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REALITY AND ILLUSION—CONCENTRATION EXERCISES

Greetings, my dear friends. God bless all of you and your dear ones.

All spiritual teachings and philosophies agree that the world of manifestation is illusory. The only reality exists beyond your earth sphere. This is a matter not of geography but of awareness. Although the full perception of absolute reality is impossible for human beings, you can sense it to a small degree by raising your consciousness, through eliminating your inner conflicts which is a consequence of the work of self-search on this path. In the course of the work, you become aware of your emotions and their significance. Thus you find the unconscious erroneous concepts that you have harbored so far. You then become aware of the emotional unreality in which you have lived, and thereby you approach reality. This is the only way. You cannot ever sense absolute reality by studying and reading. Even studying the greatest wisdom of the ages will give you only theoretical knowledge that has no real root in your inner world.

By becoming aware of the unreality within yourself -- that is, by seeing how untrue your concepts have been and perhaps still are -- you may glean a momentary recognition of reality, of its totally different quality and steadfast character.

The ability to live in the comparative reality accessible to you as incarnated human beings depends on your maturity, mental as well as emotional. Maturity, in turn, depends on your capacity and willingness to love. The more you are afraid of love, unwilling and thus unable to love, the more you live in unreality, or illusion.

These words will do you no good if you accept them at face value. You must understand, at least theoretically, how living in reality depends on maturity, and how maturity depends on the ability to love. Therefore I shall try to explain this in detail.

In previous talks, we discussed the legitimate desire to be loved. We also discussed how the immature part of yourself, the child in you, requests an unlimited amount of love and covers this desire with various other desires, such as the wish for approval. The more immature a person is, the more he or she craves being loved without taking the apparent risk of loving. The more you are afraid to love, the greater your desire to be loved becomes. The greater the discrepancy, the more you are torn in this conflict -- and in other conflicts arising from this basic problem. The first, and perhaps hardest, step is to become aware that this very deep problem does exist. When this is found, the most difficult part of the battle is over. It will then be relatively easy to see how unrealistic and unfair it is to request something that you are unwilling to give. Your desire to be loved is legitimate only if you are prepared to give as much as you ask. This is reality. It is not reality to ask for more than one is willing to give, nor is it reality to claim one does not wish to be loved. Some people have withdrawn so far and found a temporary, superficial contentment that

they are unaware of their deep inner yearning. Their lack of awareness is a self-deception and therefore illusion.

When you consider all this, you may begin to observe your surroundings with a different understanding. You will see that people who emanate genuine warmth, who are outgoing and whose love can truly be felt, have less need to be catered to, approved of, and agreed with. On the other hand, people who withdraw in fear from love -- and therefore from life -- have a proportionately great desire to be loved. This is an equation and must come out even; it cannot be otherwise. This does not mean that when you love, you should not desire to be loved. But your desire will be less strenuous, less urgent, and therefore you will suffer correspondingly less tension and anxiety.

Incidentally, another misconception or illusion, which is largely responsible for your fear of loving, is the idea, perhaps unconscious, that true love will forever be unreciprocated and that to prove true love you must give up your personal integrity, your legitimate needs, your dignity. At another time we shall go into that subject in greater detail and discuss how you resort to one wrong extreme in the belief this is the only possible way to avoid the other.

You must become acutely aware of all your hidden emotions and unrealities if you are to have any chance of approaching reality and you may not be aware of them at all. Therefore, when you hear or read these words, you may not feel an echo in yourself. In fact, at the slightest unpleasant reaction you have when pondering these words, you will quickly close the door tighter. You will say to yourself, "Oh, this really does not apply to me." And you will think of many other people to whom it very obviously does apply. Be careful, my friends, for this is a sure sign that you are not willing to see the unreality in you. How then can you ever hope to attain even the slightest glimpse of reality? The higher spiritual, absolute reality cannot be found by a shortcut. It can be attained only by changing your inner world of unreality into one of reality. You cannot do this if you are unwilling to face your confusions and misconceptions. Be on the alert for the tendency to close the door, to avoid facing yourself.

