



SPIRITUAL AWAKENING IN OUR TIME

The substance of a lecture given at the Royal Commonwealth Society in November, 1972.

Our theme is spiritual awakening in our time. An extraordinary phenomenon seems to be happening in these years and months; it seems as if there is a new consciousness rising in people, bringing with it a deep sense of joy and of hope that change is afoot. Something is really happening, something that is exciting and full of prospects for the redemption of mankind. Let me stress immediately that I am not trying to force any form of dogma or belief. We all know that it brings up a resistance if we feel something is being put over on us. It is quite a different thing to invite thought. The mind has a faculty for apprehending an idea for its beauty. Do we not all have that experience? This may be a first step towards opening the faculties of higher knowledge. It could be the sign that we are beginning to be able to seize an idea immediately out of what we might call the reservoir of living ideas which fills the Cosmos. We take the idea and live with it as a concept. Think it, and if it is true it will draw to itself other ideas which support it, carrying certainty and enhancing the meaning of life.

As I said, there seems to be something comparable to a rising tide within our consciousness. What Teilhard de Chardin calls the 'noosphere', that layer of intelligence encircling the earth, seems to be shot through and lightened by a spiritual vision of what life and the universe is about, and this new light is available to all who have open minds.

What then is this spiritual world-view? There are those who are convinced that matter is the primary, if not the only, reality, and that by spiritual values we mean simply that superstructure of poetry and painting, architecture and music, and religion in the narrower sense. A materialistic outlook is, after all, concerned with outward looking and with the getting and control of things and the meeting of desires. On the other hand there are those who have the deep conviction that matter is derivative from the world of spirit, that behind all appearance is a vast universal realm of absolute being, of creative intelligence from which the forms in the relative world have been deposited. This is saying no more than that which we have so often said and read and heard; 'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God, by Him were all things made and without Him was not anything made that was made.'

Do we or do we not believe that? Dare we take that literally? First comes Divine Imagining, creative intelligence which divides itself into ideas, into exalted fixings, sub-dividing down into lesser levels of being, and gradually consolidating those ideas into matter. This planet is nothing but a reflection of the divine ideas which as living thoughts have worked down from this realm of creative thought. Space is not an empty dead mechanism but is shot through and through with thought, with being, with creative spirit. The whole of space is, in this sense, alive. It looks to us like empty space because we are looking at it merely with eyes that are tuned in to the vibratory rate of physical matter. Therefore the great astronomer of Napoleon's time, La Place, could say proudly, 'I have searched the heavens with my telescopes and I found no sign of God!' Of course, however great the telescope, you are still looking on the matter-bound frequency rate, but if we could tune in to a higher rate, other levels of being and consciousness would become apparent. It becomes clear that on earth we live in the lowest, slowest, darkest frequency band. If the earth is a reflection of the realms of absolute Being, must we not conceive that it is in truth a living creature, with its own organs, glands, sensitivity, breathing and thinking. We men are like corpuscles in its bloodstream, points in which evolution becomes conscious of itself and can think out towards the cosmos.

This thinking, if it be valid, reverses the tacit assumption held by so many that man is but an accident in evolution in a universe to which he is irrelevant, and which cares nothing at all about him. While we thought that the planet is merely a lump of mineral, a tiny speck of dust in a vast and indifferent Cosmos, then naturally enough we felt that we are perfectly free to exploit the minerals and the life of the animals of the planet to our own advantage, for our own pleasure or gain. But now we begin to come up against the vision that the earth is a great living being of which we are part, that we are therefore truly the stewards of life on this planet, and that we have a profound relation to all the kingdoms of nature. Man has something which none of the other kingdoms of nature have - he is the bearer of the spiritual being, a conscious 'ego'. The inner core of each of us, that which can say 'I', is a droplet of the divine source, a spark of the cosmic light. Life is inextinguishable. The outer sheath in which being is enshrouded can decay and fall away, but nothing can possibly kill the eternal spark. Each of us is on a long and endless journey through life on many levels of consciousness. If the spark were extinguishable it would make nonsense of the whole concept of a Creator. If you are drawn to this view then let's take it as a working thought that the droplets which take to themselves the sheath of a body are in fact imperishable. As the Bhagavad Gita says, 'you always are and you always will be. There is no time when you were not, and there will be no time when you are not.'

This is an awe-inspiring thought. It means that discussion of survival becomes irrelevant. Of course you will survive the change that is called death; how can you do any other? There are many levels of consciousness in which the spiritual being which is in each of us can have experience. 'In My father's house are many mansions,' said the Christ. Our souls have descended into this lowest density for a very good reason, and we are on a path back, through the aeons, to that divine source from which we came.

Why then are we down here? It looks as if the divine invention of gravity, on a planet like this, gives the setting into which the eternal core in each of us can incarnate in order to go through the experience of drastic limitation which entry into a body involves. It looks as if the descending soul has to accept something like a death in entering into the sarcophagus of the body, and that the function of the body is to slow down a spiritual being that can move at the pace of thought and can expand consciousness to the width of the Cosmos. Experiences in meditation sometimes lead us towards understanding that potentially we are able to unite in thought with the Creative Intelligence, with the thought field of the Universe, to draw directly and immediately from the great reservoir of creative ideas. The human mind can lift beyond brain-bound thinking, and unite with the whole thought structures and processes of the world.

