting go of our acquired and inherited pattern: Our very individuality, or egocentric position.

Whatever is blocking our understanding is well known to the inner teacher, we just need to listen and pay attention. Our first reaction may be to hunker down and insist on going right for the prize. We may be intently focusing on " Who am I ? ", or "What is Reality ? " to such an extent as to block out any realization even it smacked us in the face. Many are desperately trying to force reality to reveal itself, when they haven't yet discovered and seen as false the self they've taken a lifetime to create.

There are a myriad collection of techniques we can use to find and translate what the inner guide is constantly telling us. Dream analysis, the I-Ching, free association, prayer, and simply watching our thoughts can all be useful. As the poet John Davis once said, " follow your fascinations ". Here is where action is necessary. We must be willing to act on what is given us, in order to unveil even more of the false. The key is to observe and understand, not project what we want or believe.

If we one day find ourselves looking at the 'person' we once thought we were, from a place beyond the individual mind, we will realize what we are not. What we then find ourselves to be, will not be describable, but the 'person' we were will no longer seem so important, or even be seen as real or 'alive'. We find this place of Silence through surrender, after perhaps years of struggle to dis-cover the false self.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " There is a way between voice and presence where information flows. In disciplined silence it opens. With wandering talk it closes.
- " Which is worth more, a crowd of thousands, or your own genuine solitude? Freedom, or the power over an entire nation? A little while alone in your room will prove more valuable than anything else that could ever be given you.
- " Leaving manhood behind, there's no doubt you'll become an angel; The earth you'll leave then, and head for Heaven. Transcending the angel, become an ocean, whose each drop will be larger than the countless Seas of Oman.
- " Be careful not to regret the past. Be a Sufi, don't talk of the past. You are the son of the moment, you are young, you have vanquished time. This short present moment must not be wasted.
- " Every venture one's life may replete, Mathnavi's purpose is the Great Defeat. Set afire, burning with cleansing heat, on the anvil, egos ply and beat. This book, if you open, read, entreat your life, a mendicant's, in the street.
- " The whole world is made of dung and blood and devil's piss, and yet when a selfless one holds it, it tastes like sweet springwater." - Rumi
- " Reason is the illusion of reality. " - Hazrat Inayat Khan
- " The people who complain about not having material for meditation are those who have the most." - Richard Rose
- " For we are always what our situations hand us, it's either sadness or euphoria. - Billy Joel
- " Busyness deadens the pain of an orphaned spirit." - Bill Johnson
- " When I go on patrol in the backcountry, I might be carrying something that weighs heavily on my mind. Ten minutes out on the trail and that burden melts away. If you haven't experienced this, you need to. It is something you need to do for yourself." - Park Ranger Mark Daniel

Comic Philosophy

Political correctness is a doctrine, fostered by a delusional, illogical minority, and rabidly promoted by an unscrupulous mainstream media, which holds forth the proposition that it is entirely possible to pick up a turd by the clean end.
- R. J. Wiedemann

Someday in the future, after you've died and passed from living memory, really won't be that long from now. - The Onion

12/05/10

Paracelsus

This month's Missal takes another look at the alchemist, physician, and healer known as Paracelsus (1493-1541) . Once referred to as the Grand Paradoxical Physician, Paracelsus was to change the course of conventional medicine in his lifetime. He was born in Einsiedeln, Switzerland, near Zurich, the only son of a poor German physician and chemist, William Bombast, who taught the boy his early education. Born as Philippus Aureolus, he later took the pseudonym of Theophrastus Bombastus Von Hohenheim, and the name Paracelsus, meaning "greater than Celsus", a Roman physician.

He began his studies at the young age of sixteen at the University of Basel, graduating at seventeen. He was afterwards taught by Trithemius of Spanheim, a great adept of magic, alchemy, and astrology. He then was tutored by Sigismund Fugger, a mineralist, physician, and mine owner. Here, Paracelsus gained much he was later to use in healing with minerals.