So I say to all of you, find the specific hidden emotions. Learn to understand their language. Analyze their meaning. Only in this way can you find out that what I say to you here is true.

Reality is truth, far beyond what meets the eye. The more you are in reality, the deeper is your comprehension. You may be in comparative reality in one area of your inner life, while in another you are in deep unreality. In the latter area, you will see only the superficial facts and ignore the deeper connections. Thus the wider truth of your situation is in darkness.

Let us take a common and simple example. If someone hurts you, what he or she said and did will actually be a hurt. But as long as you remain focused on what happened and ignore the reason behind it, you will remain hurt. The moment you fully understand, it is impossible to be hurt any longer. I am certain that every one of you has occasionally had such an experience. And yet you keep falling into the same trap. You know very well by now that only by understanding yourself can you come to understand others. Understanding eliminates the hurts because it brings you into truth, or reality. This is why it is said that truth makes you free. This is why the resistance of the child in you when it comes to fully facing yourself is entirely unreasonable and damaging to you.

Unreality, or illusion, is bound to bring you unhappiness, confusion, tension, and fear. Reality, or truth, is bound to bring you happiness and freedom. Your resistance to facing your unreality and to changing is in itself an unreality in that you regard truth as being to your disadvantage. If you did not believe this, you would not resist. Moreover, maintaining your illusions requires strenuous effort on your part. Illusion always causes tension and strain, for it cannot stand by itself. The effort to maintain your illusions causes many vicious circles and chain reactions.

As you learn to understand your emotions, you will evaluate outer happenings differently. The outer happenings are real, but up to now the emotional importance you attached to them was unreal.

The more your fear of loving produces the urgent desire to be loved, approved of, and so on, the more rigidly and tensely you construct illusory forms, in the hope that your desire can be fulfilled. This process is subtle and happens in many different forms.

For instance, if you ardently desire to be loved by or to impress a particular person, you imagine situations in which you see this wish gratified. You view every favorable sign in the context of an illusory construction. Even if you actually obtain the love or admiration you wish, you fail to perceive it in reality as carrying the particular flavor or stamp of the person involved. You are dissatisfied with it in the long run, because it does not live up to your idea of it. Unconsciously, you struggle against disillusionment as long as possible and strain even harder to maintain an illusion where none is necessary. You constantly suspect that what actually is does not correspond to your idea of it, and therefore you feel yourself endangered. Every indication of reality clashes with your illusion, disappointing you, and in turn creating unconscious hostility in you.

Hostility is bound to affect the other person, so that he or she reacts in a way that makes your illusion impossible to maintain. The loss of your illusion causes an all-black view in you. Your urgency to be loved by a specific person causes the illusory construction, whereas in many cases, no such construction is necessary. Actually, it is never necessary because even if, for his or her own reason, the other person cannot respond to your desire, you would be better off to see that and let go. But often, you can obtain your wish -- but only in freedom, without urgency, and therefore without any unreal, preconceived ideas of how a relationship should be and how the other person should react. In such freedom, you can adapt flexibly to the particular ways of the other, and realize that it is unnecessary to mold the person and the situation to your ideas.

Thus, there is a manifest unreality in your reactions during the entire process. The "favorable" signs -- those that fit into your constructions -- are overvalued. They produce more joy than reality warrants, not because the other person dislikes you, but because his or her reaction is just different from your perception. You are in unreality because you can rejoice only if what happens fits into your construction. On the other hand, when it cannot, your crushing disappointment is equally unrealistic. The many repercussions and ramifications of this state are too numerous to discuss at this point.

To realize how you create unreality, you must begin by becoming aware of the many little disappointments that you do not allow to be conscious. This is so partly because you tend to deceive yourself and do not like to face anything unpleasant, and partly because in your intellect you know better than to be so disappointed about a little thing, and you therefore feel guilty about

having such a childish reaction. But it is essential that you train your awareness in this direction, regardless of whether your reactions are right or wrong. You know better than that by now. You know that the childishness does not disappear by looking away from it. By becoming aware of your many little disappointments, you will come to see how you reacted as a child -- and still react inwardly, although now you observe it -- and how, as a result, you let that which is most negative in the other person justify your wrath. You will notice the personal, colored subjectivity we discussed the other day, and thus you will see the special type of unreality you live in.