This means the possibility of man drawing knowledge immediately, if he can but step up the voltage of his thinking to unite with Creative Intelligence on the higher levels. Some of the great seers of our time, following the achievement of Rudolf Steiner, have demonstrated the possibility of this development in human thinking, proving to us that ultimately there are no limits to knowledge. We are incarnated in an extraordinary mechanism, itself the work of the divine thinking and divinely-guided evolution, and so complex that it is able to carry self-consciousness and open itself towards cosmic consciousness and ultimately God-consciousness. But let us accept that our entry into the earth life is a powerful limitation. There is an admirable and brief poem by Martin Armstrong which he calls 'The Cage':

'Man, afraid to be alive
Shuts his soul in senses five
From fields of uncreated light
Into the crystal tower of sight,
And from the roaring songs of space
Into the small flesh-carven place
Of the ear whose cave impounds
Only small and broken sounds,
And to his narrow sense of touch
From strength that held the stars in clutch,
And from the warm ambrosial spice
Of flowers and fruits of paradise,
Into the frail and fitful power
Of scent and tasting, sweet and sour;
And toiling for a sordid wage
There in his self-created cage
Ah, how safely barred is he
From menace of Eternity'

There is the soul, shut inside the cage, filtering a little of cosmic experience through the limitations of the senses, which are tuned only to work in this world. Perhaps the legs are not so much to walk with but rather to slow us down to a pace at which we can carry on our social relationships effectively. If we were all moving at the pace of Ariel, business on this plane would be much more difficult!

We start with the premise that behind all is the great One-ness of living creative Being and creative thought, of which this world of separation is only a manifestation, and that we in our ordinary consciousness are living in the illusion that the world is a mass of millions of separate things and people. It is all one great living unity manifesting in infinite diversity of forms of expression and appearance. The droplet in each of us is part of the same great source and is eternal, though each of us has obviously been through immensely varied experiences.

Could we look back through corridors of time and memory, we should begin to see what we have been through. If this is the plane on which we experience being cut off from the divine source and developing egohood and self-consciousness, it is to be seen as the great training ground in which we can experience freewill and learn to become free moral beings and, like the Prodigal Son, come to ourselves and say, 'I will go back to my Father'. Every soul has to go through the experience of alone-ness before it can take the next step out of self-consciousness to be re-united with the One-ness.



We go, all of us, through the experience of the Ancient Mariner

'Alone, alone, all all alone, alone in a wide, wide sea,
And never saint took pity on my soul in agony'

Each one of us is the Mariner. Coleridge's great ballad takes its place among the world's myths in giving a picture of the passage of the soul through earth life. These great allegories are speaking to us of the nature of the soul, and they all tell essentially the same story, namely that each soul is a droplet of the eternal and does come down on to this plane to go through all the trials and obstacles and difficulties of life in order to discover his higher, more spiritual principle, his higher self, to unite with it in the mystical marriage and so go back again to the worlds of light.

Now if this is the great training ground, it is hardly thinkable that one short life out of eternity could do the job, and therefore we arrive at the thought that we must have come back again and again to this plane. One thing that does appear from spiritual research into the laws of repeated earth lives, is that we reincarnate in groups. Our friends, our colleagues, the members of our family, are almost certainly souls with whom we were together in earlier lives. We have all been through the earlier epochs, in Chaldea, in Egypt, Greece and Rome and in the Middle Ages, to experience the progressive evolution of the earth consciousness and with it human consciousness. Our soul is thus a repository of history. Could we but develop the faculty of memory we might begin to get recollections of rowing as a slave in a galley, or marching on a crusade. We apparently experience each great age with the group of souls who are on our wave-length, sometimes as mother and daughter, sometimes as brothers, sometimes as friends and companions. This is a powerful thought to strengthen us in the inevitable difficulties in personal relations, particularly in this age leading up to the great spiritual turning point in human history at the close of this century. Any who are working for spiritual enlightenment must therefore treat with the greatest possible respect the friends, the colleagues, the family with whom they are now incarnated, for there is almost certainly purpose in our being together.

This picture surely restores for many the lost sense of meaning to life, bringing to us a supreme hope. The world is not just a desperate place full of death and hate, murder and disaster, as we would gather by listening to any news; we are watching the turmoil of the coming to birth of a New Age and a new quality of soul in man. We recognise that death is the great illusion, and we need have no fear of it. Since life is eternal, all that can happen is the discarding of worn-out sheaths. A beautiful analogy is that of a daffodil. It sags and it drops and we throw it on the compost heap as a dead thing. There it breaks down and becomes humus, which is the matrix of all life. It holds within it this little point of formlessness, chaoticised matter, the seed. When this is put back into the living soil and water, sun and air play on it, out comes the resurrected daffodil. Where is the death? There's nothing but the breaking down of the outward form. It looks as if the earth forces are the ones which do the breaking down of form, not into death but into the life-filled structure of mother earth, and that from the Cosmos streams in creative power which can bring forth and make new flowers, new animals, new men.