After these years of formal training, he began a life of wandering. His travels took him through Germany, France, Hungary, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, and Russia. In Russia, he was taken prisoner by the Tartars and brought before the Grand Cham at whose court he became a great favorite. Through this connection he was said to have even traveled to India, learning many secrets of the age. He reappeared in Europe in Italy around ten years later, working as an army surgeon. Making his way back to Germany, he became well known through the many and seemingly miraculous cures he performed. He was appointed to the staff of the City Council of Basil as a professor of medicine and surgery, but was not to hold the post for long. His methods were contrary to the methods of the time, and his insistence on teaching them in opposition to the medical establishment, despite his obvious success in healing incurable cases, led him into trouble. He publicly burned the texts of Galen, the accepted medical authority of the day, and succeeded in antagonizing the medical faculty, infuriated that their authority and prestige were being undermined by Paracelsus' original teachings and successful healing's. He was forced out of his position and exiled from the city.

We should do that which our conscience teaches, for no other reason but because our conscience teaches it. To learn from others, to accept the opinion of others, to act in a certain manner because others are acting in that way, is temptation.

He began his second period of wandering, popping up in cities from time to time, but always succeeding in turning the medical establishment against him, despite his superior treatments. He is credited with the introduction of opium and mercury into the arsenal of medicine, and has been called "the precursor of chemical pharmacology and therapeutics and the most original medical thinker of the sixteenth century." By this time he had a small but faithful following, who copied down his teachings. He wrote little, but dictated his knowledge to his students. His life of wandering came to an end when he was taken in by the Duke Ernst of Bavaria. His time there was not long, as he became sick soon after, and passed away in September of 1541.

The legacy Paracelsus left was great. He changed the course of medicine by insisting that disease was caused by the invasion of the body from outside, by sickness or poison, and should be treated by attacking these invaders, a radical idea in his time.

He claimed that the true method of learning the art of healing was done through hands-on experience, rather than through lectures and books.

Reading never made a physician. Medicine is an art, and requires practice. I began to study my art by imagining that there was not a single teacher in the world capable to teach it to me, but that I had to acquire it myself. It was the book of Nature, written by the finger of God, which I studied - not those of the scribblers.

Paracelsus claimed to receive his knowledge directly from Nature, by emptying himself of all opinion, and thus being able to see the true essence of things. The value of insight and revelation as true knowledge is his most important legacy to us, for his success in curing the incurable gave proof to his claims that direct insight is of greater value than mere rote learning. He taught that if we first know ourselves, all other knowledge can flow to us from the Source within.

A knowledge of spiritual things cannot be obtained by merely reasoning logically from external appearances existing on the physical plane, but it may be acquired by obtaining more spirituality, and making one's self capable to feel and to see the things of the spirit.

All Quotes from Franz Hartmann's Paracelsus: Life and Prophecies

Tricks and Traps

Trap: Irrational fear of making a mistake, brought on by taking our 'selves' too seriously, can turn into a pattern of mind, keeping us bottled up and afraid to move. This blocked energy could be put to better use, and our mind would be better off not constantly chewing on fake problems. One way of breaking the spell of fear, leading to a clearer mind and better energy use, is the
Trick of Humor: Being able to laugh at ourselves when faced with our faults and misgivings. This humorous point of view helps us to accept ourselves as we are. Fear hides the joy within, and separates us from our friends and helpers. Also, since we are all One, helping others to face themselves and release tension through humor, helps us.

"Man is not body.
The heart, the spirit, is man.
And this spirit is an entire star,
out of which, he is built.

If therefore a man is perfect in his heart,
nothing in the whole light of Nature is
hidden from him."
- Paracelsus

Commentary

On Learning to Listen

"It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."
- William Shakespeare, Macbeth

Paracelsus was known to be able to look at anything, an herb, plant or mineral, and divine its essence, and thus its purpose and use. A direct knowing, given by the Universal Intelligence, to one who had ears to hear. How might we tap into this direct insight of the universe? Most of us are trapped with only a very limited 'knowing' which is basically the description of opinions derived from an arbitrary point of observation; a fixed pattern, based only on the recalled past. This 'knowing' or ego/mind, is hardly capable of knowing itself, much less the essence of an herb, plant, or our Source. This ego is derived from the experience of a character in a story, who is basically unconscious; a scripted unwitting idiot telling a tale, ultimately signifying nothing. To know directly, as Paracelsus, we would have to leave our story-drama and its trap, and become something wider, deeper. We are capable of hearing more than the mind's obsessive chattering about our personal character's recalled experiences. We may begin to wake up, and feel as Arthur Dent in The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy: "Did I do anything wrong today, or has the world always been like this and I've been too wrapped up in myself to notice?"