Objectivity versus subjectivity, which we discussed last time, is one phase of reality versus unreality. You must understand that you create your subjectivity, and therefore unreality, through your strong and urgent need to nourish your illusion. This urgent need for illusion comes from the forcing current of the child in you who must have everything his or her own way. All this is subtle, my friends, so do not be deceived by a superficial right reaction. Think of where your problems are in life, discover your emotions in connection with them; and then try to find this forcing current in you. You are bound to find it.

To the degree that you learn to give up your forcing current and become free of a great inner tension, to that degree will you be free to receive something. Perhaps it will be no less valuable than you had imagined, or even more valuable, although not necessarily attained as quickly as the child in you wanted it. In fact, when you do receive something, the extent of its value will depend largely on your increasing awareness of where you stand in this respect.

As you progress in this direction on the path, you will see that not getting what you want -- and you won't get it all the time -- will not cause you half the distress and despair it caused you before. But as I said, first you must become aware that in not getting your way, whether in outer things or in other people's reactions toward you, you have felt disappointment. And you have to see what this unconscious disappointment made you do. Only then can you give up your forcing current and thus your self-created illusions, thereby becoming free to receive real value; or, not receiving it, to discover that the loss is not half as tragic as the child in you thinks.

The difficulty here is that in your intellect you will readily agree with what I say, and because you can agree, you are likely to overlook the urgency of your contradictory emotions as they manifest inwardly, not necessarily outwardly. It is sufficient that they exist inwardly.

In this predicament, you have an unreal picture of other people, since you are tempted to increase their value if they please you and decrease their value if they do not. Your picture of them is not unreal because what you emphasize in your varying moods is necessarily wrong. When you see the good, partly for subjective reasons, you will possibly see what is really good in her or him, and when you see the bad, you will possibly see what is really bad. Your picture is unreal because of your underlying motive for seeing the other person's good or bad side rather strongly. And it is unreal because, in each instance, your perception of the whole person is tainted and one-sided.

You also have an unreal idea of the importance that incidents or the reactions of others have for you. Again, intellectually you may know better, but emotionally, at this moment, the incident is of disproportionate importance to you. Hence, you do not see the quality of people or of occurrences in reality.

Last, but not least, you are in unreality because your concept of time-quality is false when your childish emotions are involved without your awareness. The child in you exaggerates the importance of what happens at this moment. The child does not see the passing character or overall quality of the moment. It knows only the immediate pain or pleasure, forgetting that in the relatively near future these strongly felt emotions will have lost their impact. For all your intellectual knowledge, in this respect your emotions still react childishly. Something unpleasant happens to you now and you become depressed, although you know perfectly well that in a short time you will not even think of this slight or disappointment anymore. This is the child in you who reacts to the moment almost like an animal. It knows no past and no future and therefore lacks the judgment to evaluate the true significance or, to put it differently, the reality value of what happens.

I often use the expression "to live in the now." As in everything else, there is a right way and a wrong way to do this.

If you recall a recent mood in which life seemed completely hopeless, and then look at your life now, only a few months later, you can judge how unrealistic that mood was. Perhaps you are hopelessly depressed again, but it is very possible that the reason is a different one now. In any case, that which utterly crushed you only a while ago, does not do so now -- and this is a good demonstration of how unrealistic it is to evaluate the importance of any happening by relating it to permanency, which is a facet of time.

The wrong way of living in the now comes from the child in you that exaggerates the importance of the moment. Even the real tragedies that befall every human being will be felt very differently in retrospect than at the time of their occurrence. The saying, "Time heals all wounds" is valid in that a little distance brings a more realistic or truthful view of the quality or importance of the event.

Thus, the maturing soul who approaches inner reality, ready to meet life, unafraid of loving, unafraid of giving up the strong self-will current, will meet even tragedies with true detachment, which is gained only by maturing your emotions. True detachment means that life and love are no longer in danger, as personal slights lose their importance. It can never be gained by forcefully superimposing right concepts on childish, illusory fears that continue to fester in your unconscious mind. A mature soul will, of course, feel the momentary impact of a tragedy with all its grief and relative importance, but simultaneously will perceive its passing nature and genuinely evaluate its overall significance. Therefore the hardship will not be so great.

