

SPIRITUAL UNFOLDING

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Hydrochoos

1st Teaching

New ideas and new works are being prepared for the world. The race of the Christian sign of the Fish has developed collective states and the great social movements and mass organizations to a high degree. The sixth subrace will unfold the egoence of the being in a special way.

The fact that humankind progresses no longer because of the gifts it may receive will become a familiar concept. New human types will attain happiness through their own means.

Thus the concept of the being will rise to the highest expression of individuality.

Therefore, during the last decade (1927-1937), there has been felt among human beings a tremor of spirituality, of a desire for supraphysical knowledge.

Many beings eagerly searched in books, sought masters, and tried to perceive the light behind religious veils and initiatic symbols.

As was to be expected, much dross formed around these yearnings and lately this subject has come to be a sort of fashionable psychic illness.

Such a state of things has led many to error, disorientation and disillusionment. But no one should be blamed for what has happened, since it is a defect of the poor human mind to spend its energies in search of new sensations exteriorly, while refusing to realize the spiritual work by its own means, introspectively.

The human being's mind runs after the vein of gold that someone claims to have discovered; it spends its vital reserves in the eager search; it falls heedlessly into illusory traps and obstinately refuses to dig in its own garden.

Reflecting the order and harmony of the Universe, our planet is surrounded —to use an image— by three concentric spheres of divine, semidivine and superior beings who order, protect and regulate the destinies of the earth and earth's inhabitants.

These beings come to live among us when one race declines and another begins its cycle; when a new impetus must be given to human activities and there is an imperious need for assistance. When these divine instructors return to the superior planes, they leave behind a limited number of disciples so that their teachings will be kept alive through out time. These chosen souls created the great initiatic schools of antiquity.

We may call the three mystical spheres Solar Wheels, Lunar Wheels and Wheels of Fire.

The beings of the Solar Wheel possess a very high degree of spirituality and rule directly over the gradual unfoldment of human monads. They regulate the

formation and disappearance of continents. They select among existing races those which are to form the new ones. And they assign Entities, according to the degree of their progress, to the various jobs of the Great Work on earth and on the supraphysical planes.

There are no Solar Initiates on earth in this present generation but there are some direct disciples of Solar Initiates. The appearance of a Solar Initiate is expected at the beginning of the age of the sign of Aquarius or Hydrochoos.

The beings of the Lunar Wheel closely direct the progress of the civilization of nations. The great evolutionary and liberating movements of human groups are due to them. They stimulate and guide the great migrations, they foment the well-being of nations, found the great religions and inculcate the precepts of those religions. They are, in other words, the paladins of civilization, freedom and the social and ethical progress of the world. At present there are a certain number of these Great Initiates on earth.

The mission of the Initiates of Fire is to endeavor for beings to recognize themselves; to strive that beings may discover the Flame that shines within them and which has been hidden since the time human beings drank from the Goblet of Oblivion. Their concern is the study of the Great Chemistry, especially the Chemistry which promotes, directs and models inner transmutations. The Great Chemistry transforms matter into mind and mind into matter. These Initiates are always alert to see that the Flame of spiritual vocation is not extinguished in the soul during her great struggle to unfold and reach a harmonious relationship with herself and with the world.

At present there is an extremely limited number of Initiates of Fire on earth, but this was not always so. A great number of these Initiates lived upon the earth during the great fifteen hundred-year battle, which the nascent Aryans waged against the powerful Atlanteans. It was during the time of those great wars that terrifying divisions and submersions of continents were also taking place. In that era Schools flourished which counted as many as 700 Initiates. Later, once the most pressing danger had passed, these Initiates retired to subterranean caves, to hollows in volcanic mountains and other isolated places. From there their disciples continued and still continue their work.

Today the doors of the Temple are opening once again. Many Initiates of Fire are about to come and live among us and give impulse to the formation of the new day of Sakib which is about to dawn.

From the bowels of the earth the Flame of the Mother Divine has risen anew and come out into the light of day, so that Her Solar Spouse may kiss Her once again.

Secret Tabernacle

2nd Teaching

When someone decides to work toward an objective, it is logical for him/her to begin at the customarily established point of departure for attaining that end. It is therefore understood that when students begin the road of their perfecting they must be resolved to reform their foregoing life, as those have done who have already traversed that road. It is understood also that students must place themselves within a previously established current of ideas, and must adopt a particular rule or code and observe it scrupulously. Otherwise they would be unfortunately wasting their time.

This task is good; it is excellent. But it is, in a way, to undertake the work on an exterior level. On the contrary, the task of the Great Work begins in the most intimate and hidden depths of the being's consciousness.

Students are to drop “the poor person's bag of bread” once and for all. Nothing and no one is to set limits or inner laws for them. They themselves must be transformed into living bread for their own nourishment. “I am the bread of life,” said Jesus. “If you do not eat of this bread, you will not have Eternal Life.” This means that beings are to liberate themselves by their own means, when experience fits them for working consciously on their spiritual unfolding.

Each human being is a small world; even more —is a universe in miniature with its particular rules and the exceptions to rules. What is very good for one person can be counterproductive for another. Humankind has wisely and irrefutably established the conquest of good and the annihilation of evil as a basic axiom of spiritual perfection. But neither good nor evil exists in the pure reign of the Spirit that is beyond the region of human beings. The blood circulating through the veins of our organism must not be disdained because it is impure, and value given only to the blood that circulates through the arteries. The existence of one is inexorably ruled by the existence of the other.

True spiritual unfoldment neither begins nor is acquired. It is, rather, a wonderful retrospective knowledge that removes the veils of illusion which the need for experience has placed one by one upon the soul; it causes beings to return to the source of life in their interior and thus recognize themselves in the absolute silence of Undifferentiated Essence.

“Let us enter the cell of self-knowledge,” repeated ceaselessly the mystic Catherine Benincasa of Siena. May the Son of the Flame thus penetrate his own heart. This is the Divine Mother's mysterious sepulchre. There She awaits the kiss of the true lover to awaken Her and compel Her to reveal the eternal secrets to him. There he will learn the Great Alchemy that transmutes the harsh metal of sorrow into the pure gold of peace and happiness.

This concept is to be given not only a symbolic but also a real form. Even physiologically the human heart is the measure of the Universe. Its shape, its life, its pulsations, the different substances that circulate through its chambers, the infinite number of atoms that compose it, are a microcosm that reflects the macrocosm.

The human heart is the arcanum of existence. Hidden there is the seed of the Supreme Power which, duly applied and developed, is able to know, to shape, to maintain and to destroy all things. Throbbing there is the substratum of all perfections, all possibilities, the most select of pleasures and satisfactions, and even the seed of all evils and miseries.

If the affections of a limited heart are life's desires, then the manifestations of a free and conscious heart are the fulfillments of Supreme Love.

The Flame

3rd Teaching

“The spirit is strong, but the flesh is weak.”

Many persons would like to withdraw from the vulgarities and wretchedness of life, but inner enemies and the lack of spiritual exercises and a suitable environment continuously interrupt the road of the best-intentioned person.

The flame of the Mother Divine shines on the mountain of aspirations with all its luminosity; but how can one reach it? Faced with this question, the hesitant neophyte formulates two questions: “If I am a free being, why can I not liberate myself from the passions that bind me to the earth? And if I am a slave bound to an inexorable law that has been plotted by fate, why should I struggle against the impossible?”

This is the dilemma that has kept thousands of self-willed souls in suspense for centuries. It has filled the world with discussions, books and the opinions of sages. Is the chosen one led to the spiritual path by predestination or by free will? Is the choice a result of causality or of will?

The Law of Consecutive Predestination and the Arbitral Law of Possibilities determine, in a parallel and alternative way, the greater or lesser advancement of the being.

The being comes from one point, is in another, and continues onward. This is not left to the being's free will; rather, s/he is predestined by the harmonious play of the great wave of causes and effects, from which s/he cannot separate him/herself. This is the Law of Consecutive Predestination.

However, although the being cannot separate him/herself from the Law of Consequences, s/he can undoubtedly hasten or retard originating actions with the conscious effort of will. It is thence that we have the Arbitral Law of Possibilities.

In short, the infinite and the finite meet and merge continuously. The Crux Ansata that dominates the Temple of Hes is always the solution to the great divine and human problem.

Behind these two great fundamental and universal laws rules another, inner and occult law, which individually connects the being with the cosmic and spiritual current which is within the vastness of his/her consciousness. Let us give an image: The human being's life draws a curved line which reaches the apex of its ascent and there collides with the cosmic current with which it is in tune. It is the unique occasion of a lifetime; it is the instant in which vocation flashes suddenly into the seeker's mind; it is the moment of progressing which is presented only once on the human road.

Even the most perverse person has his/her instant of inner elevation and connection with the superior forces; it is when s/he feels the desire to be better.

