

## *Meditation: Training the Will*

**T**HE TRAINING OF THE WILL still languishes for the most part among humanity. The training of the mind is dilettante. The training of the feelings is chaotic. The training of the will is quite primitive. Every book in which one hopes to find something about this subject proves this.

And yet the increasing number of cases of sickness of the will—weakness of will, want of resolve, feeble vacillation—indicate that something must be done.

We must entirely reject all methods which approach this evil in too external a way. One can work upon the will by asceticism, by breathing exercises, and also by taking certain medicines. These can be a support to the organic foundations

which is not quite healthy and which threatens a relapse. It was otherwise in earlier ages when the human ego was still only little developed. Today the only safe renunciation is that which the ego renews at every moment out of its free insight. Such a renunciation is enormously refreshing for the life of the will.

We must also reject such training of the will as is offered us in the jesuitical and similar exercises. It is not denied that they school and strengthen the will in a high degree. They break self-will. But they also break a man's own will. This is quite understandable because of the age in which they arose, and because of the object they were intended to serve. But they have no regard for the growing ego and its individual possibilities and tasks.

***Jesuitical and similar exercises develop the power of the will formally to a high degree, but at the price of having no free ego to use this will. They put man into a uniform. But nothing is more apt to lead humanity away from its goal than a spiritual uniform.***

of the life of our will. But it is in accordance with the spirit of our time that the will should be built up out of the spiritual centre of the human being, out of the ego. Only so is it fully healthy and enduringly strong. It is certainly a help towards this if one freely gives up certain enjoyments. One will indeed notice how this concentrates and confirms one's will. But it must be a free renunciation, which has something of royalty in it, which *can* act at any moment, but *will* not, out of the nature of the spirit. Violence and rules from without easily bring about a damming-up of the will

They have no consideration for the ripening freedom in humanity. They do not see the royalty of a will which works out of an ego. So they develop, indeed, the power of the will formally to a high degree, but at the price of having no free ego to use this will. They put the man into a uniform. In this uniform he may feel his self to be strong, and believe himself to be something more than he really is. But nothing is more apt to lead humanity away from its goal than a spiritual uniform, at least in our age.

In the exercises of the Jesuits, occult experiences of humanity are at work still with a thousand year-old power, but they work upon an age that requires something different. They maintain the Middle

*This is the 15th in a series of articles taken from Friedrich Rittelmeyer's Meditation, Guidance of the Inner Life, published by Floris Books, Edinburgh. Reprinted with permission.*

Ages among us, even when through their pact with Modernism they fascinate many people. Besides much else which might be said about them—that they proclaim Jesus the earthly king instead of Christ as Lord of the higher ego, that they overwhelm men with a whole system of dogma from the past, that they plant much egoism and materialism—this crippling of the free ego, out of which alone the will may break forth, is decisive for us. If today we bring to men new exercises for the will, much greater care must be taken for the individual value of each ego. Otherwise there arises a powerful aggregate of will which can be guided by some power or other, but not the fullness of the Godhead which reveals itself in personalities whose egos are free. The dangers which are on this path must be overcome.

The third method, about which we shall not speak particularly here, is sport. One must indeed make much greater distinctions between sport and sport, than the layman thinks, who sees all kinds of sports represented in the Olympic Games of the present day. And nobody without bias can deny that there are exercises in sport which give beneficial training in self-restraint and self-esteem, which draw forth from the will power, swiftness, activity, endurance. That all this does not lead further than a certain restricted increase of bodily soundness, and of general self-control, can be clearly seen from the way in which those who are great in sport mostly disappear from notice in their daily occupations, without doing anything of importance in them. At the same time we are today inclined to under-estimate the less favorable aspects of the practice of sport, ambition, sensationalism, record-seeking, externality, unspirituality. The best that sport as it is practiced today gives to the soul is the general training of humanity in good behavior towards opponents, in self-restraint in the application of rules laid down, in respect for others in the battle of life. With regard to the practice of sport as it comes from the West, it would be necessary for ...[a person] not simply to imitate it shamefacedly, but to think out the problem for himself and to place sport in its right place in human development. Then one would be able to discuss in another atmosphere how the attaining of

a bodily goal gives firmness to the human will, because it sees with its own eyes what has been accomplished; how bodily tension and strengthening lay other foundations for the life of the will.