Your inner child's exaggeration and distorted black-and-white perception of life's happenings brings in its wake a further conflict. That is the tendency to dramatize oneself, which is present to some degree in every human being. There are, of course, those with whom it is obvious. But there are also those with whom it is not apparent at all. In the latter, it is much more difficult to detect because the trend is so hidden, so well camouflaged and rationalized. The only way you can find this tendency is, again, to analyze what your moods and emotions are saying, and why.

You may find, for instance, how a little encouragement or compliment makes your spirit surge to heights of unreasonable joy or gratification, beyond all proportion to its real value, and the way a little criticism -- real, imagined, or implied -- can spoil the day for you. This black-and-white attitude causes you to dramatize yourself. You not only overdramatize the world around you as it relates to

you, but you deliberately encourage it, although unconsciously, and for a very good reason, my friends. Since the child in you is constantly clamoring for attention, it uses the dramatization either openly or subtly as a means of forcing others to comply. I repeat, this is not necessarily done by outer actions. More often, your inner reactions work in that way, and you feel all the more frustrated because you do not dare to live it out. Thus, you force the world around you in fantasy only. You build up an unreality.

You may think that in the positive manifestation it does not matter: "If I am overjoyed by a small thing, is that not good?" I say, no. If the joy is unrealistic, the disappointment will be all the more crushing. Hence, you have to learn to distinguish between the real and the unreal, in this respect as in any other. It does not mean that you should force the joy away. But humor it and look at it with a little detachment, in the same way that you should look at your depressing moods and other negative aspects. Just observe the child in you working. You cannot force it away, even after you have fully recognized its existence.

Concerning your dramatization of the negative side, I would say that you build up your situation to appear so bad and thereby try to force others to sympathize with you, to pay attention to you, to do your will or to side with you against those who do not. You do this ever so subtly; again, it takes utter self-honesty to recognize these emotions. Even if you manage not to show them, still, the voice exists deep down in you that says, "Look at poor little me, how I suffer, how unfairly I am treated, how absolutely miserable everything is." Or conversely, "Look how bad I am. By recognizing my wickedness, I show you how honest I am, so that you will give me the admiration I want." The dramatization can take many forms, but it is always a form of exaggeration in order to enhance self-importance, whether open or hidden.

It will be of great value for all of you to find this particular aspect of your world of illusion -- where and how you dramatize yourself, and what is behind it. Then ask your emotions further, "What is the aim? Do I really believe it is as bad as all that?"

The difficulty is that nine times out of ten you are not even aware that you are depressed, let alone why. So you must start by questioning, every day, what you really feel. Then you can go deeper to discover the why and wherefrom. In most instances, if the depression cannot be hidden away, you seek and find more acceptable reasons for it, or you may even say, "I do not know why I am depressed." But if you search diligently, you will always find a personal slight, something that has not gone according to your will; something that the child in you considers a disappointment.

How then, does the absence of this forcing current bring you into reality, and thereby into a more secure state of happiness and serenity? If the forcing current is absent, you are bound to experience, provided you are certain of yourself, that the disapproval, if it actually exists, is but an illusory hurt. And you cannot be certain of yourself as long as the child is in you with all its selfishness, egocentricity, one-sidedness and unfair demands. Thus you are in a vicious circle. Disapproval strikes a chord in you because you know deep down that, no matter how unfounded the criticism in this case, you yourself criticize your lack of courage to help mature the child in you. To the degree you go through this maturing process, and so lose all the negative aspects of the child, you gain in stature, in certainty, in clear-cut, realistic concepts that you can rely upon deep within yourself. By gaining self-respect, you become less and less dependent on approval from others. If, then, disapproval still comes occasionally, you may search to see whether there is some grain of

truth involved, even if the other person does not bring out the true core. The moment you find it, the justified or unjustified disapproval will no longer hurt. In this attitude you will not fear criticism or disapproval; your forcing current will dissolve.