If during the descent of the curve toward physical death the soul keeps alight the flame of the vocation perceived in that superior glimpse, she will never again be what she once was. But if oblivion extinguishes that light, the discovery of one's vocation will be no more than a remembrance that she will have to fecundate in the next human pilgrimage. Physical death is, in the final analysis, no more than the depletion of particular consequences and possibilities.

Beginners are not to get discouraged if they encounter enemies, difficulties and temptations which get in their way as they begin the spiritual road. With continuous effort and right intention they must try to keep themselves always within the current of spiritual yearnings. They will not lack help at the necessary moment. If at the beginning they do not advance as much as they would have liked, they must know that spiritual progress is not measured by great advancements in the acquisition of psychic powers and inner mastery; these are also subject to the law of ebb and flow. Rather one is measured by the degree and duration of his/her inner state of serenity.

In order for the soul to attain an intimate union with the spirit, she must free herself from every inner hindrance or attachment and imposition. For this she needs to know and study exterior life and the life of the senses. Therefore, it is indispensable to practice, according to each person's individual disposition and characteristics, exercises which predispose her to receive higher teachings when the propitious moment arrives.

For the time being, the disciple must be silent and wait. Silence is the first word the student should know. It will give him/her the solution of the other nine words listed below.

The basic words for Spiritual Unfolding are the following:

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Silencing | 6. Wanting |
| 2. Listening | 7. Daring |
| 3. Remembering | 8. Judging |
| 4. Understanding | 9. Forgetting |
| 5. Knowing | 10. Transmuting |

4th Teaching

Retrospective Examination

With fair approximation, thought may be represented as the flow of water descending continuously from unknown mountains —that is, from the instinctive, the rational. It is channeled into a pre-established course and discharges at last into the immensity of the sea of matter.

Thought flows always; its activity, whether conscious or unconscious, is incessant, even during sleep. If this were not so, chaos would reign. It might be said that if the principle root of thought were to pause for even a single instant, the Cosmos would become undone. However, if the mental powers could be held back, their power would be enormously multiplied when they were restored to movement. The results would be surprising; matter would respond to the call of the mind.

Control of one's mental powers is so important that it is the first thing taught to students in Initiatic Schools. The desired end is that thought should be an instrument directed by the superior mind instead of the mind being led by a current of uncontrolled thoughts.

Human beings cannot calm the troubled waters of their soul because they lack mastery over thought. This is one of the reasons they are ignorant of the deeds of past lives.

On the physical plane, human beings find themselves very limited and in the dark; submerged in time—the three times of the Hindus: past, present and future. On one hand, the future is unknown and the present inaccessible to them. On the other, the past is limited to the present incarnation, an insignificant stretch of the road which brings them from the infinite and takes them to the infinite.

How can one perceive the goal?

It is not possible to project oneself ahead, for the road is found to be in darkness. Nor is it possible to stop in the present. What remains, therefore, is the short distance of the traveled path which memory illuminates; the mind must drill itself on that and go over it more and more frequently.

The basic exercise which introduces the student to the knowledge of his/her mental world is the Retrospective Examination. Religions as well as spiritual schools have made use of this exercise by one name or another, practicing it in various ways.

The word “exercise” refers to a group of practices whose object is to develop a faculty or, if the faculty has already been acquired, to firmly preserve it. The object of exercise of the Retrospective Examination is to develop the faculty of managing one's mental powers according to one's wishes.

The Retrospective Examination is carried out in the following way:

Preferably, it is done at night when one retires to bed, or shortly before this, since nocturnal silence favors inner silence. Since bodily fatigue induces drowsiness, the will must be applied to wakefulness and to the effort not to lose dominion over one's thoughts. After a minute of mental rest, one should attempt to remember successively the events which have occurred during the day, going back from the moment at which one begins the exercise to the instant of awakening.

In the beginning one tends to take a long time remembering events. To surmount this problem it is useful to discard the most trivial happenings and fasten one's attention on the most important. There are always three or four events in a day that stand out over the others.

It is important to fix oneself objectively on the events without qualifying them. From the point of view of the exercise, it is not important to single out an event as good or bad; the mind will do that work unconsciously during sleep, and the next day one will know spontaneously what is or is not advisable to choose to do or repeat.

When one reaches the point in which one fastens one's attention on the moment of awakening, one is to imagine that one's blood, accumulated in the brain by the effort one has made during the day, descends slowly to the heart, where it is purified. Then one is to imagine that the blood continues descending to the soles of the feet. This leads to peaceful sleep.

After three or four months of doing this exercise, it may be carried out in a more detailed way. The practice allows one to rapidly perceive even the most insignificant events. The degree of one's advancement can be estimated when one is able to show the film of events rapidly, without omissions and with great precision.

When the student is more advanced, every eight or ten days s/he may travel retrospectively over the events that have occurred during the month. When there has been even more progress, one may remember all the events of one's past life, until the moment in which the light of thought shone for the first time in the mind of the child.

What about further back?

One must not weaken. Thought is to aim at that infinitesimal point at which one may enter the unknown, supraphysical world. There one may travel the spacious roads of past lives.

5th Teaching

Reserve of Energy

In order to be able to advance rapidly, beginners must get used to reserving their physical, intellectual and moral energy.

The saying “to work is to pray” is true if work is understood as continuous consciousness of all one's acts, even the most insignificant ones.

The direct result of this continuous self-inspection is a remarkable strengthening of one's etheric centers. When these centers are stimulated at the suitable moment, they shed an abundant measure of health, good conduct and success into the student's life.

The Hindus say that the Divinity placed His/Her throne at the human being's sacral plexus and that the Universal Power sleeps there in the shape of a coiled snake, which is a symbol of good and evil.

Above all else, sexual energy is to be reserved. The source of all manifestation of life resides there, as well as the basis of the reproductive functions. When this force is wisely guarded and directed at the opportune moment, it vitalizes and renews the body and influences the mind in a remarkable way.

The sex hormones release into the blood the sap of well-being and happiness. If the human being knew the true and complete sexual functions, s/he would not use the sublime attribute of sex for pleasure and reproduction only. S/he would also learn to transmute that force into a mental and energetic substance, thereby effecting a true inner regeneration.

Religious instructors knew this secret, and for this reason imposed absolute abstinence on their priests. Those whose rules imposed marriage upon them carried out the reproductive functions as a sacred and measured act. Moreover, many persons whose vocation moves them toward a more perfect life practice celibacy spontaneously.

One must constantly desire that one's sexual energy be transformed into the Word.

The energy of words is to be reserved. The sidereal systems were made by the Creator Word. The word produces sound and sound is vibration. A vibration that is wisely sustained and directed is power. Consequently, words must be measured.

One often finds wise laws condensed in old sayings: “Speech is silver but silence is golden.”

A talkative person wastes a great amount of energy. The rigorous norm of silence was solemn and sacred to the Initiates in the Egyptian Temples. In the

times of Apollonius of Tyana, aspirants kept unbroken silence for the first five years. The religious of the Trappist Order observe the rule of silence for their whole lives.

Jesus said, "Let your words be 'Yes, yes; no, no.'"

The word must be the clear and concise expression of the idea one wishes to express.

Vocal energy is expended with emotional or irascible expressions and the habit of laughing or crying too much. But immensely more energy is spent in murmuring and lying. In the book "Light on the Path," by Annie Besant, one reads that "one may not enter the path of discipleship until the tongue knows how not to wound." Moreover, useless and malicious words are loaded with negative energy that viciously surrounds the being who emitted them, harming him/her intensely. Therefore, one should speak little, or speak in a way in which words are a source of good and contribute to the fulfillment of the Great Work.

When one speaks well, in a measured and upright way, a law of sympathy causes the energy spent in speaking to be immediately restored.

When a person is always addressed in a certain way, s/he gradually adapts to that particular nickname. Thus when Sannyasins begin a life of renunciation they change their name, so that the word may accompany the newly chosen ideal.

The ancient founders of religions knew the power of vocal energy and therefore taught their disciples to pray methodically and to vocalize the words.

Visual energy is also to be reserved.

A great amount of energy escapes continuously through the eyes. There was a Hindu Sannyasin who took a vow never to take his eyes from the sky. St. Bernard did not know what the ceiling of his cell looked like because he always kept his eyes lowered.

One useful exercise for the student who desires to learn to restrain his/her eyes consists in counting, every night, the number of faces s/he has seen during the day.

Eyes in the habit of jumping continuously from one place to another not only lose spiritual strength but also skill. A country person is used to serenely concentrating his/her eyesight, and is able to distinguish a person from an animal at a distance at which a city person sees only uniformity. Certain things are better left unseen, and one would do well to erase from the retina some of the things one sees. Moreover, by habituating one's eyes to discretion, one learns gradually to direct one's attention toward the interior, toward one's very being.

The energy of one's eyes is to be guarded so that when they look they see everything at once and penetrate to what is most hidden.