Only something which has no vested interest in the drama can look outside of the character in its tale, and see the universal reality behind the dream of life. This is a very scary proposition, it threatens the very system of the drama, for we derive our identity from our character and story-line, each defining the other. The drama is seldom questioned, for this can only happen by stepping outside of it; a paradox. We refuse to listen to the voice of the silence within, because that would imply we don't know it all already. How can we learn to turn to this inner listening, to hear the voice of intuition, of insight?

Spending time alone is one way. We take a break from the distractions of our electronic age with its cell phones, computers, TV's, etc., plus the well meaning but distracting voices of our friends and family. This can give us time to learn to appreciate silence, and to listen. Perhaps we'll reacquainte ourselves with a long lost companion deep within: our own heart. Time spent alone removes the relentless pressure imposed on us by society to conform to its standards, and allows our mind to clear and become quiet. Another pressure is the ego's defense against its main fear, the unknown. This also requires much time and energy, and blocks out anything that doesn't fit the storyline. Nothing from the higher power within is allowed to get through.

Another way is to spend time with those who value listening within, and have found their connection to the inner voice. These fellow seekers can save us time and energy, having been down the long road to their inner self and thus able to help us along our path as well. The higher energy fields of these companions will give the inner self a taste of its own potential. Their inner calm and quiet are a stark contrast to the tale of sound and fury we have been dreaming so hard, without question.

The world of dreams is similar to this drama we call our life. When in a dream, we take it for real, and the experiences of the dream as telling us a true 'knowing' about the dream-world. But when interpreted upon awakening, we see it as only a story of our character's mind, and this 'knowing' as being simply a description of this mind

that made the dream-world. The individual pattern or view-point is what's known. Nothing is objectively known about the so-called things, inhabitants, or possible reality of the dream.

To find the reality behind the dream, and possibly behind the dream character, we must find something higher. This universal intelligence is constantly speaking to us, always trying to get our attention. This voice of insight or intuition is drowned out by the voices of the characters in our drama. Look bravely at the plots of the dramas in life you've seen. They all end the same, and nothing is gained. Death conquers all, and the story with all its sound and fury, endlessly repeats. Question the character you've been lost in, and the drama of your own so-called life and its significance. Search fearlessly to find the nameless Something behind the play; the calm, clear reality beyond the dream, where nothing is done, nobody's there to do it, and all is perfect in silence.

Bob Fergeson

" The exercise of clairvoyance requires a passive state. " - Franz Hartmann

Quotes -

- " I went in search of my art, often incurring danger of life. I have not been ashamed to learn that which seemed useful to me even from vagabonds, executioners, and barbers. We know that a lover will go a long way to meet the woman he adores: how much more will the lover of wisdom be tempted to go in search of his divine mistress!
- " Men do not know themselves, and therefore they do not understand the things that are in their inner world. Each man has the essence of God, and all the wisdom and power of the world (germinally) in himself; he possesses one kind of knowledge as much as another, and he who does not find that which is in him cannot truly say that he does not possess it, but only that he was not capable of successfully seeking for it.
- " That which the dream shows is the shadow of such wisdom as exists in man, even if during his waking state he may know nothing about it... We do not know it because we are fooling away our time with outward and perishing things, and are asleep in regard to that which is real within ourself."
- " Thus, the cause of the disease chorea lasciva is a mere opinion and idea, assumed by imagination, affecting those who believe in such a thing. This opinion and idea are the origin of the disease both in children and adults. In children the case is also imagination, based not on thinking but on perceiving, because they have heard or seen something. The reason is this: their sight and hearing are so strong that unconsciously they have fantasies about what they have seen or heard."
- " If the followers of the Christian Church or the modern 'theosophists' were to realise these truths, they would cease to kneel before external Christs or run after strange 'mahatmas', and every one would try to know the Christ or 'Mahatrna' within himself." - Paracelsus
- " Magic is a science which teaches the true nature of the inner man as well as the organization of his outward body." - Franz Hartmann

- " Pain is inevitable, but misery is optional. We cannot avoid pain, but we can avoid joy. " - Tim Hansel
- " Liberalism is part of a religious disorder that demands a belief that life is controllable." - Ann Coulter
- " What we accept as everyday consciousness is thoroughly sub-normal." - Colin Wilson
- " The aim of art is to prepare a person for death." - Andrei Tarkovsky

Comic Philosophy

I wonder how the high colleges managed to produce so many high asses. - Paracelsus

