

III.

MEDITATION AS TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

The Yogi and the Stoic, two righteous egos who achieve their very considerable results by pretending, systematically, to be somebody else. But is it not by pretending to be somebody else, even somebody supremely good and wise, that we can pass from insulated Manicheeism to Good Being.

I just discovered that the word "whole" stems from "holy." More important, "health" comes from the word "holy." I like the term "good being." Taking care of yourself is to maintain good being, good presence.

Good Being is knowing who in fact we are; and in order to know who in fact we are, we must first know, moment by moment, who we think we are and what this bad habit of thought compels us to feel and do. A moment of clear and complete knowledge of what we think we are, but in fact are not, puts a stop, for the moment, to the Manicheeism charade. If we renew, until they become a continuity, these moments of knowledge of what we are not, we may find ourselves all of a sudden, knowing who in fact we are.

Concentration, abstract thinking, spiritual exercises-systematic exclusions in the realm of thought. Asceticism and hedonism-systematic exclusions in the realms of sensation, feeling and action. But Good Being is in the knowledge of who in fact one is in relation to *all* ~ experiences. So be aware in every context, at all times and whatever, creditable or discreditable, pleasant or unpleasant, you may be doing or suffering. This is the only genuine yoga, the only spiritual exercise worth practicing.

That is from Huxley's *Island*

I was going to work on the gospel of John. If I had not contained myself I would have hastened to chapters 14, 15, 16 and 17. A little while ago I had the experience of reading it to myself, and I became aware of the fact that although I did not have the slightest idea what it was talking about, I was deeply addressed by it

Set your troubled hearts at rest. Trust in God always; trust also in me. There are many dwelling places in my Father's house; if it were not so I would have told you; for I am going there on purpose to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I shall come again and receive you to myself, so that where I am you may be also; and my way there is known to you. Thomas said, "Lord, we do not know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus replied, "I am the way; I am the truth and I am life. .

"If you knew me you would know my Father too. From now on you do know him; you have seen him." Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father and we ask no more." Jesus answered, "Have I been all this time with you and you still do not know me? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. Then how can you say, 'Show us the Father?' Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? I am not myself the source of the words I speak to you; it is the Father who dwells in me doing his own work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father in me; or else accept the evidence of the deeds themselves. In truth, in very truth, I tell you, he who has faith in me will do what I am doing; and he will do greater things still because I am going to the Father. Indeed anything you ask in my name I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in my name, I will do it."

I have had fun looking at my notes on Meditation we developed five years ago. I was pleased with how good it was. The titles interest me; in those days we were more "smartalec" than we are now.

Remember, point one-Meditation is Inherent Community; point two- Meditation is Pristine Dialogue; number three-Meditation is Fanatical Discipline; point four-Meditation is Destinal Armageddon. That must have been good!

Of course, that is not what I want to talk about. I am just assuming what we said then. I think we were right, as we struggled in those days, to try to ground Meditation in humanness, to say that Meditation was an ontological reality. We were right, I think, to see that Meditation is fundamentally the internalization of the community before whom we experience approbation and disapprobation, with whom we dialogue about relating ourselves to our relationship to the situation. It is precisely at this point where, to use ancient Persian imagery, Satan always attacks. Meditation has to do with Satan because Satan has to do with that relationship to our relationships. Meditation has to do with grounding.

In terms of taking care of yourself, we have talked about experiencing your experience in the profound sense. By that I mean, if my wife gets angry with me and I get upset, taking care of yourself has nothing to do with your getting upset. It does not even have anything to do with whether or not you hit her or she hits you. I said yesterday that I experienced myself as schizophrenic, living in two worlds. I literally experience the Other World in the midst of this world. To be present, to stand at attention to your experience in the profound sense means that you have to go through your wife's being angry with you to the meaning of the situation and relate to it. When you see that, you understand that anything which you and I usually call external to ourselves has nothing to do with being in Good Being or Bad Being. You never collapse because something external happened to you. You only collapse in relationship to that other relationship. To put it in secular language, you only collapse when you get in disrelationship with consciousness. External happenings have nothing to do with my consciousness. Whether or not you like me has nothing to do with my consciousness nor does whether or not I like myself. When you begin to see what I am talking about, you become aware that you have no excuses ever again. You have nothing to blame anything on.

When you experience your profound experience, all of us are in exactly the same boat. All my life I have been wanting to say, "You are no different than I am, and I am no different than you are!" This is on the level of profound consciousness. What you are experiencing is *Humiliation*: You may have thought that you were unique in this; *Weakness*: And you thought that you were the only weak one; *Resentment*: In Sunday School they told you that you should not resent things and all your life you have resented every day; and *Suffering*: You have no object of suffering, you are just suffering.

I know also, about this sense of not having any home. After you have been married for years, you might have expected that you would be settled down and at home, but it has not happened. You people who lose your nerve think that the rest of us have found a home. Isn't that true? This is just as true for other categories of the Long March of Care. Although life does not seem stale to me, there is a sameness. I have not had a different experience for as long as I can remember. I am always trying to pick up my humiliation and my weakness, my resentment and my suffering. In the deeps of consciousness, that is the way it is.

What do you do? You can see the relationship of detachment to meditation. If you cannot detach yourself, you cannot meditate, and you can see the relationship in its intensification, which is knowing. When you push knowing to the bottom, all you have is the Word. In prayer you utter, and in contemplation you write. Actually, in prayer you do not utter; prayer is the utterance before the utterance, and in contemplation, the writing is before the writing.

