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Master of No-Man's Land

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Good evening and welcome to the Festival of Libra.

As we enter into the first decan of Aquarius, humanity finds itself upon the probationary path of discipleship which Libra governs. It is the path of choices, and Libra facilitates the decision making process for it is a sign associated with balance and judgement – qualities that the world clearly needs right now. This first quarter of the twenty-first century has given no indication that the planetary crises of the twentieth century are nearing an end. In fact, if anything, the underlying wrong relationships seem to be intensifying.

Libra marks a period of disengagement from activity in which a necessary distance from events is created, enabling more accurate judgement. This sign is the great evaluator hence its association with justice and equality, and its influence provides opportunity for assessment prior to renewed creativity. The more we can sensitise ourselves to these Libran influences, the more insight we will gain as to the causes that have led to such terrible world conditions, and the right way to resolve them. In this communications era, public debate is taking place on a mass scale, and this progressive discernment is clarifying what values and principles will eventually lead humanity to make the right choices.

As with the individual, humanity has to tread the noble middle path between those great opposing forces of the astral plane between which it has so violently swung through the ages. The historian, Eric Hobsbawm commented that “the twentieth century ended in a global disaster whose nature was unclear and without an obvious mechanism for either ending it or keeping it under control.” The reason for this impotence, he continued, “lay not only in the genuine profundity and complexity of the world’s crisis, but also in the apparent failure of all programmes, old and new, for managing or improving the affairs of the human race.”¹

Hobsbawm called the twentieth century the age of extremes, and it is clear that in the first part of this century, the thinkers of the race are moving through a period of disillusionment and abstraction from past modes and systems of thought. Ideologies have their time and place: they come and go, only to reappear at a future date in a fresh guise more suited to the prevailing energies and conditions. At the moment there is much mulling over what was good and bad about the past and the attempt to find the magical third element needed to construct the way forward. As the physicist and religious philosopher Ravi Ravindra suggested, transcending opposites is more than just putting them together – a change of ‘level’ is needed. Simply combining things doesn’t necessarily change their level. He observed that the magic of sacred scriptures occurs when they somehow lift us up to a higher state of consciousness. “But if there is to be a true synthesis”, he said, “there must always be a mysterious element added into the combination. Otherwise it will not lift us up. It’s something not quite within the grasp of our ordinary thinking. However, when two or three or more people of

goodwill come together to explore something, there is always this mysterious element which lifts them up.”² The nations and societies of the world are in dire need of this mysterious element to redefine their relationships with one another, otherwise the future will just be an exercise in survival and co-existence. Esoterically, not only do we need to draw forth the positive from all sides but transform things by adding something from a higher more inclusive level of consciousness.

The upheaval in the world at this time is similar to the process which occurs in the consciousness of the individual aspirant. The inner conflict of the aspirant is intense, and this same, mysterious element is required to lift the personality up into the light to form a new relationship with the soul. The soul has made its appearance in the life of the aspirant, just as it has in the life of humanity, and the initial effect is the stirring up of the lower nature. In the ensuing turmoil, the soul is temporarily lost to sight again. After initiating a crisis of change, the soul seems to vanish from the scene, leaving the aspirant to endure a kind of half-light of belonging neither to the world of the personality nor to the world of the soul. It's a state of limbo that has to be endured until sufficient spiritual tension is gained to move forward. It is also a state that keeps returning at various stages of the path in increasing levels of severity, but the psychological crises generated eventually make him, what has been termed “The Master of No-Man's Land.

The dark tension of this period is portrayed in an old stanza that used to be chanted by those who were preparing to take the initiation of transfiguration. The first part of the stanza runs:

"I stand between the Heavens and Earth! I vision God; I see the forms God took. I hate them both. Naught do they mean to me, for one I cannot reach, and for the lower of the two I have no longer any love.

Torn I am. Space and its Life I cannot know, and so I want it not. Time and its myriad forms, I know too well. Pendant I hang betwixt the two, desiring neither."