Sacred cows make the best hamburger. - Mark Twain

Love: a temporary insanity curable by marriage. - Ambrose Bierce

Before enlightenment, chop wood, carry water. After 'enlightenment', sell books, go on Oprah. - John Small

03/07/11

Jim Burns

This missal takes a look at a modern day teacher, mystic and psychologist: Jim Burns (1931-2016). Born in Pittsburgh in 1931 to Irish-American parents, Jim's life was one of struggle and subsequent triumph, from mental illness to great feats of insight into the human condition. Suffering from a withered arm as well as a profound dis-interest in the games of life and society, Jim struggled to gain understanding of himself, life, and his source. Realizing at an early age that the only answers that satisfied him and relieved his angst were those he found within, he devoted himself to a life in pursuit of self-understanding. These journeys within gave fruit only after tremendous struggle, but Jim slowly found a system of insight and self-knowledge, and in later life gave these insights to those who also longed for real answers to their longing

"If you've gotten to a point where you realize that the thing you would like most to find in this world is a steady source of guidance, to help you become your own source of guidance - then that's what you are after. You never find that stated anywhere in simple language. The key to the whole process lies in the fact that there is a fountain-spring of endless guidance and information within every human being. One only has to learn to get out of its way, to let the consciousness generate in a stilled and quiet mind."

Jim worked in his father's law office and as a service station attendant and mechanic, and developed a love for motorcycles, but despite his astute intellect, he could not hold a place in the working world. The stresses of mental illness and inner angst led him to spend a good deal of his adult life in mental institutions. Despite his mental afflictions, Jim was able to remain objective enough to his situation to gain an acute understanding of psychology and the world of the mentally ill. In the 1960's Jim had the good fortune to be introduced to A.R.E., (Association for Research and Enlightenment, founded by America's "sleeping prophet" Edgar Cayce) by an understanding psychiatrist, giving Jim an outlet for his insights into the mind. Later, an A.R.E. member introduced him to TAT and Richard Rose, leading to a friendship with like-minded fellows. Jim has been invited to many TAT gatherings, always an inspiration and light for those with an interest in their own minds, and a path within.

When you begin to have experiences of the information from within, you learn how perfectly attuned the inner mind is to your immediate and momentary circumstances. It can guide you exactly to the thinking required to deal with the outer circumstances or other aspects of consciousness that is absorbing your attention. It is perfectly attuned to the potential of expanding your total consciousness to its absolute maximum. It is designed to do this.
It is endlessly trying to do this.
It can't stop doing it.
The fountainhead lies totally within.

Jim's association with TAT led to many of the conversations being recorded. These were painstakingly transcribed and edited, culminating in his insightful book, *At Home With the Inner Self,* published by the TAT Foundation Press, a masterful work on psychology and insight. Jim teaches three important techniques for re-connecting

with the inner self: free association, holding awareness through all states of consciousness [i.e., going to sleep slowly], and dream analysis.

Your internal system is entirely capable, given the opportunity, of teaching you what it is trying to teach you. Try to place the problem mentally in front of you and let every tension go out of your body. Gradually, a word will come to mind that will begin to explain and alleviate the circumstances. The words form so long as you hold that center. It is uncomfortable and miserable, and the only thing that is worse is that which you're trying to escape. There is a free association part of the mind that is like a citizen's band scanner, constantly going up and down the channels. Your inner mind is constantly trying to get your outer self to be aware of what's going on within yourself until you've answered to that need. It keeps throwing balls over the fence. As you drive down the road your mind will constantly pick out this fence or that tree, or this sign. You're accustomed to it and assume that everyone else's mind does the same thing. If you analyzed why you pick this or that to see out of everything that is available, you'll see that there's a definite reason and pattern to it. It follows very closely the things that come in ordinary dreaming, which is another method of throwing balls over the fence. The dream-maker uses these things in waking life. They are attempts to guide you to what in you is unfulfilled.

Jim's life was one of hardship and separation, he spent many years in mental institutions, and had few opportunities to work and have normal social relationships. His success in spiritual endeavors can be directly related to his troubles: he had to find solutions to the pressing emotional problems, and he had the time to do it. Having a clear and calm mind is necessary to communicating with the inner self, and this requires many long hours of solitude, something Jim could afford. He also stumbled on the capacity to maintain his waking consciousness even in sleep, something he recommends highly:

In the beginning, you have to learn how to clear your mind of daily concerns. You have to take them one at a time until they die a death of their own. This is what permits you once you accomplish this. This permits you and brings you to the edge. And you realize that if you try, you can take your daily consciousness once changed into sleep and not lose track of it. Once you have accomplished this, you never leave the waking state consciousness again. It carries into all things, fundamentally a clear-headed sharp capacity into insight into all matters regardless of what they are in the mental aspect, which is part of everything. That is the goal. It was built into you and buried by misconception, but once you try to bring it back to life, it will have a life of its own.