I am not much of a poet, but once I tried to say something poetically about a sunset. The writing before the writing are the images that come to you, without which there is no beautiful sunset. Without those images, you have nothing to do your poetry with. That is contemplation.

Meditation is not utterance and it is not writing; it is reading. It is the reading before the reading. I do not want you to tell me to read a chapter of the Bible every day. I am not against doing that, but I am opposed to doing it as some kind of old piety. The reading before the reading would not have to be the Bible. In principle, it could be anything. Someone told me this morning that it could be a science fiction book or a light novel. I am not opposed to that; I believe in it. However, I think that because of the fact that society has put the Bible aside and put a seal on it means the Bible is absolutely crucial for this reading before the reading.

Just yesterday the 40th chapter of Exodus came to my mind. I read again about how the temple was completed and then was filled with the *doxa*. Another time recently I read Joshua's valedictory speech. Those are meditation. It does not have much to do with rushing off and reading something. It is a dialogue with my being.

I am not going into the council which is in your minds, but you must remember it. You do not dialogue outside of that council, in principle, even if you are reading a book by an author you never heard of.

If this ministers unto you in terms of what I mean by the exercise of meditation, it is screened through that council. These readings that occur to me from time to time keep me grounded. If I lose my ground, I am utterly vulnerable.

I see my ground in three different ways. In the early days every year, often more frequently than that, we would go back in history and get ourselves grounded concretely in history. We would relate ourselves to historical thrusts, to keep our feet on the ground to know who we are. That kind of grounding is crucial. Once you lose your sense of being anchored in remembered history, you are vulnerable to any kind of attack. Your ground, finally, of course, is in the communion of saints. You do not have to use Christian language for that; its equivalent is found in every culture. For our Order, it is the People of God.

The second way you have to be grounded is in humanness. I experience myself as grounded constantly in humanness only as the historical one. It is harder these days to talk about the grounding in history than it was. Right now there is a kind of clarity relative to my grounding in humanness that I never dreamed was even possible. That is because of the Other World chart and our work on the Dark Night of the Soul. The moment that I lose awareness of the fact that the Dark Night of the Soul is the situation of consciousness itself, I am lost.

The third way that I have to keep myself grounded is in Being itself. This is a little more difficult for me to talk about than it was 20 years ago, when all we knew was the decisional dimension of selfhood, that each of us was responsible for deciding who we were. These days I experience myself as captivated by unknowable forces that do my selfhood deciding for me. That is what I mean by Hope appeareth. I am trying to confess to you that every time I take two steps I do not have to decide all over again that I am a believer. I stumble upon myself constantly being a believer. That does not take away the decisional dimension.

Now, what is Meditation? Seen functionally, Meditation is that reading before the reading which defends and protects my honor, *my* profound integrity. I do not mean my moral integrity, I mean my *profound integrity*. I mean not my being a believer, but my *being* a believer, that I be the presence, that I *be* my trust, that I *be* my concern, I be my power, I be my vocation, I be my peace, I be my certitude, I be my joy unspeakable which is filled with glory. This is what Meditation is.

One of the reasons why I finally dropped Ignatius temporarily is that I did my best to transpose his emphasis upon sin into the postmodern world. I could not find a way to do it, so I dropped it. Meditation is not contemplating sin. As a matter of fact, when you are looking directly at sin, or for sin, you could no more find it than you could find the proverbial needle in a haystack. Your own sin is *disclosed* to you, and the best you can do is to see it out of the corner of your eye. Otherwise you do not see *sin*, you see this false image of yourself that I read about out of that book. In Meditation you are not looking for your sin anyway. When this reading before the reading happens to you, it usually is in the inverse of this sin. It usually jars Good Being into your consciousness. It jars your integrity or your honor. It pushes you back again to the Word.

This is the point where Satan enters. The only way that, in our day, we can deal with the category of sin concretely is to understand that sin has to do with being depth consciousness. Sin is the refusal to be consciousness. It is your rebellion against who you actually are; a contingency, a humiliatable entity, a weakable entity. To use theological language, sin is only rebellion against God. And that happens when you refuse the resentment you are, when you refuse the suffering you are, when you say, "I have had enough of this," which means, "I am going to do my best to get myself out of the profound depths of consciousness. I have had enough of it." The tragedy is that once you get that mud on your feet you never get it off. If you have actually fallen into the depth, all that you have ahead of you if you flee from the deeps of profound consciousness is zombieism. Sin is the refusal of being unfulfilled. It is the refusal to endure drainedoutness. It is the refusal to not have hope in temporality. Do you see that this is precisely the point and the only point where, to use the images of the Persians, Satan attacks?

Meditation is not something you go aside for an hour a day to do. I am extremely suspicious of that. Meditation goes on constantly. This is the constant brooding. There is not a soul in this room who is not grateful for every Bible verse that his parents and his Sunday School teacher forced him to learn. There is not a soul in this room who is not grateful for every adage. My Latin is bad, but my Papa used to make me go to the board and write over and over again, *Laloor omnia vincet*.

I am talking about Meditation: I am talking about brooding. I am talking about the glory of having to live with terrible people like you. Why, you are the stuff of Meditation! You do not have to be good, you do not have to live up to all of my expectations or all of your own to supply me with the material of my reading before I read. My wife said that the walk I did up here the other day was not too good. I appreciate that kind of comment. It is the stuff of Meditation. Finally, Meditation is that goingoneness with whatsoever council you have that enables you, when you are absolutely collapsed into a heap of shaking palsy, to pick yourself up and walk tall. this means that Meditation is the continuing of the profound decision to live life in profound consciousness.

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