What we are here striving after is a training of the will from within. The following is recommended as a simple exercise: Let one undertake to do something special tomorrow, something not so closely connected with the events of the day, but willed out of an entirely free will; e.g., tomorrow evening at seven o'clock I shall take a book from my book-strewn writing table and put it in its place on the bookshelf. It may be also something apparently foolish; e.g., this evening at seven o'clock I shall stretch my arm out of the window. Such a meaningless action can be of this advantage: that no force from without, not even through the reason, will be exercised upon the action, but the whole will proceed from entirely free will. One will notice how through such easy exercises, when one succeeds in letting them come forth out of the unconscious at the right hour, one comes to experience the royal strength of the will. And presages of the far future of humanity may play around such a small experience.

...[T]he bad habit of being unable to find things one has put away, cannot be combated by putting them regularly into the same place, but by exactly the reverse means, namely, by putting them consciously always in different places, and trying to remember where it is that they are placed. There is no doubt that in a psychiatry of the future such simple methods will reveal a much more far-reaching action for good than one credits them with today.

Here we are striving for something else. And it is good if we first place before our souls the different kinds of will. There is a strong will that can press through with force against resistance, but is easily crippled, and there is a long will—the expression is Nietzsche's—which pursues its object over long spaces of time and grows stronger through contrary circumstances.

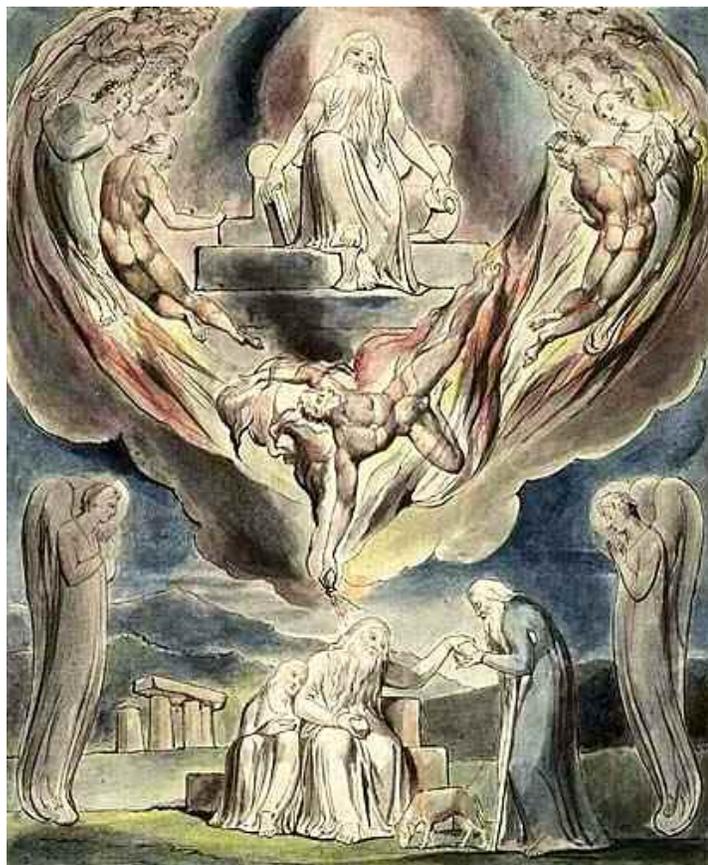
There is a flexible will which adapts itself elastically to varied circumstances, and there is a rigid will which has no capability for changing its methods. There is a conscious will which lives in the clear light of knowledge, and there is an uncon-

scious will of which we ourselves know nothing, although it governs our actions. There is the will of custom which works from taught or inherited complexes of the soul, and there is the will of opposition, which always wants something other than what is usual. There is the community will which is present in the individual with great force when it is shared with others, and there is the solitary will which loses pleasure in itself when another agrees with it. There is the direct will which strives towards its goal by the straightest path, and there is a crooked will which tries to reach its resolve by by-paths. There is the will of the outward world which never thinks that there is anything to be gained by inward conquest, and there is the will of the world within which prefers to leave all things outward as they were, so that it may strive towards its inward goal. Much could be said about all these. Our eyes must first be opened to all that exists in this sphere. Then we can better see into ourselves. The danger of the will is that it should become unspiritual, that it should continue to work in its own strength, even when the opinions from which it springs need to be changed.

The will is also always unspiritual when it is not upborne by a deep insight. Especially unspiritual are the two errors in which we most often find the will; that it is materialistic or egotistic, or both. In the first case it lays too much emphasis upon what is earthly in the universe, in the second case it emphasizes too much the individual ego. Here again are the Ahrimanic and the Luciferic errors which we have found everywhere.<sup>†</sup> The ideal is a strong and long will which is every moment at the service of man, and which, while flexible to every condition, remains constantly set towards the highest aim.