If it is not approval but outright love you need, and this love is not forthcoming, you may be a little sad, but your life will not depend on it. You will come to see that not being loved to the desired degree is a consequence of your own problems, the inability to love, and the fear of love. You will also recognize that for a long time the slowly growing child in you keeps producing hostility and aggressiveness, even if ever so subtly, when it feels slighted. You will, moreover, see that these emanations contribute greatly to the other person's negative reaction. These insights will free you and further your maturing process.

With the forcing current removed, you will see all that. What used to be a hurt will cease to be one. When you suffer occasional disappointments, you will not be half as despairing as before. You will gain true insight and therefore the freedom that only the approach to reality can bring.

When a relationship is ambivalent between people, they tend to create daydreams that fulfill their wishes. This happens even in relationships of old standing. This is an escape from reality which is so bleak that you create a more pleasant world for yourself. This is true, but there is more to it. The escape is part of a vicious circle. The reality is so bleak precisely because of your forcing current, because of your exaggerated need to have everyone approve of you. That is what makes reality so unbearable that you escape into an illusory world by concocting fantasy situations. The more you fabricate these fantasies, the more you spin around this unending vicious circle. For how can reality ever fit into your fantasy? It cannot. So even under very favorable auspices, what actually happens is bound to disappoint you, since part of the illusory childhood world is the desire for instant gratification, the total lack of patience. If you lack patience, every little sign of something different from your prefabricated situation will create disappointment, and therefore hostility. As I have said, the hostility cannot help affecting the other, even if you are both aware of it. Thus, you sabotage, you spoil every favorable situation that could come your way.

Preconceived, imagined situations, as fabricated in daydreams, are the product of the forcing current and of self-centeredness. Only when liberated from this, can you have the vision and comprehension of truth as it relates to you and around you at any given moment.

Without the forcing current, you will not need to dream up fixed situations. You will not be rigid in your expectations, or disappointed when things turn out differently from what you expect. You will be flexible and able to face what is in reality. You will not have hidden hostility and resentments. The other person will feel your openness, and a spontaneous, free situation can slowly grow.

My dearest friends, to find and change all this is of primary importance to all human relationships. It applies to your entire inner life and therefore ultimately to your outer life.

If you truly understand the deeper meaning of these words, you will perhaps understand and somewhat experience what the term reality actually means. It means freedom from fears, and therefore greater happiness and security. This can be only if emotional maturity exists. Emotional maturity, in turn, is the state of being willing and able to love. Hence, reality and the capacity to love

are directly connected. We also know that the forcing current reduces your capacity to love. This fact must become quite clear to you, in theory as well as personally and particularly. Find out how your fear of loving makes you withdraw and how guilty you feel, deep down, about withdrawing. Find also how you need to force others to love you in order to atone for this guilt, as though being loved were a confirmation that the hidden voice of your guilt is wrong. Find the emptiness within you due to your unwillingness to love, which you would balance by making others love you. For all these reasons, the forcing current works strongly, although in very devious and hidden ways. When, in the course of your work, you have recognized all these emotions and reactions, you will understand much better what I am talking about here.

Without the forcing current, you will give another person the freedom to feel about you as she or he wants. You will approach mature love in such a state of mind; you will give more to others. The giving will not always take the same form. In some cases it will simply be affection shown despite the fact that your will was not done. You will give the freedom you could not possibly have given to another person as long as these twisted conditions prevailed in you. By giving freedom, you give basic human respect, regardless of whether your will is met. Thus the benign circle continues. In such inner freedom -- the freedom you have and, therefore, the freedom you give -- you can perceive reality. It is then that you experience the real situation, as against your imagined and forcefully wished one, and in much larger degree.

There is widespread confusion about the meaning of mature love. Although we have touched on some points of it in this and in previous talks, we shall look at it more fully later to eliminate your unreasonable fear of it. For the present, I will say only this: You often labor under the misconception that true love means to give up your self-respect and dignity. You think you have to give in to the most selfish part of another person's nature. Naturally, you rebel against this. But your further misconception is that the remedy lies in withdrawing from love altogether. So you fluctuate between the two extremes. Either you are submissive, which you feel is unhealthy for all concerned and has no more to do with love than the opposite extreme, or you withdraw into a shell in which you find yourself lonely and unfulfilled. The nagging, gnawing voice of your higher conscience urges you not to withdraw. But you cannot heed this voice, because your thinking is confused -- let alone your emotions.

