

## FESTIVAL OF CANCER TALK

### The First Doorway: The Lighted House

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Good afternoon, dear friends present here in the Lucis Trust Library, and to those joining us via Zoom from around the world - a warm welcome to our Full Moon meditation in the sign of Cancer.

Last month we celebrated the Festival of Humanity in the sign of Gemini, a sign closely associated with duality, relationship and mediation. In Gemini, the disciple becomes increasingly aware of the two dimensions of life: the life of the soul and the life of the personality, the inner and the outer life, contemplation and service. The pairs of opposites emerge more clearly into consciousness, and the need for integration becomes increasingly apparent.

Among the many reflections on this subject, Roberto Assagioli, in a Full Moon Talk given here in London for the Wesak Festival in 1949 and entitled *The Dual Life of the Disciple*,<sup>i</sup> explored the challenge faced by every disciple: how to live fully in the world while remaining inwardly aligned with spiritual reality. He described the gradual development of what he called the simultaneous dual life, in which “one part of the reflective nature and awareness” remains centred in the life of the Hierarchy, while another part of the mind remains fully responsive to life in the three worlds, “and this simultaneously.”

The disciple is no longer divided between two lives, but learns, gradually and imperfectly, to live both at once.

Yet perhaps we may ask a further question.

What becomes possible once this simultaneity is achieved? What opens before the disciple when the effort of constantly reconciling the pairs of opposites begins to give way to a more stable and integrated condition of consciousness?

Throughout the ages, humanity has expressed this search in many ways. One of the most ancient prayers from the Upanishads gives voice to an aspiration which remains as living today as ever:

*Lead us, O Lord, from darkness to Light;  
From the unreal to the Real;  
From death to Immortality.*

*OM*

Perhaps this simple prayer already suggests the movement we shall be considering today- not as a rejection of the world, but as a gradual recognition of the deeper reality which underlies it.

It is here that the sign of Cancer offers a further clue.

For Cancer turns our attention toward a different image. We leave, for a moment, the language of duality and relationship, and meet instead the image of a house - a house that must be built, illumined, and, in time, inhabited.

The keynote of the disciple in Cancer is well known:

*“I build a lighted house and therein dwell.”*

There may be a suggestion hidden within these simple words - that integration, important as it is, is not the end of the journey. The work of building remains essential, and yet the keynote does not end with building. It ends with dwelling.

What does it mean to dwell within the lighted house? And why does the keynote place its emphasis there?

These are some of the questions we may hold in our minds together today.

A helpful image for this transition may be found in a thought (§441) from Agni Yoga:

*“Experienced sailors look at the sea in two ways. One current is visible on the surface, and the other is below, not easily discernible, but it is this current which has the real power.”<sup>ii</sup>*

This image brings us closer, perhaps, to the actual experience of the disciple than the idea of two separate lives running side by side. For although we speak of the inner and the outer life, of the life of the soul and the life of the personality, the reality may be less a matter of two lives than of two currents moving within one life - just as the sea remains one, even while different movements can be observed within it.

The surface current is the one immediately visible. It is the field of daily activity, of relationships and responsibilities, of service and work in the world. Its movements are shaped by circumstance and by the ever-changing conditions of life, much as the surface of the sea is shaped by wind and weather.

Beneath it, however, there moves another current, less obvious, not always easy to recognise, which quietly carries a different quality, a different kind of power. It is not withdrawn from life, nor separate from it. Rather, it gives life its continuity and its direction, remaining present beneath success and failure, through clarity and through uncertainty alike, slowly establishing a deeper rhythm, one less dependent upon outer conditions.

For much of the path, our attention is naturally drawn to the changing movements at the surface. We are learning to recognise the pairs of opposites, to understand them, and little by little to hold them in a more balanced relationship. Yet there comes a time when something begins to shift. We remain fully engaged with life, perhaps even more deeply engaged than before, yet the centre of gravity slowly changes. The currents are still there, but they no longer seem to tell the whole story.

Little by little, attention is drawn less to the currents themselves, and more to the sea in which they move. And it may be from within this sea - no longer watching it from a distance, but one with its depth and its silence - that a light first becomes visible: still far off, still faint, yet already marking the way toward a house not yet built.

