

Time and Timeless

We quoted the last line (highlighted below) ... 19.2.8 § here is the whole thing...

What is the practical value of the teaching about time? The full answer to this question would embrace many fields, but here is one of the most important. Philosophy teaches its student to apply the double point of view to the outward happenings of his life as it does to the inward contents of his sense-experience. From the ordinary point of view, the nature of an event determines whether it is a good or an evil one; from the philosophic point of view, the way he thinks about the event will determine whether it is good or evil for him. He should always put the two points of view together and never separate them, always balance the short-range one by the long-range one.

The higher point of view enables him to escape some of the suffering which the lower one would impose upon him. An event which to the worldly man seems staggeringly important and evil from the point of view of the moment, becomes smaller and smaller as the years recede and, consequently, less and less hurtful. Twenty years later it will have lost some of its power to shake him; fifty years later it will have lost still more--indeed, it may have lost so much as to cause him no further pain; one incarnation later it will not trouble him at all. When the student adopts the long-range point of view he achieves the same result in advance and by anticipation of time. It is said that time heals all sorrows; if we seek the reason why, we shall find it is because it insensibly gives a more philosophic point of view to the sorrowful. The taste of water in a jar will be strongly sweetened by a cupful of sugar; the taste of water in a bucket will be moderately sweetened by it; the taste of water in a bathtub will be only slightly sweetened by it; and water in a lake will be apparently quite unmodified by it at all. In exactly the same way, the stream of happenings which makes up time for human consciousness gradually dilutes the suffering which each individual event may bring us.

The student is not content, however, to wait for such a slow process in order to reduce his suffering. By bringing the philosophic attitude to bear upon each event, as and when it occurs, he immediately reduces his suffering and fortifies his peace. Every calamity which is seen from this standpoint becomes a means whereby he may ascend, if he will, to a higher level of understanding, a purer form of being. What he thinks about it and what he learns from it will be its real legacy to him. In his first fresh anguish the unawakened man may deny this; in the mental captivity which gives reality to the Present and drops it from the Past, he may see no meaning and no use in the calamity; but either by time or by philosophy he will one day be placed at the point of view where the significance of suffering will be revealed to him and where the necessity of suffering will be understood by him.

This, indeed, is one of the great paradoxes of the human development: that suffering leads him step by step from the false self to the acceptance of the true self, and that the true self leads him step by step back to the acceptance of suffering.

If the worldly person agitatedly sees the event against the background of a moment, if the philosophic student calmly sees it against the background of an entire lifetime, the sage, while fully aware of both these points of view, offsets them altogether by adding a third one which does not depend on any dimension of time at all. From this third point of view, he sees both the event itself and the ego to whom it happens as illusory. He feels the sense of time and the sense of personality as unreal. Deep within his mind he holds unshakeably to the timeless character of true being, to the eternal life of the kingdom of heaven. In this mysterious state time cannot heal, for there are no wounds present whereof to be healed. So soon as we can take the reality out of time, so soon can we take the sting out of suffering. For the false self lives like a slave, bound to every passing sensation, whereas the true self lives in the timeless peace of the kingdom of heaven. As soon as we put ourselves into harmony with the true self, we put ourselves into harmony with the whole universe; we put ourselves beyond the reach of calamity. It may still happen, but it does not happen to nor is it felt by our real self. There is a sense of absolute security, a feeling that no harm can come to us. The philosophic student discovers the mission of time; it heals sorrows and, under karma or through evolution, cures evils. The sage solves the mystery of timelessness, which redeems us. 19.2.8 **§ dup above... and see #11 and near it: contra**

AND:

Can we ever escape from the relativity which affects everything from an ant to an aeon? In a universe where everything is in process of continuous change and is ever becoming something else, where nothing has a self-existence that is really enduring, where every ephemeral change seems the only reality at the moment, can we hope to find something that exists by its own right and forever exists unchanged in itself? Reality that IS? The answer is provided by philosophy. Our intellects and senses may misapprehend it and perceive form without perceiving its essence. Nevertheless, reality interpenetrates everything and goes out into all things. There is nothing here in this space-time without its share in reality. Hence philosophy bids us see *through* the multitudinous forms of the world into the unity upon which they are grounded, without, however, letting our consciousness lose, as the mystic loses, the forms themselves. And this unitary substance is none other than Mind-essence itself. 19.2.4 **4**