We will eventually discuss this subject at greater length, not from the point of view of ideals you cannot now attain, but rather from a much more practical viewpoint. We shall see where and how you deviate out of unreasonable fear based on misconceptions. We shall then compare the right concept to your deviations.

To benefit truly from my words, you must experience your emotions and understand their language. I cannot emphasize this enough. By doing so, you will become more serene, less subject to fluctuations, and as a result your emotions will be more attuned to reality. Only in this manner can you slowly come to sense, in an ineffable way that cannot be conveyed in words, what absolute reality really means and why this world of the earth plane is illusory. As long as these are merely words you hear, as long as you do not discover where you are in unreality, this term will mean nothing to you. Only by seeing and thereby eliminating your unreality can you slowly approach the door through which you may occasionally glean a sense of cosmic, spiritual, or absolute reality.

What is intelligence other than perceiving reality? Some people may have great intelligence -- and where it functions, they are in a sort of reality. Where it does not, they are submerged in their confusions and therefore removed from reality. The difficulty with people who are intelligent is, to a large degree, that they do not realize where they are in unreality. But then, people of little intelligence also are unaware of their lack of reality. Mental and emotional health is reality. To the degree that you are unhealthy, you are in unreality. You do not see the truth.

I said earlier that "living in the now" can be done in the childish, unhealthy way, as well as in the mature, constructive way. The latter will bring you peace and harmony, security, and a full experience of life such as you cannot possibly imagine. Living in the now, in the right way, means a complete and full awareness of the moment, its significance, its truth. This awareness can be attained only by tuning in to what is, rather than by wishing for what might or should be. In other words, the rigidly built, imagined situations that prohibit reality also prohibit your full experience of what life has to offer now. If you live in the now, there are no daydreams. There are no prefabricated situations. You vibrate flexibly and live with the moment, even if the moment is, at times, difficult or dull. You are completely in the moment. Here! Now!

The concentration exercises I discussed a while back can be a valuable help in addition to analyzing your emotions in order to change concepts that are not in accord with reality. This practice is a great help, provided it is not done instead of the inner work. If you recall what I said, you will see quite clearly that this is another approach to living in the now. I told you various methods of concentrating on a state of nonthinking, not by letting your thoughts float away in a haze of vague background thoughts or escape, but rather by being right there. Nonthinking while being right there, in you, rather than away from you, is a difficult thing to learn. The fact that it is so difficult shows you how little you live in the now, how much you are away from the reality of the moment.

To the degree that you live in reality, to that degree will you be able to stay with yourself, observing yourself as you do not think. Of course, you may attain a comparatively high degree of efficiency in these exercises by mere discipline, while neglecting to find your inner obstructions. Such proficiency certainly makes you more fit to function where you are free already, but the discipline by itself will not eliminate the areas of obstruction. In these areas, confusion and unreality will persist and hinder your full experience of life, the full manifestation of your capacities and creativity. This is why both approaches are favorable. Although the inner search and change are indispensable and can bring you to the goal without the help of such exercises, the latter will be a helpful addition. This should be clearly understood.

The difficulty you encounter when doing these exercises should not discourage or deter you. If you persevere, you will eventually succeed, be it only for a few moments. This will be a good beginning. The effects the exercises will have on you are much more valuable than you can realize at the moment, provided you do them in conjunction with the other type of work that we do.

I should like to give some further advice about the concentration exercises. I must observe that, unfortunately, my friends are not doing them as would be good for them. You have all been a little lax in this respect, and this is a pity.