The path of initiation is formed as the soul applies spiritual pressures and forces on the personality. This doesn't mean that the outer personal life is necessarily more eventful than the next person's; what it does mean though, is that the inner life intensifies and this impacts the substance of the physical body and the environment of the personality. The process of initiation is not a natural feature of evolution, but a divine experiment to accelerate the unfoldment of life. An analogous process can be seen in scientific experiments simulating what was thought to be the Earth's early atmosphere to see if life could have developed from it. When this *primordial soup* was subjected to electrical discharges (to simulate lightning) and ultra-violet light for a few days, amino acids were created – the building blocks of protein, which in turn is the basic stuff of life.

While this process doesn't create life, the experiments do show that the application of electricity and ultraviolet light can stimulate the elementary lives existing in matter into greater life expression in a short period of time. In the same way, the path of initiation speeds up the process of natural evolution by subjecting the aspirant to the light and electrical pressure of the soul – stresses that are absent in those who have chosen the slower, more natural way of development. This is one of the reasons that fatigue is such a common phenomenon of the path, and can be so even

in times of little outer activity. Bouts of stress and strain are common to those who are subjectively, even if not consciously, adapting to new energy flows and rhythms, and breaking down one crystallised set of behaviour patterns after another. Affirmations and mantrams can all help in this adaptation process and perhaps we can take a few minutes to reflect on this and then say the Affirmation of the Disciple together:

*I am a point of light within a greater Light.
I am a strand of loving energy within the stream of love divine.
I am a point of sacrificial Fire, focussed within the fiery Will of God.
And thus I stand.*

*I am a way by which men may achieve.
I am a source of strength, enabling them to stand.
I am a beam of light, shining upon their way.
And thus I stand.*

*And standing thus revolve
And tread this way the ways of men,
And know the ways of God.
And thus I stand.*

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The keynote of the disciple in Libra is “*I choose the way that leads between the two great lines of force*” – and this clearly portrays the dynamic nature of the spiritual life. For the initiate, the two great lines of force are the great poles of spirit and matter, and between them he stands in a dynamic state of tension, relating them to one another through the creative consciousness. However, the struggling aspirant is more concerned with achieving a point of balance between the two poles of force on the astral plane, treading the razor-edged path between the forces of attraction and repulsion that buffet him relentlessly. The cause of all this is the desire nature, desire being simply and lucidly described by the Indian sage Patanjali as the “attachment to objects of pleasure”. In the commentary on the sutras of Patanjali, Alice Bailey writes:

“This may mean the delight of a cannibal for that which he eats, the love of a man for his family, the appreciation of the artist for a beautiful painting, or the adoration of the devotee for Christ or his guru.” It includes “occupations and reactions which the emotions or intellectual pursuits will offer... to the rapture of the mystic. Desire is a generic term covering the outgoing tendency of spirit towards form life. It is all attachment in some degree or another... and the progress of the soul seems to be in this dispensation from one object of sense to another until that time comes when he is thrown back alone upon himself. He has exhausted all objects of attachment, and even his guru seems to have left him alone. Only one reality is left, that spiritual reality which is himself, and his desire then turns inward. It is no longer outgoing but he finds the kingdom of God within. All desire then leaves him. He makes contacts, and continues to manifest and work upon the planes of illusion but he works from the centre where dwells his divine self, the sum total of all desire, and there is nothing to lure him forth into the byways of pleasure or of pain.”³

The transfiguration marks the point of entry into the kingdom of the soul wherein the human condition is transcended and consciousness is fused with all other souls. Glimpses of this state may be encountered in peak periods of meditation, but it is not sustainable to most as yet. The sacrifice of merging the personal identity in the greater whole is too much to bear – no matter how much it may be thought to be desired. It is hard to let go of the personal sense of identity and so the aspirant dwells in no-man's land and the dark night of the soul settles down upon the consciousness, a darkness that precedes all major initiations. At this point the feeling of separation from the soul is intense and meaning and purpose seem to disappear from life. Nevertheless it's said that "*it is in the dark that we know God*" and the surmounting spiritual pressure that occurs in this void leaves little choice but to relinquish all and submit all to a revolution in consciousness.