We gain it when we consciously take into consideration the super-human powers of the adversary, when, over against them, we take Christ's goal into our wills, when we look upon the example of Christ. And so we greatly fulfill the universal law, that the will should grow by great aims, by

<sup>†</sup> See prior issues of the Rays, and further on in this article, for a fuller discussion of the polarity of these spirit-powers and how they manifest in human behavior and consciousness.



Watercolor, black ink, and graphite on cream laid paper, 1821, 27.1 cm x 22.7 cm, actual. William Blake (1759-1827). Bequest of Grenville L. Winthrop. Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University Museums, Cambridge, MA

***Then went Satan forth from the presence of the Lord***

*He who has recognized evil in all its opposition to the divine has known God. Evil is the power which exists so that good may come.*

great examples, by great opposition.

The strongest power of the adversary is called among men "evil." But one looks at "sin" in Christendom today almost exclusively from the point of view of forgiveness. However true that which is said about it may be, there is yet a conception of evil in which are revealed the ultimate heights and depths of Christianity. By it one recognizes evil to be the power which exists so that good may come. Where there is no evil, there is in the strictest sense no good. Evil must grow to its entire greatness and terror, so that good may through them raise itself to complete power and greatness. If one can inwardly and deliberately oppose to evil the power of good, then it is possible to transform evil. And then the force of opposition is transformed into so much the greater force of divine goodness. He who has recognized evil in all its opposition to the divine has known God

most deeply. He who has experienced evil in its furthest distance from God, best knows what love is. In him, who has borne within himself the full force of evil's rebellious opposition, undreamed-of powers of doing good can be released. Thus evil in the strictest sense acts in the development of man's mind, feelings and will.

The apostle Paul was often upon the track of such thoughts. He has dismissed questions which arise from them in the words, "Shall we then say (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say), let us do evil that good may come? whose damnation is just." (Rom. 3:8). His final decision is "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." (Rom. 12:21) Paul could come to such thoughts only through that which he saw in Christ: the superiority of good to evil, the ever mightier revelation of good by evil, the conquest of evil by good; for example, in the soul of Judas, and in the soul of Paul himself.

It was the Manichees, who, in connection with all that was pictured in the Persian religion as the fight of the light against the darkness, formed this sublime conception of evil, and so prepared for man a far future in which such a Christianity would some day struggle into being. According to Rudolf Steiner this will be based upon the foundations which the being of the Russian people offers to such a Christianity.

But already we have reached the time when there are people who look at the world of evil in such a grandly spiritual way, and who regard it not merely as that which ought not to be, not merely as that which must be forgiven, but as a world in which is buried an immeasurable fullness of deep knowledge of God, of transcendent love of God and of heroic service for God. For this is required a fearless glance which looks right into the eyes of evil in its ultimate frightfulness; a strong confidence, firmly based upon the superiority of good over evil; a heroic resolve, which, in the face of the wickednesses of the world, asks not only, like past ages, for a theodicy, a vindication of God's justice, but itself takes in hand the vindication of God and accomplishes it through its own acts, by bringing good out of evil. Such people, when they are brought within the sphere of evil, find themselves

exactly in the right place. They know that it is just there that strong warriors for the good are needed. They do not long for a world of outward peace and quiet happiness so long as humanity is as it is. They shape their own actions, even when not much result can be observed, as a cooperation with the divine conquest of evil.

The basic perception of Rudolf Steiner...is here illuminatingly helpful—that the might of the adversary of the world's evolving consists in two aberrations: On the one side the power which shuts men up in egoism, and, even in the form of a higher spirituality, makes him strive after his personal well-being; and on the other side, the power which draws man towards what is earthly, and holds him a prisoner in the earthly being with its heaviness and mental darkness.

These are the two powers which in the New Testament are clearly distinguished as being the tempter (*diabolis*) and the prince of this world (*satanas*). The more clearly a man sees these two basic powers, and knows them through and through, through their outward changes of dress and manifold disguises, the more clearly he feels himself to be in the world's service as a warrior for God. Such knowledge has nothing to do with ghostly superstition about the devil; it is an awakening to the world's background. One fights for man and for the earth "with principalities and powers," no longer "with flesh and blood." One knows that great wakefulness is required in the face of these powers. One feels that the victory over them is within us, that it is won decisively through Christ.

The fight of which we speak demands the highest heroism of which we as men are capable. If we seek for a picture for meditation by which we may bring it to life, we can, perhaps, at first, find nothing in the New Testament which is quite suitable for us. We may think of the story of the Temptation. But because evil meets us in men first, and not in spirits, because it comes to us in men, as our inner sickness, and not, or not so much, as a conscious resistance, because men have rather fallen before evil than conspired with it, therefore our immediate task can be connected with the third "sign" of Christ in John's Gospel, with the healing of the impotent man. (John 5:1-16) (Continued) □