So, let me give you some further suggestions with which some of you may find it easier to succeed. Many people have to try various approaches until they find the one best suited for them. When you sit down for a few minutes of such practice, first observe your mood. See if you are impatient or hasty. Then ask yourself, "Where am I hurrying to?" What do I think I miss by spending a few minutes on these exercises?" See the unreality of this haste. There is some feeling in you that this is a waste of time. Then consider what a disproportionate amount of time you actually do waste on daydreams or on insignificant floating thoughts of which you are only half aware. Yet when it comes to sitting down for five minutes or so, your feeling is, "This is a waste of time." You have all sorts of things to do that are more important. Realize the preposterous illusion of that emotion. By observing this attitude and mood, gaining a little distance from it, you will experience a certain amount of peace and relaxation.

The next thing you may do, when you are completely relaxed in body and mind, is to close your eyes and try to see yourself as you sit there. Concentrate as though you were outside yourself, or as though someone else saw you sitting there; see what you wear, what your posture is, your facial expression. This is not egocentricity, nor does it lead to it, my friends. It merely leads to a detached self-observation. As you do this, you will undoubtedly find yourself becoming more calm. As you thus observe yourself, you may discover certain facial expressions you may otherwise not have noticed. You may feel, for instance, that your mouth pulls down, or your shoulders sag; or that you forcefully straighten them in an unrelaxed, artificial way.

Observe all that as you would closely observe another person. You do not have to do it for long. Then do either one of the exercises I mentioned previously. Or try another one, which is a little more advanced, but which some may find even easier. Watch yourself as you are not thinking. Be on guard for what thoughts may come. This is one of the best means of preventing background thoughts, which take you away from the here and now. You can almost feel yourself standing poised on guard at a sort of threshold. If you succeed, be it only for half a minute, it will have a wonderful effect on you.

If after a few seconds the chain is broken, never mind. Do not get impatient with yourself. Start again, observe again your state of not thinking. Observe the emptiness there. The more you succeed, the more you will see how you are in the present, aware of the moment, neither in a haze of vague, floating, often irrelevant thoughts, nor in a dream world. When you float away into the unreality of your uncontrolled thought process, you are not in full awareness of self and of the moment, and therefore you are in unreality. The background thoughts you float away with are always away from you, as you surely will observe.

After you have succeeded in this exercise, be it only for a short time, you will have a wonderful opportunity for prayer or meditation, or to instruct your subconscious. For then you are fully open, receptive, and alive. You will be better able to formulate your thoughts, thinking of that which you need most in the present phase of your development. Whenever you feel confused or uncertain about something you have found recently, or about something that bothers you, the best time to state your question, your confusion, is after these concentration exercises. This is always the first step toward gaining the necessary clarification. At such time, you may also express your intention to put aside all resistance toward facing yourself and changing where necessary. This is the time in which you can best observe the reaction of your subconscious when you utter such an instruction in its direction, or ask God for help. How much does your subconscious cooperate? It

does, if you feel the unreserved desire to face anything that is within yourself. If you feel uneasy and anxious, if you wish to limit such insight, you know that the child in you resists -- and you should know by now that this is damaging for you and against your best interest.

You can also utter such instructions or intentions in clear-cut foreground thoughts every time you feel you cannot "stand on guard" anymore. Each time your thoughts aim to float away from you into a vague haze, that is the moment to catch yourself. It is easier then to think constructively with deliberate and valuable foreground thoughts.

As you proceed on this path, in the direction I lead you now, by using both approaches, you will come to a point when you not only will free yourself of tensions and fears, of many unnecessary burdens, but you will also become much more alive to each moment. Your reactions will be much more spontaneous and healthy, your intuition more reliable.

I am sure there will be many questions in connection with this subject. Think about them so that we can elaborate on them together. I know this is not an easy subject. It is elusive for those who in their work have not yet come across the emotions we discussed today. Then these words should give a direction in which to search. If you are not blocked, you will be successful and bring out many facets, which you will then comprehend in a different light. I might put it this way: the natural process of your work will bring to light the very factors I have described here, and my words will help give you clarification. But you can never forcefully attempt a certain work process. If your search proceeds organically, it will bring to light all that should be tackled at each phase. All that I have said today and in recent lectures can be material for many months of work. Try to make it so, and you will gain freedom.

God's blessings, my dearest ones, for each one of you. May the strength and the blessings given unto you now help you to approach reality. Be in peace, be in God!

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