An analogy of this change of consciousness exists in the chemical combination of Hydrogen and Oxygen, each being complete in themselves, yet apparently annihilated as individuals when combining to form water. In *The Secret Doctrine*, Helena Blavatsky comments that "some argue that each gas must retain an element of their former identity as they are found again when the water is decomposed and so they must be there all the while; others contend that as they actually turn into something totally different they must cease to exist as themselves for the time being; but neither side is able to form the faintest conception of the real condition of a thing, which has become something else and yet has not ceased to be itself. Existence as water may be said to be, for Oxygen and Hydrogen, a state of Non-being which is 'more real being' than their existence as gases."⁴

So too then, the transformation of the individual consciousness of the personality into the group consciousness of the soul sees the initiate becoming something '*other than*', and functioning through a different medium to that of the five senses and the synthesising mind. It is a fusion with greater breadths of reality that takes place repeatedly as the inner worlds are traversed, and it is said that, at their appointed time, even the Gods die to something greater. The Ageless Wisdom teachings offer us the guidance to make these successive transitions into other kingdoms of nature as smoothly and as quickly as possible. The techniques for mastering the lower-self are given to us, as well as the laws that govern the higher spheres and the method of bridging the gap in consciousness that exists between them and the lowest one with which we have become all too familiar.

The hardest part to master in all this though is persistence – to not give up when results are not forthcoming. It is said that when "*right tendencies and rhythm having been set up, it becomes simply a question of steady perseverance, common sense and endurance. Unless the utmost vigilance is exerted, the old habits of mind will very easily reassert themselves, and even until the final initiation the aspirant must 'watch and pray.'*" In the words of St Paul "*Stand therefore ... and having done all, stand;*" and again in the words of James "*Behold we count them happy that endure.' It is the going on when the point of exhaustion has been reached, the taking of another step when the strength to do so seems gone, the holding steady when there seems nothing but defeat ahead, and the determination to endure whatever may be coming, when endurance has been taxed to the limit, which is the hallmark of disciples of every degree...*"⁵

We can see from this why one of the most effective ways of cooperating in the process of transition and loosening the ties with the personality is a focus on service. Service is simply an act of transmission; the passage of energy from a higher kingdom of nature to a lower one. And it is in the void between two worlds that the disciple becomes the master of no-man's land. Far from it being a place of lost sensation and failed aspiration, it is the outstanding place of service. It is only as more aspirants stand with courage and conviction between the opposites of the astral plane and resist their pull, that the needed spiritual tension will be generated. The rents in the veils between this world and the next can then be widened and the light of the new reality flood in. Upon this the Hierarchy depends, and that many of us fail to serve in this way lies behind the Tibetan's comment that it is not humanity but the aspirants and disciples of the world who are delaying the Reappearance of the Christ.

By standing at the midway point between the human and spiritual kingdoms, the esoteric group is intended to serve as a catalyst enabling them to touch and merge – the only bridge that can provide a common space for interaction between the two kingdoms to occur. We should not think therefore that our relative unimportance and feelings of aloneness disable our influence, for no man's land is where the most potent work is done, and into this void every human being must enter at some point to become transfigured. As we go into our meditation work this evening, we can hold in mind the concluding part of the mantram earlier referred to, the affirmation of the chela who undergoes transfiguration to become Master of No-man's Land:

"Hark to the joyous paeon that I chant; the work is done. My ear is deaf to all the calls of earth, except to that small voice of all the hidden souls within the outer forms, for they are as myself; with them I am at-one.

"God's voice rings clear, and in its tones and overtones the little voices of the little forms dim and fade out. I dwell within a world of unity. I know all souls are one.

"Swept am I by the universal Life and as I sweep upon my onward way—the way of God—I see all lesser energies die out. I am the One; I, God. I am the form in which all forms are merged. I am the soul in which all souls are fused. I am the Life, and in that Life, all little lives remain.

1. *Age of Extremes*, p563 Eric Hobsbawm
2. *Science and the Sacred*, p 48 Ravi Ravindra
3. *The Light of the Soul*. pp135-136 A. A. Bailey
4. *The Secret Doctrine*. p. 54 Facsimile edition. H.P. Blavatsky
5. *The Light of the Soul*. p. 423 A.A. Bailey