In Cancer, the disciple is met by one of the simplest and most familiar images in the whole zodiac:

*"I build a lighted house and therein dwell."*

Most often, our attention falls on the first half of this keynote. And this is natural, for a great part of the disciple's life is, indeed, a work of building. We build character; we build discrimination; we learn detachment and dispassion; we build the bridge between soul and personality. Slowly, and not without error, we build a life through which something of the soul's light may find expression in the world of men.

And yet the keynote does not stop there.

It does not just say: *I build a lighted house.*

It says: *and therein dwell.*

There is something very simple, and very profound, in these two words. For it is one thing to build a house, and quite another to feel at home within it. It is one thing to be permanently occupied with construction, and another to discover - almost without noticing when it happened - that a space has appeared, stable enough and luminous enough to hold the whole of one's experience without being fragmented by it.

The Tibetan speaks directly to this:

"Learn to stand in spiritual Being, remembering ever that to be is a greater realization than to know and to act. The constant effort to dwell in the Secret Place of your own soul, and from thence to go forth into the world of men, pouring forth love and understanding, should be your prime endeavour."<sup>iii</sup>

There is something deeply quieting in these words. They do not suggest withdrawal from the world, nor any release from its responsibilities. Quite the contrary. They speak of an inner place -

a silent room, we might almost say - from which one may go out into the world, and to which one may return, without losing that deeper current we considered a moment ago.

And perhaps the two images meet here. The lighted house and the Secret Place of the soul are not two different places, but two ways of describing the same attainment. The soul is no longer only an occasional presence, an inspiration that comes and goes; it begins to give life a certain rhythm, a certain continuity - and we begin, even if only for certain moments, to feel truly at home.

This, perhaps, is one of the blessings of Cancer. Not because the path ends here, but because, for the first time, what has been built begins to be lived in.

For many disciples, this is the first time the work shifts in kind. Until now, so much of the path has meant building the self - shaping character, refining discrimination, constructing the very instrument through which the soul might find expression. Cancer brings a different task into view, quieter than the others: no longer only to keep building, but to know the joy and the fulfilment of dwelling in what has already been built, before seeing the next step on the Path.

Yet the house, once built and lived in, holds one more surprise.

There is something curious about a house. As long as it is under construction, almost all our attention is absorbed by it. This is natural. We cannot dwell in a house before building it, nor can the work be hurried. Building takes time, and patience - and, more than anything, perhaps, it takes that quiet and often imperfect labour through which life slowly gathers a certain coherence.

But once a house begins to be lived in, something changes. We do not stop caring for it, nor does this mean the work is finished. Yet the house is no longer at the centre of our attention. It becomes, almost without our noticing, the natural setting of our life.

Something similar may happen on the disciple's path. As long as the pairs of opposites call for reconciliation and integration, much of our energy goes into the work of building. This is necessary work. But when the house becomes luminous enough, and spacious enough, to hold the dual life within it, we begin, perhaps for the first time, to feel truly at home.

And here lies one of the paradoxes of Cancer. For dwelling in the house, as a goal, is in fact only the first goal. Not because the path is incomplete, but because the path does not end there.

In the stillness of a house that is lived in, there are moments when we are no longer occupied with its walls, nor with its roof. We are simply at home. And it may be in such moments - when the dual life is held and integrated within a wider field, and we begin to feel truly at home in the house we have built - that something very simple, and very profound, takes place.

Not a new attainment, nor the beginning of a further construction, but a recognition. A recognition of a greater Light, one that has always been present, and of the way that leads toward it.

*What seemed an arrival turns out to be a beginning. What seemed the goal becomes a doorway.*

This, perhaps, is the first doorway that the aspirant or the disciple already upon the Path begins to perceive in Cancer.

And perhaps what begins to reveal itself in such moments can be best expressed through the experience of Arjuna, who, caught between the duties of the world and the call of a vaster reality, was led not so much toward an answer, as toward the recognition of a Light that sustains and pervades the whole of life.

This recognition, and this gratitude, have found expression, across the centuries, in one of the oldest invocations known to humanity - the Gayatri

Not as a request addressed to an absent Light, but as a grateful recognition of a Light that has always been present, even when not always perceived.