The eyes are the mirror of the soul. A serene and tranquil mind is expressed in eyes that have an equivalent expression. Look well, then, so that your eyes may shine like the bright rays of the sun.

6th Teaching

Method of Life

Methodize your days, your years, your life. Look at the magnificence of the heavenly vault: The stars and the solar systems move with mathematical precision. Cosmic years and human days follow a perfect rhythm. The seasons follow each other with absolute regularity. All is order in nature. All obeys a law. From the spiritual point of view, the soul must have the most absolute inner freedom. However, her exterior acts must be under her strict control, must obey a law and be circumscribed within a method of life.

The human body must get used to serving its master, and not the reverse. It must rest in its time, and act and labor in its time. It is not good to be overly careful of the body nor to take it for an enemy that must be destroyed, as some ascetics understand.

To the conscious being, the body is nothing but an instrument. If it is coddled it slumbers; if it is punished it rebels; if it is directed it obeys.

There are those who worry too much about bodily health without understanding that physical health is the natural result of a discreet lifestyle. Drink spring waters in abundance and eat whole grains, eliminating what is very sweet, very salty and very sour. Nutrition must be regularized, watched and measured, so that the body may be fresh, agile and flexible.

Millions of bacteria daily knock on the porous doors of the human organism in order to take charge of it, make it ill and destroy it. Be free of danger by bathing with cool water, taking a morning walk and breathing properly. In doing the breathing exercises one should not adopt extravagant or affected methods, but use the correct way of breathing in three times, as follows: Take a deep breath through the nose, retain the air for some moments in the lungs, and breathe out forcefully through the mouth. It is necessary to learn to act in accordance with the great Dual Current, which rhythmically rises and falls. These forces are positive or negative, active or passive, according to the act to be carried out. Some persons, during their time of work, would like to be resting. Yet during their hours of repose they feel motivated and inspired to do what they should be doing at the time for study or work. These inharmonious states of mind are nothing but the deceiving reflections of a fickle and unbridled imagination. The mind may be made easily accustomed to a suitable rhythm of work and rest with some very simple exercises. For example, although one may notice fatigue or boredom while reading, one does not interrupt the reading but continues, even though it seems one is not getting much out of it and that a dense veil covers one's intellect and dulls the brain. The next day one will prove that one has not wasted his/her time, for the work done subconsciously will give its fruits. But if a certain reading very much engages one's

interest, it is very beneficial to interrupt oneself for a few minutes when one arrives at the most interesting part, so that one's mental energy is not consumed by avidness and fantasy.

Too much hurry does not always get one to an appointment on time. It is better to pause an instant to gather energy, by an act that is willfully contrary to the one which was about to be carried out.

It is necessary to adjust the rhythm of one's daily tasks to the pulsation of the seven cosmic movements that divide solar days. It is good to rise at dawn and distribute one's daily acts in an orderly way. Time exists only as duration —hours are fast or slow, short or long, according to how well or badly distributed one's activities are. The person who is orderly in his/her life and tasks always has time for everything. It is beneficial to accompany the actions of the day with appropriate words. For example, one may repeat either mentally or in an undertone words such as “health,” “order,” “well-being,” “courage,” etc.

The state of the physical body reflects the state and activity of the mind. Likewise, method and order in one's exterior life lead to harmony and control in one's inner life.

7th Teaching

Assistance and Work

When a student is ready, the Masters call him/her to participate in the work of helping human beings. The student must be like a sentinel, always vigilant, for s/he might receive that call at any moment. The Great Work of assisting humankind is given life by the Great Current, which is a powerful force put into work by the invisible protectors. Only those beings who are in a condition to sustain themselves in it partake of this force.

The student participates in the Great Current unconsciously, slowly and gradually. To the degree to which s/he advances, his/her physical and astral bodies become purified and surrounded by physical and supraphysical particles which make him/her ready to participate in the Great Current and able to resist its vibration.

When the moment to work in the Great Work arrives, the student's motto is "to work for the sake of working." That is, to work without desiring the fruit of the work. Appetite, even if holy and good, presupposes attachment to the love object and binds one all over again to the Law of Consequences.

Those who work for the Great Current work only for the good of humankind, with their thought always placed there. They do not work for themselves, nor do they choose the type of work they are to do, for it has nothing to do with wanting to do this or that. The student carries out joyfully whatever is to be done, following always the command of the Single Will that directs the whole of the work.

In order to attain this, the student needs to remain conscious of his/her motivations. On the one hand, it is really difficult to keep one's enthusiasm on fire without one's emotions taking part. In the beginning, it is not easy for the student to strive and carry out works of assistance from a pure act of will. Many are overcome by laziness and the void, mortal enemies that often eat up the best intentions. On the other hand, students may imagine that they work for the sake of working when they are really so attached to their work that they carry it out as a personal task. This takes them away from a spirit of dependence, since they will often receive directives that are contrary to what they would like to do. If students do not wish to fail and be cast out of the Great Current as the sea returns shipwrecks to the shore, they must exert themselves to master their emotions. If at some point they realize that they cannot control them, they must rapidly withdraw their feelings from the object of attachment and focus them with all their strength on the single, pure love of the Divine Mother of the Universe. Aid to humankind is carried out on the physical plane during waking hours and on the astral during sleep.

Of course, the student must not suppose that the task to be carried out on the physical plane has to be either grandiose or the same for everyone. Moreover, before participating in great works, one must learn to execute little works scrupulously and well. In order to be able to do this, one must train oneself at home, in the street, at work, during the entire day. To the degree to which one does the little tasks well, the Masters will give one more evident opportunities to do good. One will see soon enough that, without seeking or wanting it, the souls who suffer will come to drink consolation from the chalice of one's hands.

In the beginning the acts of assistance on the astral plane are carried out unconsciously and under the direction of an invisible Master. To the degree to which the student unfolds spiritually, s/he is given a greater field of action and more freedom in his/her work. What s/he previously did almost without knowing and led by the hand, s/he executes later knowingly, and with a certain personal free will. On this plane there are more opportunities to do good than on the physical plane.

When the astral body is well-educated by right concentration before sleep, it becomes used to not wandering after the fatuous fires that the fantasy of the sleeper has been fashioning during the day. The union between cerebral memory and astral memory becomes more vivid. When the student remembers in a state of wakefulness what has occurred during sleep, s/he can control his/her astral body and direct it during the nocturnal hours to where the Masters call it to help the needy.

Not only "students" may participate in the Great Work, but any being, of whatever religion or class, who, with right intention, wishes to work impartially for the good of human kind.

The astral work carried out by Catherine Emmerich, who was totally ignorant of even the most elementary concepts of the Initiatic Schools, is illustrative of this. Her biography tells the following: "One morning she handed a friend of hers a little sack full of rye flour and eggs, and told him to go to a house in which a very poor, consumptive woman named Gertrude lived with her husband and two children. The friend was to tell the woman that she was to take those things and make some poultices that would be good for her chest. When the friend entered the hovel, the poor mother had a very high fever, and was stretched on a straw bed between her half-dressed children. The visitor took the little sack from beneath his cape and Gertrude, stretching her arms to him, said in a trembling voice: 'Oh, Sir! God sent you to Sister Emmerich. You have brought me rye flour and eggs.' She wept, coughed, and made signs to her husband to speak for her. The latter said that Gertrude had had a very agitated dream the night before. He said that she had talked in her sleep and when she awoke related her dream to him in this way: 'I seemed to be standing with you at the door of our house; the pious nun came out of a neighboring house and told you to look at her. Then she paused before us and told

me that by all appearances I was very ill, that she would send me rye flour and eggs because they are good for the chest. Then I woke up.”

8th Teaching

Renunciation

If the human being were to renounce out of a love for freedom, s/he would reach an inexpressible happiness in life that is a serenity in the face of any trial, an indescribable state of natural ecstasy.

To break bonds, to renounce to what one believes to be harmful to spiritual well-being, to leave a cage in order to free oneself from something, is to bind oneself with subtler ties, is to lock oneself in a bigger cage. But to renounce out of love for freedom is to live.

The one who leaves the things that belong to him/her for the pleasure of leaving them becomes their owner. The one who for love of freedom relinquishes the piece of earth that society grants him/her, becomes the owner of the earth. The one who goes outside the house because s/he is tired of seeing the sky from a window, sees the entire horizon.

There are seven degrees of renunciation in the volumes of *Spiritual Unfolding*.

The first degree of renunciation consists in breaking the everyday personality.

The everyday personality is the group of ideas that encloses the being within a circle of particular laws, beliefs, habits, customs and personal tendencies. To break this circle, to come out of the mental enclosure of thinking one cannot be happy without all those preestablished concepts, is to take the first step toward liberation.

Those who are enslaved by what they believe to be their happiness and well-being suffer continuously. They are afraid to lose their chains, the fine silken cords that bind them to their personality and reduce their inner vision of consciousness to a minimal point. Since they live in such a reduced spiritual space, they have no other support than in believing they are safe. And they derive their strength from this belief. The pond frog told the river frog, who was visiting him, that there could be no body of water bigger than the one he himself enjoyed.