It is our innate inertia which keeps us set in habitual outlooks and thus keeps us victims of our own past experience. We copy again every day what we did before, what we thought and felt before. We live in both the conscious and the subconscious memories, desires, fears which time has accumulated for us, and that the ego has created to bind us to itself. We are ruled by compulsions, fixations, and neuroses--some of them not even known--that freeze us, preventing further real advancement. We rarely enter the day to gain really fresh experience, think really new thoughts, or assume really different attitudes. We are prisoners of time. This is because we are so ego-bound. The compulsion which makes us conform ourselves to dead yesterday's ideas and practices, concepts and habits, is an unreal one, an illusory one. In letting ourselves become victims of the past by letting it swallow up the present, we lose the tremendous meaning and tremendous opportunity which the present contains. Whereas the Overself speaks to us from tomorrow's intuitive understanding, the ego speaks to us through memory. Its past enslaves us, preventing a new and higher way of viewing life from being born. But it is possible to arouse ourselves and to begin viewing life as it unfolds in the Eternal Present, the Now, with wholly fresh eyes. Every morning is like a new reincarnation into this world. It is a fresh chance to be ourselves, not merely echoes of our own past ideological fixations. Let us take it then for what it is and live each moment anew.

When a master mystic like Jesus tells men to refrain from being anxious about the morrow and to let today's evil be sufficient for today, he speaks out of his own consciousness of living in this Eternal Now. Consequently, he spoke not of periods involving twelve or twenty-four hours, but of pinpoints of a moment. He told them to live timelessly, to let the dead past bury itself. He is indeed a Christian, a Christ-self man, who lives cleanly and completely in the present--free, uncontrolled, and unconditioned by what he was, believed, or desired yesterday. 19.4.171

Think of yourself as the individual and you are sure to die; think of yourself as the universal and you enter deathlessness, for the universal is always and eternally there. We know no beginning and no ending to the cosmic process. Its being IS: we can say no more. Be that rather than this--that which is as infinite and homeless as space, that which is timeless and unbroken. Take the whole of life as your own being. Do not divorce, do not separate yourself from it. It is the hardest of tasks for it demands that we see our own relative insignificance amid this infinite and vast process. The change that is needed is entirely a mental one. Change your outlook and with it "heaven will be added unto you." 21.5.95

Is insight achieved gradually or suddenly, as the Zen Buddhists claim? Here again both claims are correct, if taken together as parts of a larger and fuller view. We have to begin by cultivating intuitive feelings. These come to us infrequently at first and so the process is a gradual and long one. Eventually, we reach a point, a very advanced point, where the ego sees its own limitation, perceives its helplessness and dependence, realizes that it cannot lift itself up into the final illuminations. It should then surrender itself wholly to the Overself and cast its further development on the mercy and Grace of the power beyond it. It will then have to go through a waiting period of seeming inactivity, spiritual stagnation, and inability to feel the fervour of devotion which it formally felt. This is a kind of dark night of the soul. Then, slowly, it begins to come out of this phase, which is often accompanied by mental depression and emotional frustration into a higher phase where it feels utterly resigned to the will of God or destiny, calm and peaceful in the sense of accepting that higher will and not in any joyous sense, patiently waiting for the time when the infinite wisdom will bring it what it once sought so ardently but what it is now as detached from as it is detached from worldly ambitions. After this phase there will come suddenly unexpectedly and in the dead of night, as it were, a tremendous Realization of the egoless state, a tremendous feeling of liberation from itself as it has known itself, a tremendous awareness of the infinitude, universality, and intelligence of life. With that, new perceptions into the Laws of the cosmos will suddenly unfold themselves. The seeker must thus pass from intuition into insight. 25.2.55