

Friends of Silence

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"Is there enough Silence for the Word to be heard?"

Dear Friends ~ I have been involved in Fourth Way inner work for many years. Nan Merrill and I exchanged many books during the years of our monthly phone calls with each other. The first book she sent me was *Meditations on the Tarot* and the first book I sent her was Volume 2 of Maurice Nicoll's *Psychological Commentaries*.

For this past year, I have been part of an online weekly journey group hosted by The Church of Conscious Harmony in Austin, Texas. They are a unique church that is based on the work of Centering Prayer as taught by Thomas Keating and Fourth Way inner work practices as taught by G. I. Gurdjieff. The Journey School publishes a weekly newsletter based on these teachings of Inner Christianity and has kept a public archive of the Thursday teaching for the past three years. The quotes for this newsletter come from some of this year's school. You can access the Journey School archives here:

consciousharmony.org/the-journey-school/the-journey-school-archives

~ Bob



People have always wondered at the saints, that they are able to walk around serene, whatever happens. But that is because they can choose where they'll be. They don't have to be angry. You see the difference between having scattered emotions and having a fully vibrating, controlled emotional body. This body is made from energy created from choice, from the effort involved in making choices. But it is necessary to practice; then something is possible.

~ Beryl Pogson in *THE WORK LIFE*

**Please come home.
Please come home into your own body.
Your own vessel, your own earth.
Please come home into each and every cell,
And fully into the space that surrounds you.**

~ Jane Hooper from "Please Come Home"



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Deeply spiritual persons experience the suffering in the world as their own suffering. Their skin is like a dividing membrane through which events flow into each other. But they do not let it overtake them and destroy their spirit, their ability to choose life. To live deeply in the spirit is to be able to see beyond the immediate evidence of brokenness. It is to seek the not yet, but possible future. To live deeply in the spirit is to find the courage to create in the midst of darkness.

~ Patricia Mischo in *WHOLE EARTH PAPERS*

We always think our negative emotions are produced by the fault of other people or by the fault of circumstances. We always think that. Our negative emotions are in ourselves and are produced by ourselves. There is absolutely not a single unavoidable reason why somebody else's action or some circumstance should produce a negative emotion in me. It is only my weakness. No negative emotion can be produced by external causes if we do not want it. We have negative emotions because we permit them, justify them, explain them by external causes, and in this way we do not struggle with them.

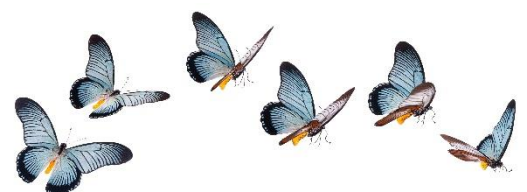
~ P. D. Ouspensky in *THE FOURTH WAY*

"What makes one wise?" asked the disciple.
"Wisdom," replied the Master.
"What is wisdom?" was retorted.
"It is simply the ability to recognize," said the Master.
"To recognize what?" the disciple asked.
"Spiritual wisdom," the Master answered, "is the power to recognize the butterfly in a caterpillar, the eagle in an egg, the saint in the sinner."

"Only a silent mind is capable of this recognizing power."

~ Raimon Panikkar in

*THE RHYTHM OF BEING,
THE UNBROKEN TRINITY*



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Christ has no body but yours,
 No hands, no feet on earth but yours
 Yours are the eyes with which he looks with
 Compassion on this world,
 Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good ...
 Christ has no body now on earth but yours.
 ~ Teresa of Avila

Conscious labor and intentional suffering are not so much separate practices as twin pillars of what amounts to essentially a single spiritual obligation.

Conscious labor is basically any intentional effort that moves against the grain of entropy, i.e., against that pervasive tendency of human consciousness to slip into autopilot. It means summoning the power of conscious attention (in our era perhaps more widely known as 'mindfulness') to swim upstream against that pervasive lunar undertow drawing us toward stale, repetitive, mechanical patterns, the siren call of World 96.

If conscious labor increases our capacity to stay present, intentional suffering radically increases the heartfulness of that presence. Intentional suffering goes head-to-head with that well-habituated pattern to move toward pleasure and away from pain. It invites us to step up to the plate and willingly carry a piece of that universal suffering, which seems to be our common lot as sentient beings in a very dense and dark corner of the universe. The size of the piece does not matter. It can be as small (though not easy!) as "bearing another human being's unpleasant manifestations," or as vast as "greater love has no man than to lay down his life for his neighbor."

~ Cynthia Bourgeault in *EYE OF THE HEART*

How long must I bear this pain in my soul,
 and live with sorrow all the day?
 How long will fear rule my life?

Notice my heart and answer me, O my Beloved;
 enlighten me, lest I walk as one dead to life;
 Lest my fears say, "We have won the day";
 Lest they rejoice in their strength.

As I trust in your steadfast Love;
 my heart will rejoice, for in You is freedom.
 I shall sing to the Beloved,
 who has answered my prayers a thousandfold!
 Come, O Beloved, make your home in my heart.

~ Nan Merrill from "Psalm 13" in *PSALMS FOR PRAYING*



We receive the light,
 Then we impart it.
 Thus we repair the world.
 ~ from the Kabbalah

I slept and dreamt
 that life was joy.
 I awoke and saw
 that life was duty.
 I worked – and behold,
 duty was joy.

~ Rabindranath Tagore,
 as quoted by Victor Frankl in *YES TO LIFE*



Life is simple. Everything happens for you, not to you. Everything happens at exactly the right moment, neither too soon nor too late. You don't have to like it – it's just easier if you do. If you have a problem, it can only be because of your unquestioned thinking. How do you react when you believe that the past should have been different? You scare yourself stuck because what you resist persists. You get to keep your stressful world, a world that doesn't exist except in your imagination; you get to stay in the nightmare. It hurts to oppose reality because in opposing reality, you are opposing your very self.

When inquiry is alive inside you, every thought you think ends with a question mark instead of a period ... I discovered that when I believed my thoughts, I suffered, but that when I didn't believe them, I didn't suffer, and that this is true for every human being. Freedom is as simple as that. I found that suffering is optional. I found a joy within me that has never disappeared, not for a single moment. That joy is in everyone, always.

~ Byron Katie in *A THOUSAND NAMES FOR JOY*