But the imprisoned soul yearns for freedom. She is not satisfied with what s/he has attained; s/he aspires to something more. This yearning is the first step toward Renunciation.

The soul wishes to leave her everyday personality in order to acquire her individuality. She glimpses the individuality proper to the future race that permits the being, becoming worthy of his/her own strengths, to place him/herself in contact with the world soul. The caterpillar is about to become a butterfly.

Since beings can no longer find happiness within the cell of the everyday personality, they lie to themselves, deceiving themselves constantly by telling

themselves that they are happy. Therefore, the second degree of Renunciation consists in the sincere confession of one's inferiority.

To renounce is to know oneself. To renounce is to take light into one's soul and see into the most secret corners of one's consciousness the shadows that are so feared and so carefully hidden.

The habit of accumulating desires, aspirations, tendencies and vices interiorly, unknown to everyone, is the human being's moral avarice.

It takes truly extraordinary courage for the soul to confess her defects to herself. There exists something like a second nature, a second being living in one's consciousness; it is the demoniacal shadow that stands to the left of the human being and which constantly moves him/her to excuse his/her inner wretchedness, hidden faults; which continuously misrepresents his/her true reality to him/herself. But the soul who yearns for freedom renounces covering her wretchedness with the brilliance of a fictitious personality; thus she herself destroys this enemy. She is no longer ashamed to see herself just as she is, with her goodness and her badness, with her greatnesses and her wretchednesses. She stands face to face with the totality of her inner world, in which there is good and evil.

Only the being who does not know him/herself can be greedy, envious, miserly; can live thinking that s/he is the center and that all those who surround him/her are his/her satellites. Therefore in the third degree of Renunciation the concept of separativity is broken down.

I and thou; this and that; today and tomorrow —These kinds of differences disappear before the happy eyes of the one who has renounced everything. The being is no longer the miserly center around whom everything must revolve. S/he cannot boast about what s/he is, because s/he was or will be a sinner. S/he cannot desire what s/he does not have, because to have or not have exists only for the one who lives in the relativity of exterior life.

S/he is all. In him/her good and evil have formed a single base, the sacred pillar upon which the flame of the Spirit is lighted.

For such a soul, who has renounced so much, the actions of life and the way of expressing them change completely. Only at the fourth degree of Renunciation does one understand those words, "to work for the sake of working."

One works as the bee does, and it does not matter for whom or for what. It is known that work is a means for liberating the soul, and no other reward is asked than that one be allowed to do it. One gives without being seen. The left hand truly does not know what the right hand is doing, for one has overcome the lust for personal satisfaction.

Charity practiced for vainglory is a morbid mental lust, but charity done for the sake of doing it is liberation —not only of the senses but also of the mind.

When great beings are instructed to carry out an action, even the most routine or banal, they fulfill it without asking why or for what. Those who carried out great humanitarian works always responded in the same way to those who flattered them for it: "I did not do it; God did it."

Only then does one live life, know life and enter into the fifth degree of Renunciation.

Oh those beings who believe there are pleasant things and awful, disagreeable things, and who seek only that which satisfies them! They will never be happy, since there are no ugly things and beautiful things; all things deserve to be known and they produce plenitude when the attentive eye of the observer discovers the spirit that gives them life.

One rainy, cold and windy night, two humble, poorly dressed and barefooted friars were on the road to Assisi. St. Francis of Assisi, the thinnest and smallest, who walked behind, suddenly broke the silence and said to his companion, a tall, strong, comely young man: "Brother Leo, lamb of God, listen to me carefully. Would you be perfectly happy if you knew the secret of the Universe, of all worlds, of all things?" And he continued by enumerating all the things human beings consider great and beautiful, always ending with the same question. As the humble Brother Leo did not answer, St. Francis said to him: "If we arrive at our monastery and the brother gatekeeper does not recognize us, and leaves us to the elements, cold and hungry, like two vagabonds, I tell you that that would mean perfect happiness." The saint said this because happiness is based on the knowledge of all things, the bad as well as the good.

The sixth degree of Renunciation is already beyond the liberation of the senses and the mind. It is spiritual liberation.

The one who has renounced all assimilates to the Divine Will in such a way that s/he vanquishes time and pain. The human being works like the women who weave great tapestries and see only the back of the weaving; they cannot know the extent of the beauty of their work. But the one who has renounced and liberated him/herself spiritually reaches such breadth that s/he is able to see the work in its essence and potential at the same time.

It is thus that the Pilgrim of Eternity reaches the seventh degree of Renunciation and lives the Eternal Hour there, because s/he has learned that to lose is to gain, to give is to receive, to leave the small is to live the great.

To transcend hours and time is to stand firmly on the threshold of Eternity.

9th Teaching

Courage and Personal Control

In spite of all that has been said and written about courage, fear continues to reign in the world.

From the ancestral fear that unites in itself all the spasms of the struggles to survive, to the fear subtly disguised with the name of personal defense, fear has not ceased to hold the hearts of human beings in its grasp.

Courage as understood at present is no more than the opposite of fear. Hence the legendary paradox of men believed to be courageous who tremble at a shadow in the night, and women who are startled by the noise of a door who show incredible fearlessness at a moment of need —like the mother who throws herself into flames to save her child.

Nevertheless, true courage does not have the external aspects currently associated with it. Courage is neither rashness nor ferocity; it is, rather, a well-balanced sense of personal control.

In his/her Control Wheel, the human being has a defense that filters all vibrations at the entrance to the body and prevents those that are destructive from penetrating it. When one allows oneself to be overcome by fear, that “door” opens and permits the entrance of negative forces. Courage thus consists in managing well one's personal control.

Courage Control is carried out by means of four steps.

First step: SIMPLICITY

“If you do not become as little children, you will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven,” said the Master.

It is indispensable that simplicity reign in the heart, so that the Control Wheel can unburden itself of the hindrances that make it difficult for it to function correctly. The child is the best example, since his/her spontaneity and confidence generate enough strength for his/her defense.

Simplicity is courage. The simple soul is truly the one who is not afraid. The soul who is really great does not lend herself to caviling over what will come, what will be. Her simplicity makes her sure of herself.

The modern human being lives in worry. S/he has entangled his/her mind to such an extent that s/he lives in self-defense, ceaselessly quibbling about the evil that might be done to him/her or that might happen to him/her. S/he spends his/her energy reacting before any danger presents itself. If these types of thoughts were rejected and one were to live today, in the present time, one would be certain that

one has in oneself the power necessary to react appropriately at the moment of danger.

The valiant soul does not close her eyes to the future, but this does not cause her to live in worry about what might eventually come to pass. On the contrary, she surrenders herself confidently to what she is supposed to be doing, because she knows that when difficult situations arise she will face the difficulties confidently.

A disciple of a mystic went apprehensively to his master to inform him that he had no rice with which to make the next meal. The mystic answered him: "How glad I am of that! We will now be able to show the Divine Mother that we live abandoned in her arms." General San Martin revealed a remarkable feature of his character by retiring to sleep after having been informed that the enemy was near and his troops were in danger. The general had already given the necessary orders for their defense so, instead of losing control and acting hastily, he gathered energy for the opportune moment.

Weak persons do have motives for fear. Since they do not have the habit of establishing a reserve of energy, they do not have sufficient strength at their disposal when they need it. The human being has at his disposal an inexhaustible source of cosmic energy. The valiant soul reserves that energy and uses it with good judgment. Her simplicity makes her strong and keeps her from fear.

Second step: PRUDENCE

However, the Master also said, "Be as simple as doves but as prudent as serpents."

One is not to confuse the prudence of Courage and Personal Control with the constant indecision which is so habitual to human beings today and because of which they lose their best opportunities. Prudence is the continuous observation of one's personal strength and the correct evaluation of what one can effect with that strength.

When the soul feels filled with a holy strength that motivates her to go out in defense of the oppressed, to bring about justice and suffer martyrdom for the good of humankind, she has to contain that energy in order not to waste it on fantasies. She must consider what she would do if she really had the concrete possibility of fulfilling her dream.

How many people say that they would give their life for an ideal and then, when faced with the first trial, not only do not offer what they had promised but abandon their ideal and even deny it! Peter tells Jesus, "I lovest thee more than anyone; I will lay down my life for thy sake." Nevertheless, when in danger he denies him — three times! After the Resurrection, when he has by that time learned the lesson that the courage of one's dreams is not the courage of reality, Jesus asks him, "Peter, lovest thou me?", Peter answers, "Thou knowest whether I love thee."

It is easy to be courageous when one is seated comfortably in a cushioned armchair and fantasy runs as freely as the smoke from one's cigar. But only when one confronts a concrete case does one know the reality. In this the prudence of Courage and Personal Control is the only master.