*O Thou Who givest sustenance to the universe,  
From Whom all things proceed,  
To Whom all things return,  
Unveil to us the face of the true spiritual Sun,  
Hidden by a disk of golden light,  
That we may know the truth  
And do our whole duty  
As we journey to Thy sacred feet.*

The lighted house was never built for ourselves alone.

For a house, by its very nature, exists not only to shelter, but also to receive. It offers a space in which life can be held, nourished, and shared. The same law, it seems, applies on the path of the aspirant and the disciple.

At first, all our energy is directed toward building the house, and toward learning the art of dwelling within it. But, little by little, we discover that the light filling it was never meant to remain within its walls. The house itself becomes a place of meeting, and of sharing.

Perhaps this is one of the deeper meanings of service. Not so much doing something, as being able to hold something. Becoming a space stable enough, quiet enough, and transparent enough for a greater life to work through it.

And what is true for the individual seems to be true for the group as well. The group itself may be a house - not a house built of walls, but of relationship, of trust, of understanding, and of that shared orientation toward the Light which makes working together possible.

A group, too, holds its own currents and counter-currents, differing temperaments, differing rates of progress, differing ways of seeing. None of this needs to be resolved before the group can serve. What is needed, perhaps, is something closer to containment than to resolution: a space wide enough, and stable enough, to integrate this difference, so that it ceases to be friction and becomes, instead, simply the texture of a shared life.

In *Esoteric Psychology, Volume II*, in the chapter on “Humanity Today,” speaking of the role of the New Group of World Servers, the Tibetan tells us: “As channels, we must be prepared to forget ourselves in the service of touching, containing and holding force for the rest of humanity.”<sup>iv</sup>

It is, perhaps, another expression of the same idea - the need to become a sustaining and containing force for the rest of humanity.

For the world in which we live seems ever more fragmented, ever more tense. And one of the greatest needs of our time may not be to win arguments, or to resolve every contradiction, but to create spaces luminous enough, spacious enough, that these tensions may be held without separation, and without loss of meaning.

Our group work, too, during these Full Moon gatherings, may be seen in this light. Not so much as an activity we perform, but as an act of containment and distribution - an attempt to build together a house sufficiently lighted, so that the Light invoked may be received and shared in the service of the whole.

And perhaps, in the end, this is the true meaning of dwelling. Not to keep the Light for ourselves, but to become a vessel through which it may move freely.

And, in the end, we are not asked to leave the sea, nor to abandon the house we have built, nor to fully understand what is glimpsed beyond this first doorway.

It is enough to learn, slowly and with patience, the art of dwelling. To dwell in the lighted house, to hold within it the dual life, and to allow a greater Light to find its expression through it. Thus, individually and as a group, the house becomes a wider vessel for the life we are called to serve.

There are moments when, even in the midst of life's movement and its responsibilities, that simultaneity of which the great teachers spoke begins to make itself felt. The branches of the tree continue to be moved by the wind, yet the trunk remains unmoved; outer activity continues, yet the inner peace is undisturbed.

Perhaps this is, after all, the simplest way to describe what we have been considering. Not two lives, reconciled through effort, but one life, deepening - a house that, once entered fully, turns out to have no far wall, no final room, only a widening sense of welcome. We do not leave the world to find it. We find it, increasingly, in the midst of the world, as the quiet ground on which everything else now stands.

And nothing expresses this state more beautifully than the words from the Voice of the Silence:

*“Body agitated, mind tranquil, soul limpid as a mountain lake.”<sup>v</sup>*

In the silence that follows, let us hold together these simple images - the sea and its hidden current, the lighted house, the first doorway, and the Light which moves through them all - and let them continue their work within the consciousness of the group.

And, with this thought, let us go together into our meditation.

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<sup>i</sup> The Beacon – Vol. XXVIII, November 1949 – The Dual Life of Disciple – Dr. Roberto Assagioli, pp 202-212

<sup>ii</sup> Agni Yoga, §441, p. p. 288

<sup>iii</sup> Discipleship in the New Age - Alice A. Bailey, p. 417

<sup>iv</sup> Esoteric Psychology II, p. 687

<sup>v</sup> The Voice of the Silence, H.P. Blavatsky (1959) – The Two Paths – verse 130 – p.153