Once the ability to observe and remember the information and feelings of the dream state is reached, Jim recommended using the material to find and understand what the inner self is trying to communicate. These buried feelings and moods can be brought into full consciousness, further clearing the mind, enabling deeper insight:

When I was young, I learned that dreams were the source of all necessary information. It's good to go to sleep slowly and to wake up slowly. If you have a nagging dream, just lie in bed and be quiet. Try and be conscious of no-thing, which is different than nothing. Just let it come to you. All the pictography of the dream is an attempt by the inner stage master to throw things over the fence to key you in to what is happening in

your insides. Through dreams, you can repair the bridge to the inner self and again become a whole person. Realizing something in a dream isn't enough—you have to become aware of it in the waking state.

Jim's presence and astute sense of humor will be missed by all of those fortunate enough to have spent time with him. His time was spent in understanding the problems of his own life, and then communicating this universal insight to those around him. While he didn't have the ability to communicate, work and travel as much as some, he did find an audience, one that keeps his work and insight alive and well.

The goal is to be peacefully and rejoicefully aware and awake in common garden variety consciousness. It is the goal we all seek to achieve. If you work at the things I am saying, if you can find the time, you cannot miss getting there. If you don't have the time, you are finished and it eats time. It is the biggest reason why no one ever said much to anyone about it since once they realize that all the time they have and all the effort they can stand to put out is eaten by paying the bills. I was carried along first by my family and then by social security disability. There is where I got the time. I knew one thing the whole way through: that I dare not waste one second.

All above quotes by Jim Burns, from his book, *At Home With the Inner Self.*

Tricks and Traps

Trap: Tragedies and Drama. Life puts mud holes in our path as often as not. If we become identified with the events of our lives, and only see them in terms of our desires and fears, we become trapped in the drama of tragedy. We may even sit down in the mud, smearing it on our face, announcing our pathetic situation to all, reviling in our victimhood. We may even stray from our path into the underbrush in a vain attempt to avoid all conflict and difficulty.

Trick: Leaps and Zebras. When we see the mud hole, we can leap over it, rather than wallowing or becoming lost. This moment of flying above the situation through non-identification keeps us clean. We observe rather than identify, think rather than react, and thus leap into a higher perspective. Another trick is understanding, knowing that in this dimension of life, there are always opposites. We can't have our way all the time. Just like a Zebra with its stripes of white and black, we have ups and downs, the path is bumpy and smooth. Again, this lifts us into a higher perspective. The point of the path, is to climb up to a clearer view.

" Renunciation is always in the mind, not in going to forests or solitary places or giving up one's duties. The main thing is to see that the mind does not turn outward but inward. It does not really rest with a man whether he goes to this place or that or whether he gives up his duties or not. All these events happen according to destiny. All the activities that the body is to go through are determined when it first comes into existence. It does not rest with you to accept or reject them. The only freedom you have is to turn your mind inward and renounce activities there."

- Ramana Maharshi

Commentary

A Formula for Self-Discovery

I'm often asked how a seeker can increase their progress along the path. Sometimes the person may feel stuck, or simply wants to know the most expedient way to increase their vector. Looking back over my own life, I've found that one factor stands out. When I became a conduit for realization, passing it along to others, things took off. It's as if we agree to become a link in a chain, and pass on down the line that which was handed to us from above. This is not only a theory, but something we can, and must, actively do in our day-to-day lives. One may argue that if all is one, then this is just another illusion, but the rationalizations of the ego come easy and keep us stuck in our own mud, while active work may put tension on us in a way the ego can't handle.

I can best relate how this works along the lines of my hobby with photography. I've spent a lot of my time in the great outdoors, and for years refused to share this experience with others due to a certain ego. I felt that if I took pictures of my trips, it would somehow cheapen the experience, take something away from the purity of the pristine settings. Somehow this changed, thank goodness, and I became willing and inspired to do the work to bring a bit of what I was seeing back with me to share with others. I broke down and bought a digital camera, and the magic began. Some inner part of me that had been denied came back to life, and with it a better relationship to everything involved. The entire experience of hiking was somehow changed for the better.