The prudent person knows the limits of his/her control, the point up to which s/he may cast the vibration of courage such that s/he does not overreach his/her capacity and become muddled with fear.

“Take me with you,” said an impatient disciple to his spiritual guide. “I want to fly to those wonderful worlds you describe; I want to see the etheric figures that fill the astral world.” The Master admonished him, responding that the moment for that would come in due time, that before then he had to become strong and balanced, with control enough for any trial. But since the neophyte kept insisting, the Master took him to a crossroad, drew the magic circle, pronounced the solemn words and said to the youth, “Place yourself there in the middle and do not fear, for the chariot needed to transport you to the superior regions will descend.” The disciple did as he was told, but when he heard the noise of the vehicle approaching and saw that it came toward him at great speed, he lost his control. The chariot and horses became immense; it seemed to him that they would crush him. Then the fearful youth collapsed as if dead. His apparent courage was merely curiosity. If it had been the prudent courage of a discreet disciple, he would have had strength to control his fear at the moment of passage from one state to another.

King Solomon was asked, “What is wisdom?” He answered, “Wisdom harbors prudence in its house.”

Third Step: TEMPERANCE

Temperance is indispensable to be able to live simply, peacefully and without the torment of not being able to defend oneself for lack of control and reserve of energy. In the process of the conquest of Courage and Personal Control, temperance allows one to distinguish real strength from illusory strength.

The exercise of temperance avoids the confusion of prudence with a dissembling form of fear. Temperance is the coffer in which one gathers the energy of courage. To control and measure all one's acts, to deprive oneself of what is most pleasant, to use measure and discretion in the satisfaction of one's fundamental needs, to guard one's thoughts and words, is to save precious strength. One is not to pay too much attention to the one who says, “I am strong and I know how to defend myself.” The one who makes excessive boasts cannot save much energy.

Cardinal Peretti—very old and infirm, and walking laboriously with a cane—didn't have the looks of a courageous man. For this reason the Cardinals, thinking they would be able to manipulate him as they liked, elected him Pope (Sixtus V). But when Cardinal Peretti heard of his election he straightened his body, threw

aside his cane and said, "I have hidden my feelings for many years. Now I am in command." Sixtus V ruled the Church with an iron hand.

Temperance, the constant sacrifice of gathering strength, makes the Control Wheel as hard as a diamond; it can hold even the most violent and fatal vibrations. There have been persons who lived enclosed in cloisters, with their will completely subjected to the authority of their superiors. However, when they began to act, they showed they had courage for any trial, even trials for which their previous life would not seem to have prepared them. Renouncement to one's personal will, mastery over one's passions and temperance exercised for many years gave them true courage, based on personal control.

When fear invades the soul, she must not try to conquer it by boasting that she does not feel it. This would be like using colored glasses to make the world look more beautiful. In order to be able to conquer fear, one must save energy every day. When one has gathered sufficient strength, one will be able to face fear successfully.

Applicable to this are the following paragraphs from the chapter entitled The Abyss: "Do not look back! Do not falter at the edge of the precipice! You will surely fall into it, wrapped in the terrible whirlwind that your Enemy's eager breathing rhythmically stirs up. Tomorrow you may! You will return to kill her for the last time after She, awakened by your victorious kiss, has entrusted you with the double-edged sword of unshakable will."

Fourth Step: FORTITUDE

When one arrives at the last step, the most difficult of all, the great question is posed: How does one acquire Courage and Personal Control—with active resistance or passive resistance? Should the individual confront the enemy with all his/her strength or abandon him/herself like a meek lamb into the hands of his/her adversary?

Jacob struggles with the Unknown Angel, who is God Himself, and overcomes him. By resistance the Universe is maintained, life is defended, species are preserved through time. But the proper strength of true courage consists in resisting up to a certain point and not beyond that. If one is to conquer, it is indispensable to know when one should stop resisting. Resistance should cease exactly when the trial is overcome, in order not to detract from the triumph by taking advantage of it in an inappropriate way. A rough example is needed here: When a man is attacked he defends himself—he disarms his enemy, making it impossible for him to fight, but does not harm him at all. He has already overcome the danger and that was the reason for his resistance. It is proverbial that the valiant ones who knew how to face their enemies and persecutors successfully were noble and generous to them after the conquest.

If, after overcoming a trial requiring courage, the soul understands that she does not need to take advantage of her triumph and renounces it, she conquers the essence of the victory with her strength.

In short, Courage and Personal Control include the simplicity of the child, who knows no fear; the prudence of the aged one, who no longer fears or cares about danger; the temperance of the virtuous one, who disdains the excesses of life; and the strength of the conqueror, who has placed himself above his own victory.

The Exercise of Memory

Memory is usually thought of merely as the mental faculty that permits the past to be recorded. However, memory embraces a much broader field. To possess memory means dominating its three times: past, present and future. When the present is lived attentively and consciously, the past is clearly established and the future becomes evident.

Memory is, thus, the remembrance of the past, the mental fixing of the present and the perception of the future that has been generated by actions that were done and events that have occurred.

Human beings think they know their past, but they do not remember anything but vague shadows of yesterday, increasingly weakened by the passing of the years and the transpiring of new happenings. If one possessed a good memory, the human horizon would expand remarkably its area of possibilities.

Students of spiritual life must have a memory that allows them to record the past perfectly, especially the important events of their lives.

In childhood one has a memory that fixes events clearly because the brain is still permeated with the cosmic energy it has brought from the astral world. If memory is not exercised, it weakens at the person's maturation and in old age the tendency to forget what has happened is even more accentuated.

Memory is not a free gift of the mind that needs no care. On the contrary, memory is an exploitable field which can be wasted if one does not work on it.

First time: THE PAST

What should students do to overcome the dense shadows that hide their past from them?

Children observe and remember. The strength of their curiosity is so great that when they pay attention they concentrate their energy at the Hypophysical Center (also called the Visual Wheel or Center). In time they begin to lose that healthy curiosity and their good memory. Adults pay attention to what they like, what they need or cannot do without and are indifferent to anything else. Therefore, before the day ends they have already forgotten a large part of what happened during such a short time. When concentration and interest are lacking, past events are exhumed by the Solar Center instead of the Visual Center, and are forgotten. It may be said, then, that memory failure is due to the lack of interest in life. The individual refuses to think and allows his/her subordinate mind to think for him/her.

The retrospective examination is very important for improving memory and accelerating spiritual unfolding. The practice of it reorders the events that have

occurred during the day and charges them with the needed mental energy that must fix them clearly in memory. Ignatius Loyola knew this and therefore was not satisfied with the exercise of mental remembering but also wished past events to be minutely writ ten down. The practice of his spiritual exercises strengthened his Order and saved the Catholic Church from collapse.

Nevertheless, the daily retrospective examination is not enough to acquire a good memory. It is necessary to do periodic recapitulations of events that have been lived. A good merchant is not satisfied with the daily account of his/her incomes and expenses, but needs semi-annual and yearly balances. One of the ends of spiritual Retreats, so often recommended in the Sacred Order of the Knights of Fire, is to make a spiritual "balance." All students should retire, even if only once a year, from the bustle of the world, from business, from relatives, from daily preoccupations, to live some days in complete spiritual absorption. That time lends itself for doing an examination of the year that has gone by and to accustom one's memory to fix well the outstanding events of one's life.

Spiritual exercises create pauses in the course of life. During these pauses one reconsiders past events serenely so that the most important stand out, become fixed in the soul, charged with energy and transformed into teachings. Experience made teaching shows one how to live the present so that it leads one to the yearned-for future.

God said to the Psalmist: "Go into solitude and I will speak to you there." Ramakrishna told his disciples who lived in the world: "Leave your homes and jobs once in a while and come with me to solitude."

Contact with nature and the pure air of high altitudes also helps to develop memory. That is why counsel is given to have the Retreats in elevated spots. For this reason the ancient Knights built their castles at more than a thousand meters above sea level. Tibetan Lamas also believe that the air of the Himalayas improves memory.

To remember the past faithfully allows one to sometimes see as though in a flash the solution to the most difficult dilemmas. It can also reveal a mission to fulfill.

Freud tried to cure certain illnesses with psychoanalysis by making the memory search out the origin of the evil in the subconscious.

Second time: THE PRESENT

The exercise of observation and attention gives memory clarity.

Those who try to improve their memory frequently practice a type of observation which is restricted to what interests them, without paying attention to the rest. However, a good observer must have a broad and exact view of everything s/he sees. One must take an example from children, who insist on asking about

everything, on wanting to know everything. Their extraordinary interest allows nothing to escape them and makes them remember what they observe.

