

GOTTFRIED DE PURUCKER *THREE STAGES OF VISIONING TRUTH*

[in: *Wind of the Spirit*, pp. 273-75 (1st edition 1944)]

The psychological opening of the human being to truth, to the ingress of our God-Wisdom, in other words the training that every true Theosophist undergoes, begins once he is touched and his heart is opened — begins even though he knows it not. This opening of the heart may be divided into three stages. We are familiar with these in that form of Buddhism which originated in China coming from India. In Sanskrit it is called the Dhyāni-form, and in Japan it is known as the Zen-form of Buddhist thought. It is expressed somewhat as follows, and it applies equally well to Theosophy because the Zen- or the Dhyāni- form of Buddhism is but a branch of Theosophic thought.

The student in entering the pronaos of the temple of wisdom, and later in entering the temple itself, goes through three phases of inner opening — that is the word they use. Thus, in the first phase, the mountains and the waters of the earth are mountains and waters, and they are recognised as worthy of study and research, and their wonder is seen and sensed; but they are only mountains and only waters.

But by study and aspiration after truth, finally comes the second psychological opening of his character, of his understanding, of his being. He realizes that the mountains and the waters, however beautiful they may be and wondrous for study, are after all but aspects, appearances, phenomena of noumena behind, the effects of invisible and secret causes; and he realizes in this second phase of the opening of his being that if he wants truth he must go deeper and study the science of the mountains and of the waters of the earth. He must investigate the causes which bring them into being, the inner causes and energies which produced the mountains and the waters. He realizes that the mountains and the waters, because they are effects, phenomena, appearances, however relatively real they may be, are but illusion, māyā, because the real truth is within and behind them. And his whole being is enwrapped in the thought of this wonder.

Then gradually he begins to sense the profound wisdom of the old saying that the entire universe is a phenomenon and therefore illusory, but illusory only because we do not understand it aright. It does not mean that the universe does not exist. That is absurd and a wrong construction. He realizes that we do not understand it aright, that we must see behind and within. The visible should portray the invisible, the effect should teach us the underlying causes. In this phase he begins to sense his oneness — and this is the finest part of the second phase of the psychological unveiling of this system of training which the Theosophist undergoes and loves so well — he begins to sense his true oneness with all that is, for he realizes that, as physical man, he is but a phenomenon, an effect; that he is in fact the product of secret and invisible causes; that behind the phenomenon of the physical man, is the human spiritual noumenon. And he grows very reverent and a great sense of sympathetic beauty enters into his heart because he realizes that he is but one of all beings and entities and creatures which infill the universe. And he begins to sense from this moment that ethics are no mere human convention; morals are rooted in the very fabric and stuff of universal nature herself. He feels immensely his oneness with all that is. “I and my Father are One.”

And this leads to the third step of psychological opening, and in this third step he realizes the wonderful paradox of all that he knew before in the two earlier states. In this third step he learns that inwards and upwards, expansively upwards, yet ever inwards, the mountains after all are the real, and the waters are after all real in a certain wondrous sense, for illusory though they may be to our relatively imperfectly evolved human understanding, nevertheless it is fundamental reality which has produced them forth, just as we as phenomena are brought forth.

So then we see at one and the same time that the only reality is the divine, and yet that this divine because it is the utterly real, makes real in a certain sense even the illusory appearance of cosmic phenomena. And applying this to ourselves, we sense that the only real part of man is the divine within him; and yet precisely because this divine is reality, that very physical phenomenon which we call the physical man is in a certain marvelous sense real also. We have come back, the circle has re-entered itself. We come back to the point of starting. First, there were just mountains and waters which were the only real things; and then the mountains and waters were seen to be but the garments, the clothing of secret, invisible, realities; and then the next step brought us to the realization that precisely because these are real things they could not produce essential unrealities; so that the very mountains and waters, strange paradox, are both real and unreal. Happy the man who can understand this third step.

The key to this understanding is another thought which I will again take from Dhyāni-Buddhism, because it is fairly well known in the West mainly through the Zen Buddhist writings of Professor Suzuki of Japan (from whom, by the way, I did not take this extract). This is the Zen thought. Hearken carefully, please, because the significance is so slippery. “In the wind of the mountains and the sun of the lowlands, in the fall of night and the mists of dawn, it is cried aloud That alone was, is, abides.”

The whole universe is That, and all its phenomena are the productions of divine noumena, or divine thought; so that all are essentially unified in a divine oneness. In a rather pragmatist way we can bring down this thought and say that all men are brothers, that every one is his brother's keeper. You see the path of conduct? Any violation of this path, means setting yourself in opposition to all universal nature herself.

There is a way to peace and happiness and wisdom and power. For once a man realizes that he is one with Nature, and Nature is one with him, his consciousness becomes, vibratorily speaking, co-rhythmic with the pulsings of the cosmic heart; and that is why the great sages and seers can work marvels in the world: heal and raise; retain consciousness after death; transport the thinking ego to distant fields and be there in self-conscious thought and see all that passes around them; and many things more. For the Universe and we are one. There is but one life and this life is also cosmic thought.