At about this same time, I also bought my first computer and entered the world of email and the Internet. I was able to stay in touch with fellow seekers from around the country, and to share my experiences in the search for definition, as with the photography. Somehow this changed the belief that spiritual work was a solitary affair only, and opened doors of opportunity I had never dreamed of. I started a web site, and became involved with an online confrontation group. I began to move within, the connection was made.

William Samuel talks about much the same thing. He describes getting answers from within as Glimpses, and stresses the importance of sharing these. It's a double-sided coin, much like the chicken and the egg dilemma, in that we must get answers in order to share them, in order to get answers. But the process is not that complicated, if we just make a move. We become a conduit, a transmitter of realization, and the more we give, the more we get.

One trap worth mentioning here is that of keeping this all in one's head. We may think that by getting a few answers in the beginning of our search, we are on the path and need not put out more effort. Being comfortable in our life, we may not wish to rock the boat of our habits, and thus keep whatever intuitions we receive to ourselves, thus miring our spirit in a dream world. Our intuitions bear fruit when they are put into action and tested in life, and when found sound, passed along to our fellows.

All of the above is what might be called a law of manifestation, an equation as Samuel calls it, and it will work for whatever desire applies it, spiritual or otherwise. If one wants money, success or security, this formula will work as well. This leads to a dilemma for some us in that we may not consciously know what we really want, until we test ourselves by putting the formula into practice. This can be a paradox. If we believe we want enlightenment, and put it to the test through actions in our day-to-day life, we may find that what we really want is freedom from fear or a desire for

power. While we have temporarily fooled ourselves, we have at least come to know ourselves better, and have thus made a move along the path of self-discovery. We may eventually uncover an intense longing for home, for something stable and real, which was only allowed to manifest as the mundane patterns of fear and worldly desire. This was long buried, and is what will provide the necessary pull to carry us farther within. To get real answers, we must come to have real and pressing questions.

One thing is for certain, if we do not make a move, a commitment to action, we will not leave the head-in-the-sand false safety of our dreams. A man asleep in his bed in a burning house may dream of oneness and ease as well as anxiety and need. On the other hand, waking up may take effort, be difficult and even unpleasant, but is most necessary, too.

Bob Fergeson

Quotes -

- " Facing the unknown takes a lot of personal quiet and divorcement from the world around you. I studied this very carefully. It is the bridge between the inner and outer man.
- " Your inner being knows. Your outer being is always unknowing."
- " Through dreams you can repair the bridge to the inner self and again become a whole person. Realizing something in a dream isn't enough; you have to become aware of it in the waking state."
- " The child-like state is the state that every human alive is trying to get to."
- " I escaped into my mind from a world I couldn't stand. I came to the conclusion that I had to find all my answers from within, that I wasn't going to get them from anyone else."
- " If you can develop the ability to be aware of what is in someone else's mind, it will enhance the ability to be aware of what is in your own mind."
- " One of the first things you have to learn to study is how your body responds when you meet somebody. Your body is never wrong. You might want to run away. If you do like them, you want to stay. That is the key."
- " Ego is a very phony, slippery, and difficult thing to get hold of. Everything is "I did," and the truth is that you don't do anything."
- " A process goes on progressively from birth to death. Some call it "wising up," but another thing to call it is "accepting defeat." It is defeat. Your fantasies die one at a time. Most people die physically before they get to the point of total rejection." - Jim Burns
- " Maturity is achieved when a person accepts life as full of tension." - Joshua L. Liebman
- " One of the symptoms of an approaching nervous breakdown is the belief that one's work is terribly important." - Bertrand Russell
- " Wipe out imagination. Stop the pulling of strings. Confine thyself to the present. " - Marcus Aurelius
- " How happy are the wild birds, they can go where they will, now to the sea, now to the mountain, and come home without rebuke." - 17th century Welsh epigram
- " The only things you technically actually like are dopamine and serotonin." - Madeline Everitt Monday

Comic Philosophy

Reintarnation: coming back to life as a hillbilly

Life's tough.....It's even tougher if you're stupid. - John Wayne

For fast-acting relief, try slowing down. - Lily Tomlin

There is a fine line between Team Work and Gang Rape. - anonymous(?)

08/10/11