The practice of observation awakens the student's attention in such a way that s/he rapidly acquires great exactness in his/her perception of the surrounding reality and enriches to a remarkable degree the "storehouse" of his/her memory. For this reason the Masters teach exercises of observation. For example, they ask the student to move rapidly from one room to another and then immediately write down what they have seen. The first time the student performs this exercise, s/he usually remembers only two thirds, at most, of the objects in the room. S/he has to repeat the exercise several times a day for a while in order to fix in his/her memory all that his/her eyes perceive in only one quick look. Another exercise consists in taking an object, observing it attentively and noting down its qualities and characteristics. At the end of a few days the student is surprised at all s/he begins to discover.

A Teacher of the Order instructed a distracted student as follows: "Stand in front of that white curtain, look at what is on it and then come and tell me what you see." The youth looked and saw nothing but white curtains. He returned to the Master and told him he hadn't seen anything in particular. Then the Master took him back to the curtain and pointed out that moths had eaten into it, forming a tracery of various designs there. "How did you discover that?" asked the student. "Simply by observing attentively what is before my eyes," replied the Teacher.

Third time: THE FUTURE

Clear, fixed and constructive memory is evidently a mirror of the future. It is very difficult for forgetful persons who live in the half-dream of material life to build their future, when they forget their past so easily and disregard their present. But the one who remembers can very well anticipate the result his/her acts will produce.

A Hindu king visited a solitary Yogi who lived in the jungle with the sole companionship of a gazelle. Before the king spoke the Yogi told him: "You have come to tell me that your people have rebelled against you because there have been three years of famine and drought in your land." "How do you know that?" asked the king. "I know it because of what you yourself told me when you visited me three years ago," responded the sage. "You had had three good harvests and were about to give great feasts and open the granaries to all in the land. By recalling that squander and noting the dry seasons that have passed since then, I deduced what has recently occurred."

It is important to make a clarification. Here it is said that one is to remember the past, but other Teachings say that the past must be forgotten. This would seem to be a contradiction but it is not so.

When the Teaching counsels one to forget the past, it is saying that one must disattach oneself from the emotions that are bound up with those memories so as

not to live tied to them; when it says that one must remember the past, it teaches us to remember the knowledge extracted from one's experiences. The past is not one particular person's past; it must be fixed in memory as a knowledge so that experiences give knowing as fruit.

Those who remember well, know well. What they do not know they learn easily and what they learn they utilize to build the future.

11th Teaching

Real Love

Although the word love is on everyone's lips, can be said in any language and is expressed in all forms, very few persons would know how to give an exact definition of love. Actually, love is the divine essence of life and sprouts anywhere, like the sudden brilliance of a lightning flash on a stormy night.

The heavenly bodies and planetary chains move because of love; because of love, the flower in the field shows its corolla on spring mornings. No one can escape the bewitchment of Real Love which is, in one way or another, the aspiration of all created forms.

Who can speak of love? Which words are worthy of such an excellent quality? Every phrase seems poor in the presence of the magnitude of this ferment of life. It is only known that there are different degrees of love.

In spite of the very different forms and innumerable shades of love, sages and clairvoyants have always been unanimous in saying that love is expressed in twelve rays. The Wheel of the Heart has twelve resplendent rays, doubtlessly to indicate the twelve degrees of love.

An ancient Rosicrucian text, known only to the seven members who constitute the Sacred Brotherhood, says that the twelve degrees of love correspond to the figures represented in Leonardo da Vinci's painting, "The Last Supper." This text says that Jesus, placed in the middle, symbolizes Divine Love. The Communion represents the Divine Love that is given to human beings. The face, style of dress, and expression of each of the twelve disciples show the twelve rays of love, from the passionate and criminal appearance of Judas Iscariot to the very smooth look of John the Evangelist, who rests his head on Jesus' breast. The text also states that da Vinci explicitly left the Savior's face unfinished because it expressed Supreme Love and therefore could not show definite traits.

The twelve rays of love show the process of human unfolding. Love is expressed in multiple ways in each ray; at the same time, in a single stage of unfolding of one person, several rays of love can be distinguished. Each soul can recognize the stage of her unfolding according to the ray of love that predominates in her life. To the degree she has advanced, the soul begins to understand the rays of love that she is unfolding and learns to control how they express themselves. She thus qualifies herself to fulfill a new ray of love.

A ray of love is surpassed when it is transmuted into another, more spiritual ray. The instinctive love which moves a mother to hear only her child opens the door to the possibility of loving and caring for all creatures. The instinct that

motivates one to preserve life at any cost is transformed, through spiritual unfolding, into abnegation and sacrifice for the good of others.

Each ray fulfills an objective in the human being's unfolding. Progress is not attained by combating aspects of love, but in understanding them and transmuting them in a love which is increasingly more noble and encompassing. In other words, a love which includes increasingly more and excludes increasingly less, until it is transformed into Real Love.

12th Teaching

The Twelve Rays of Love

The first ray of love is the animal instinct that promotes the preservation of the species. As if they were being absorbed by a powerful whirlpool, the various types of animals and human races struggle in a crazy rhythm; fighting, killing and even dying out of this intense desire for self-preservation, for survival throughout the ages.

Everything perishes, but flesh struggles desperately, to its last breath, to preserve itself. It is thus that the thousands and thousands of heavenly bodies which fill space are maintained by that magnificent and unconscious desire to be. All is moved by the same force: love.

The second ray of love is defensive and develops the individual's consciousness of self. Defensive love extends to the boundaries that demarcate the defender's needs: defense of oneself, one's progeny, one's food and all that is indispensable for one's life.

The primitive aspects of defensive love are not necessary at society's present level of unfolding; on the contrary, they are a cause of ruin, destruction and death. Nevertheless, defensive love grew such powerful roots that human beings are not yet able to disattach themselves from it.

Families, clans, nations and codes were formed for the purposes of defense. So were the societies for protection and mutual aid.

When human beings feel relatively secure and protected in the environment they have created, they direct their animal love to the third ray of love: the love of their own body.

Love of the body is undefined, mysterious and subtle. From the moment in which the child sees him/herself reflected in the water of the fountain or the mirror at home, s/he experiences that shudder, sometimes subconsciously shameful, of self-attraction. It is as if s/he encountered someone who is not him/her and yet whom s/he has nevertheless sought all his/her life; it is a morbid satisfaction, a definite descent to matter.

In time this love becomes increasingly stronger and more selfish, especially in those who do not find a more elevated object for their life. The continuous fear that the body is not well cared for, cherished, pampered, can become an obsession. Nothing is enough to satisfy one's own body. It is a blind love turns individuals into slaves of their flesh.

What can be expected of such an intense love of the body but the entry into the fourth ray of love, which seeks to give the body all the animal pleasures of life? In

this ray of love the human being finds satisfaction only in his/her own gratification. The incessant desire for instinctual pleasure leaves no room to seek happiness for other beings or to cooperate with them. These curious aspects of love appear in persons who do not think of giving pleasure outside themselves but are only interested in satiating their own appetites.

Animal love is indispensable for life; the vegetable and animal species are preserved because of it. But any aspect of this love drags the human being firmly to the animal and inferior life and separates him/her from the Divine; for s/he possesses discernment and free will.

The fifth ray of love motivates individuals to feel for others what they feel for themselves. They admit that the happiness and pleasure of another can also be their own pleasure and happiness. They discover that they are not the only ones who feel, suffer and love, but that other beings also experience these same feelings.

This love is already human and promotes expansion, communication and reciprocal affection. When individuals experience joy, they subconsciously experience even more joy because they perceive that their pleasure is the heritage of the whole species. This leads them to respect their fellow human beings, to understand their physiological needs, to shelter and protect them.

In the sixth ray love becomes attractive. Dante described this in unsurpassable words: "Amor che a nullo amato, amar perdona." That is, love demands love.

Lovers want love for themselves and for their beloved. Although the circle of their affections is very reduced, sometimes so small that it holds only one person, for them it is everything. For this love they struggle, work, suffer and even know how to die. They cannot tolerate anyone to take away their affection and, when it is not requited, they yield to despair, hatred, and may even kill.

In the seventh ray, human love is extended to several persons, and can come to encompass a whole group. Human love seeks broader horizons and attempts to transform itself into Real Love. In other words, the individual yearns for his/her love not to end, not to die, for s/he begins to understand the old saying, "The love that dies is not love."

In this ray of love individuals project their love through their children. They love their children, the fruit of their pleasure. Although they know that the affections generated by instinctual attraction will end sooner or later, they also know that their love will survive in their progeny and will increase generation by generation, following the inherited bloodline.

In the eighth ray, human love becomes compassionate. Individuals suffer for sorrows outside themselves and wish their well-being could be experienced by everyone in their country. Although they want good for themselves above all other things, they admit the need for good for others. They protect those who arouse their sympathy, help those of their race, favor those who praise them. Although they do

not par don those who oppose them they do all the good they can, always when it accrues to their own benefit and satisfies their self-love.

But human love—which is relative, as is anything that has form—is not Real Love. Only divine love is Real Love.

The ninth ray of love is divine. One loves for the sake of loving, one gives for the sake of giving, without expecting a return.