If this is all true, if we are really denizens of a higher plane, opting to live for periods of experience and work upon earth, then this planet is of immense importance. It is not a speck of dust in a dead Cosmos; it is a living seed in a living Cosmos, carrying this immeasurably important burden of self-consciousness with the potentiality of God-consciousness. Any who doubt the importance of this planet should consider that it was seen fit for the Lord of the Solar Logos to incarnate on it, which is no little compliment for the Heavens to pay to a tiny planet. As Alice Meynell says in one of her poems, this planet 'holds as chief treasure one forsaken grave'. We are approaching the possibility of true understanding of resurrection and what the resurrection body really means.

Now all this is not just an academic theory. The notable thing about this spiritual awakening in our time is the sense of urgency, the sense that something is happening now, and that the end of this century is one of the great turning points in the spiritual history of man. It is the end of an epoch, and the possibility of the new consciousness is really with us. Man has reached the point when he can take the leap of uniting his thinking with the Creative Spirit, lifting his soul to the Higher Soul level, stepping beyond the limitations of the physical. He appears, therefore, as what has been called the tenth hierarchy 'a little lower than the angels' for he is the spiritual being who has been given the God-like faculty of freewill. This is something the angels have not got, since they are simply one with the will of God and their whole delight is to serve His will. We have all gone through separation and the Prodigal Son's experience, and therefore only with freewill turn back to our Father.

Remember, of course, that only a very small proportion of the human race is in incarnation at any one moment; a huge proportion of them are on the next plane or planes beyond that. Those friends of ours who have left the body, and have not yet incarnated in another body, are all there on higher levels of consciousness, and we are very close to them because telepathically we can blend in thought with beings on higher planes. When we meditate, pray and lift our thinking to a friend who has moved on to that plane, that soul picks up our thought. This is amply proved to any

whose minds are not closed to the forms of evidence before us. The way that your friend can speak to you is not by appearing like a ghost outside you, but within your own thinking. It is wonderful to realize that within the heart and within the thought answers to our questions can come, and new ideas can come alight from the worlds of being and the beings in those worlds.

Therefore now comes the increasing possibility that human consciousness can blend with the beings of the higher realms. It would appear that the higher worlds are deeply concerned with this planet, and that the veils are becoming very thin between the levels. If this planet is a living organism then the whole solar system must also be seen as a great spiritual organism, and each of the planets is comparable to the endocrine glands in our own body. As these tiny organs influence the entire structure of the whole body, so the tiny planet influences the entire structure of the solar system.

We come back in a quite rational way to the medieval concept of the reality of the crystal spheres, as they were called. Mars is not really that point shining in the heavens, but occultly Mars is that great field of force and influence which is enclosed within the whole great circuit that it makes, the huge sphere; Jupiter is another vaster sphere, and the Moon a smaller sphere. We come back to this realization that we are all in these great spheres of spiritual influence. Now and in this room we are in Mars, in Jupiter, and in Saturn, and can draw from their forces. The beings on the higher planes are deeply concerned that man does not blow this planet off its course, because it would damage the whole solar system, much as harming the pineal gland would the human organism. Hence the concern of the higher worlds to work with man and to awaken him to the possibility of co-operation.

We are called on now to open our thinking to contact these higher worlds because the forces of light, which can be called the forces of Michael, 'the countenance of Christ, Wielder of the Sword of Light', cannot just invade our darkened planet. Since they must respect the divine principle of freewill, we have got to invoke them and invite them. If we can learn to co-operate with the higher worlds there is nothing that could not be done for the de-polluting and redemption of this planet. Change could come rapidly because if human consciousness blended with the higher consciousness, light and power could sweep through human lives and bring about a veritable new society, a New Age. Many are convinced that this is coming, and that great changes are already afoot, but man is doing such damage to the whole structure of the planet that the very living being of Earth may react against him. We may be faced with considerable disasters one way or another, but disaster is not the last word, since there is no dying without re-birth. Therefore, we are seeing the dying of an old set of laws and the coming to birth of the glory of a new set of laws, the veritable New Age in which human consciousness can blend with the consciousness of higher beings, for the redemption of man, nature and the earth. We have got to do our part in invoking and calling down the forces of light, but we may feel the assurance that the Cosmic Christ, He whom Tudor Pole called 'The Revealer of the Word', is already overlighting mankind and working in human hearts and thinking.

I will end by quoting again the splendid passage from Christopher Fry's 'A Sleep of Prisoners'. Soldiers locked in an empty church bicker and quarrel through the night, breaking at times into inspired speaking from higher consciousness. The sergeant says:

'The human heart can go to the lengths of God.
Dark and cold we may be, but this
Is no winter now. The frozen misery
Of centuries breaks, cracks, begins to move;
The thunder is the thunder of the floes,
The thaw, the flood, the upstart Spring.
Thank God our time is now when wrong
Comes up to face us everywhere,
Never to leave us till we take
The longest stride of soul men ever took.
Affairs are now soul size.
The enterprise
Is exploration into God.
Where are you making for? It takes
So many thousand years to wake,
But will you wake for pity's sake?'