How can one make distinctions between one being and another if all have issued from the same divine Essence and all must return to It? What does it matter if one's love is not requited, if one does not receive the love of the loved one, if the whole flame of love is in the one who loves? Those who are truly devout experience that love and therefore say that they are mad with love for God and for all human kind.

Thus one arrives at the tenth ray of love. If divine love is so broad and sublime that it encompasses everything without asking for anything, how wonderful that love is when it focuses on a human being! Only now, at this degree of love, does one know true friendship; what a pity this beautiful word has been so degraded. Friendship is shown when one does not need anything else to feel joy and plenitude but to see the loved one happy, even at the cost of one's own sacrifice.

When Knight X entered the Order, he was distinguished by the Grand Master in a particular way. The Grand Master often called him to his presence to speak to him about spiritual subjects and divine love. He often had Knight X accompany him when he went out. The disciple felt that his soul was sheltered beneath his Master's. But, from one day onward, the Grand Master never called for him again, and whenever they met he greeted him without paying him particular attention. In despair, the student went to throw himself at the Master's feet, so that he could find out what he was guilty of to be thus spurned. The Grand Master answered him: "My love for you today is as great as it was yesterday. Better said, it is a love that grows increasingly stronger. But that love would be imperfect if we were to seek our personal satisfaction. Before, you were young; you needed my word and my presence. By now you have grown wings and you must fly by yourself. Contact with me would me more harmful than useful. See and learn that true love does not say, 'Out of sight, out of mind,' but is a love which is always invariable, near or far, in life or death."

In the eleventh ray, divine love becomes ecstatic.

There is no longer any measure between one love and another, between one form and another. Any expression of love, even the smallest and most insignificant, ignites such a flame in one's breast that it merges the soul in divine love through ecstasy.

The beauty of the sky and a bird in flight caused the child Ramakrishna to fall into ecstasy. St. John of the Cross, seeing a child in the street, remembered the

beauty of the Child Jesus and entered into such an intense ecstasy of love that his face lit up as if in flames.

By the road of the heart or of the mind, in the twelfth ray divine love restores the ecstatic soul to the primary and universal source from which sprang the first expression of life, motivated by eternal love. Real Love merges the soul with the Divinity in a way such that it is difficult to point to the boundary between the Manifest and the Unmanifest.

Even in this sublime state, the words of the Indian philosopher may be remembered: “Love is the beginning and the end of the Road.”

13th Teaching

Perseverance

All the virtues enumerated so far are indispensable. However, in order for them to have effective value in the disciple's life, they must be supported on the cornerstones of perseverance.

There is a legend that God sent an Angel to earth to give names to each species of flower. He adorned the most beautiful with splendid names and the most humble with delicate ones. He thought he had not forgotten any, for he had even given a name to the violet, which was always hidden under its dense foliage. But he had forgotten a tender little flower that waited patiently for its turn. When the Angel of God was about to return to heaven and the other flowers thought that the little flower would remain nameless, the latter, who had persevered in waiting, lifted her voice. "Do not forget me," she said. The Angel heard the persevering flower and, returning, responded, "You yourself have chosen your name. I shall call you 'Forget-me-not.'"

Perseverance likewise distinguishes itself from among all virtues by its own characteristic, by its own expression: to remain, to wait, fervently. The persevering soul never retracts what she has said, never retraces her steps, never strays from the chosen path.

Human virtues, like the biblical statue, have a golden head, a bronze torso and clay feet. The virtue of perseverance, however, which does not shine with the brightness of other virtues, has a head of clay and feet of gold.

Spiritual life must be founded on the five cornerstones of perseverance, so that it may be like a castle built on a rock that wind does move, water does not harm, nor time destroy.

First cornerstone: PATIENCE

Through patience the human being becomes constant; through patience s/he conquers the fiercest enemy, and through patience the golden door to the superior worlds is opened.

Every morning an elderly woman would approach the gate of the Royal Palace to implore clemency for her imprisoned son. The king passed by without listening to her supplications, looking at her disdainfully. The porters and servants disillusioned the old woman, telling her that it was useless to come there, for it would gain her nothing. But one day the king was in a good mood and heard the mother, took pity on her and freed her son. Patience conquered indifference.

Monica wept for twenty years, praying for the conversion of her son Augustine to Catholicism. She wept so much that her tears made furrows in her cheeks and in

the end her longing was fulfilled. A bishop who heard about Augustine's conversion exclaimed that it was impossible for him not to be converted after so much patience and so many tears on the part of his mother.

Patience is indispensable in spiritual life. How many souls begin the path with great enthusiasm but then abandon it because they do not immediately see the result of their efforts!

Human nature, hardened by acquired habits, needs long years to activate the higher centers and adapt itself to a method suitable to spiritual unfolding. Only with persevering patience does one attain success.

An Indian yogi was asked how he had achieved the total immobilization of his right arm and he answered, "Through twenty-five years of continuous effort."

Second Cornerstone: FAITH

The faith of perseverance is to accept as possible that which is not yet evident.

We are not talking here about the instinctual faith that strongly ties one to the things that are adored or believed in. We are talking about the understanding that believes something to be certain even if it cannot, at the present time, be proven. It would be impossible to live without this rational faith.

Who can prove that the things s/he believes in —without having proven them— are just the way s/he thinks they are? Who can confirm that the food s/he buys is wholesome, that it has not been contaminated in spite of all precautions? Yet s/he eats the food trustingly, based on social and collective faith.

But poor human beings, who blindly believe in the bakery that makes their bread, the running water that comes from the water department, and the paper money the state dispenses, doubt the word of the Masters and of the souls who have traversed in a practical way the path they are treading only theoretically.

When students begin college, they cannot attain at one blow all the knowledge they are going to gain during their years of study. As they study they have to accept on faith what they will later be able to prove for themselves.

The disciple who does not base his/her spiritual work on persevering faith is like the glutton who gets indigestion by eating more than s/he can digest.

When a Sannyasin requests admission to the spiritual direction of a guru, the first thing that is demanded of him is absolute obedience. Obedience is indispensable for the support of faith.

Third Cornerstone: HOPE

To be hopeful does not consist in abandoning oneself to misery, despair or sadness, saying that one day these evils will end. Hope is, rather, the virtue of the one who waits with the certainty that the Divine Plan will be realized in his/her

soul at the opportune moment. Hope is therefore the strongest support of perseverance.

The beings who have reached the summit have attained it without losing their calm; without haste or anxiety. They wait and persevere, for they know that one day all souls will reach the end of the path.

Disciples wait patiently for time and trials to pass, and the moment comes in which the divine promises of inner liberation and spiritual union among souls are fulfilled.

Fourth Cornerstone: DISCERNMENT

Perseverance gives discernment as fruit.

Persons who change ideals periodically, who try out various paths, do not fulfill any of them. They expend their energy uselessly, without having time to do anything well. Above all, they do not acquire the capacity to pause and discern. But those who keep their faith and continue constantly along the path they have chosen, learn to analyze the facts and distinguish the real from the illusory, the prudent from the harmful.

Perseverance teaches one to have time for everything, to give the proper time to each task and do it well.

Discernment leads one to enjoy things in their physical, mental and spiritual aspects. To know what one is doing, and to do it well, is a source of natural fulfillment that accompanies the soul throughout her life. To distinguish that which stimulates unfolding from that which presents obstacles to it gives security and strength to overcome trials and difficulties. And to know the limits of discernment permits the soul to transcend them mystically.

Fifth Cornerstone: RESIGNATION

Perseverance gives strength and resignation. The persevering soul accepts beforehand the fact that she cannot control life and that she will not always obtain with her efforts the results she hopes for. She accepts all from the hands of Divine Will and adapts herself uncomplainingly to the circumstances she cannot modify. It may thus be said that resignation is the crown of perseverance.

When the soul lives patiently, believes sincerely, waits serenely, discerns clearly and resignedly takes her destiny from the hands of the Divine, she has attained the virtue of Perseverance.

14th Teaching

Consciousness and Will

Universal movement oscillates continuously between one force that moves toward annihilation and relaxation and another force which promotes creation and activity.

These two great cosmic forces are called Consciousness and Will. Consciousness may be defined as the force that expands the being from the infinitely small to the Macrodivinity. Will may be defined as the universal force that is concretized in the being.

First Movement: CONSCIOUSNESS

Cosmic passiveness is manifested in the inert consciousness of the elements. Like a mother who is far from her child, cosmic passiveness calls from infinity to that which has issued from its depths, so that it may be restored to the Great Cosmic Depository. The extremely slow progress and evolution of minerals and worlds expresses a sort of passive struggle of the monads not to continue onward and to regress to the point of departure. It is as if the consciousness of that which exists were to refuse to become; as if the broad est of eternal circles were to try hard not to be reduced to the personal circle.

This idea of eternity and immensity cannot be eradicated, even after the descent to matter. Individuals, even enclosed within the limits of their rational mind, preserve this infused and mysterious sense of what they could be in essence before they can be it potentially, and they call it, vaguely, consciousness. Of course, this consciousness is no more than a distant spark of the passive occult power which will restore the soul to her pristine essence.

It is said that consciousness is the concept of good in terms of the customs, laws and ethics of society; that is, good in terms of external life. But consciousness really expresses itself in the understanding the being has of good in accordance with his/her degree of evolution.

When consciousness opens to the influx of the spirit, it breaks all bonds and expands to the infinite. Like an over flowing ocean, it surpasses all boundaries, fills all voids and restores the liberated soul to the Gordian and vital knot, to the harmony between the eternal Spirit and the being who knows what s/he is and who s/he is.

Second Movement: WILL

The ancient texts say that the planetary systems were created by an act of pure will. And they are telling the truth, since Will is cosmic energy condensed to a particular point.

In the fantastic descent of souls from the infinite to the finite, it is the strong, single and unshakable Will that attracts all beings from that which is without circle to the very reduced circle of a life. This Will makes a being out of each atom; out of each molecule it makes an entity different from the rest; from each entity it makes a personality, a world apart, a potential that is separate and different from all other potentials.

Will always plays a very important role in the progress of souls toward their conscious liberation. As Consciousness expands, Will shrinks; but as it shrinks it gives power.

The entity who leaves the eternal bosom unconsciously will be restored to eternity without losing the principle of consciousness and potential—different from all other potentials— which s/he acquired throughout his/her pilgrimage through the worlds.

Meanwhile, the flaming sword, the sacred power of Kundalini, is there, immobile, waiting for the Will to take it in its hands to master and be absolute sovereign.

The human being will attain highest realization when s/he knows how to use Will. Will is a drive that motivates one to do what sometimes seems impossible. However, in order for that drive to give an effective result, it must be one's own and not someone else's.

Although human beings are familiar with Will, they are unable to use it to their spiritual advantage because they search in outside sources. Since at present human beings are mental slaves, they blindly take a foreign will as if it were their own. In other words, they think they use their will freely when they really do what others want, what others like, what others have said, what others have taught them to want. For example, they think they dress as they please when what really happens is that they are slaves to the fashions that others impose. This slavery—which in regard to fashion does not seem important—is the same slavery that limits them in all their choices. Therefore they do not reach triumph, since Will is a faithful lover that hears only the voice of its legitimate wife. Will is the essence of the personality of beings, and in each being it is manifested in a completely differently way from all other personalities.

Human beings should try to like what they like; they should remove what the tangled foreign ideas have formed in their minds and follow their natural, mental and spiritual inclination. They will see that the mind responds to the call of the Will. Will gives them personal power, which is the potential of the being it itself.

Thus was the Universe made, by the manifestation of the single and absolute Divine Will.

15th Teaching

The Gift of Oblivion

When the disciple reaches a certain point on the Path, s/he encounters an aphorism that leaves him/her perplexed: “In order to live the eternal hour, the soul must submerge herself in the sea of oblivion.” Two questions then come to his/her mind: Is it not necessary to remember the past in order to beautify the present, in order to enliven the mind, in order to know oneself? And: Haven't we been taught the retrospective exercises in order to seek our own past and come to discover the lost thread of previous existences? The answer to these two questions is yes. But the forgetting this Teaching speaks of has nothing to do with the remembrance of past events. The Gift of Oblivion is the grace disattachment from past experiences and feelings which, although they served as a foundation for existence, are no longer useful.

According to the Teaching, remembering pertains to the mind; forgetting, on the other hand, takes place in the heart.

Oblivion is attained when there are no longer glowing coals beneath the ashes of a memory. The mind can remember serenely when the heart has forgotten and the volcano of passions is extinguished.

It is necessary to remember past experiences clearly in order to discern the facts and thus be able to utilize that knowledge in the future. But to revive the past emotionally is to tie oneself to it; to suffer what has been suffered before; to love what has been loved before; to desire what has been desired before; to live what is dead. How wise is the Law that covers beings' past with the mantle of oblivion! This allows one to put aside the feelings that are bound to previously lived events, and thus cut—at least partially—the ties that are formed according to the law of cause and effect.

Thousands of phantoms created by one's affections and thoughts follow beings as vague reminiscences that continuously impels them to revive the past. The Gift of Oblivion consists in destroying them. The heart can banish them if the mind knows how to recognize them. The one who has disattached him/herself from yesterday can properly say that s/he has forgotten and can therefore live the happiness of the present as the Eternal Hour.

Students must stop whining over their past, stop reproaching themselves for what they did or did not do, stop remembering the difficulties and obstacles they encountered along the road, for only one thing counts: to have a clean heart. A clean heart is like the smile of a child who knows only that which causes his/her joy.

Let students drop their heavy “bread bag of the poor person,” the personal past weighed down with emotion and interpretations. In this way they will be able to

transform themselves into new beings capable of living the present moment as an expression of eternity.

The past that raises whirlwinds of emotional and passionate memories must be extirpated from the heart. Only by forgetting with the heart does the disciple have the right to remember.

Sharp memories of the past do not belong to one particular person, but to the Cosmic Depository, to the instructing book of life. The past does not belong to this or that individual, but is the patrimony of all beings.

A Master says that the bonds of Karma break instantaneously when the soul forgets her personal past, and she is able to unite with the Divinity.

How wonderful is the moment in which this great truth is revealed in the disciple's heart!

16th Teaching

Transmutation

When beings cross the human circle, they receive the gift of using their sex spontaneously. Animals are subject to the periods of estrus. In contrast, the normal, healthy human being is able to engage in the reproductive act when s/he thinks it good and necessary.

The masculine and feminine genital organs are a diminutive image of the cosmic forces. Some people believe that the sexual organs are only useful for procreation and pleasure, but this is not so. As truly divine instruments, they are entrusted to human beings for the constant renewal of life.

The testicles supply the semen and the ovaries furnish the ovule. Both of them have interstitial cells. These cells perform the function of regenerative and invigorating internal secretion. As of recent years, the role of this internal secretion is beginning to be understood. But the true meaning of sexual transmutation has yet to be discovered—for, besides being beneficial for the body, it is a psychic tonic for the mind. Proper concentration of the mind on the interstitial function produces the transmutation of sexual energy into psychic energy.

There are six methods of transmutation:

The first method is the natural way. This is done subconsciously, especially in the years of puberty. At this age the abundance of internal secretion is so great that the mind distributes it spontaneously in the body and transforms the excess into psychic strength. Natural transmutation can occur in any moment of life in which there is a superabundance of sexual energy.

The second method is the aberrant way. Certain individuals reach a state of dissatisfaction through continuous sexual abuse. They then seek avenues of enjoyment that are so elaborate that they are led to concentrate strongly on their sensations, thus encouraging transmutation. This produces a state of sluggish psychism and drives the person to the use of stupeficients.

The sexual magic of the Middle Ages was based on this method of transmutation. It consisted in a sexual aberration that produced psychic transmutation. During the spasmodic ecstasy the mind, which was the most manipulated factor in the process, transformed the sexual energy into psychic energy. Once the spasm was over the subject fell into a stupor. S/he later expended the energy in deep sleep through the creation of the desired images.

The third method is the conjugal way. All religions sanctify marriage so that the sexual act may be transformed into a cultural act, a mental act. Therein lies the value of a religious marriage.

The objective of fulfilling the marriage mandate and the law of generation came to produce real transmutations that were, in certain cases, mystical, both in men and women. The intention of carrying out a sacred act takes the mind off sexual pleasure and this favors transmutation.

In the case of the man, for example, the semen that is expelled in the sexual act becomes imbued with psychic strength. By applying one's will, that energy can be directed to the brain.

The fourth method is the virginal way. In the body that has not experienced sexual pleasure in any way whatsoever, the sexual forces of the testicles or the ovaries fold gradually over the interstitial cells and, after many years, the transmutation becomes effective. The mental strength of these persons becomes extraordinary. These persons have always been the pillars of religions and philosophical and spiritual institutions.

St. Ambrose, bishop of Milan, was a lover of virginity and won many maidens to the cloister. He did not tire of repeating, "The strength of the Christian Church is founded upon virginity."

The fifth method is the way of celibates. Many persons, at a certain period of life, feel the need to renounce the pleasure of sex in order to dedicate their energy to the fulfillment of a spiritual ideal.

The laws of Manu impose obligatory celibacy at a certain age.

There is continuous celibacy and periodic celibacy. Every man or woman who follows the spiritual path should observe an annual quarantine of celibacy.

The absence of the known pleasure and the effort to overcome the desire to experience it produce the transmutation.

The sixth method is the psychic way. Sexual energy can be mastered by renouncing the pleasure of sex and with appropriate exercises. The strong and educated will sends energy (hormones) to the blood and the mental matter (neuromodulators) to the brain. The practice of these exercises is not advisable for the time being.