

The Way of Meditation

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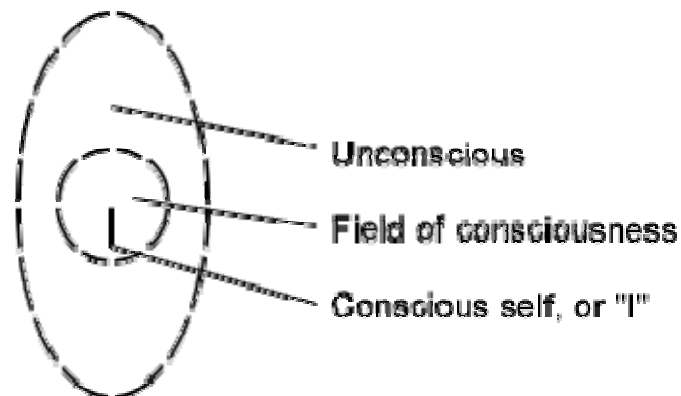
The Western world in the last few decades has shown a growing interest in meditation. There are two major reasons for this. First, there is the *inner* need. We are discovering that we are more than we seem to be. A whole part of our inner being is still unknown; why should we cut ourselves off from it? Just as we have begun to explore outer space, we have a need to explore our inner space. Also, as human beings we possess higher faculties and powers within ourselves, higher possibilities that we want to explore and use. We tend (generally speaking) to actualize ourselves as fully as possible; we have an inherent human need to “fulfill” ourselves. Through meditation we find a way to be more truly ourselves.

Second, there is a very real *outer* need for meditation in the world today. In view of our present international problems, difficult societal situations and the big questions to be solved in economic, political and other fields, it is quite clear that these cannot be dealt with adequately from the level of the rational mind only. Many of us begin to realize that we need to go beyond that; we need another dimension to our thinking in order to find the wisdom to solve these problems.

Before elaborating on meditation as a path to creating a more peaceful world, we must go a little further into investigating the inner need first.

Meditation: Toward More Complete “Being”

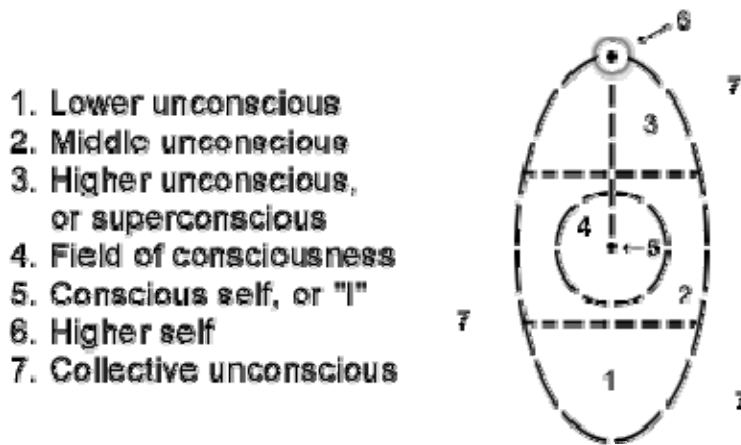
We have a tendency to think that we are no more than that which we are consciously aware of in our rational mind: our body, emotions and thought life. However, depth psychology (Freud and others) has made it clear that, as with an iceberg, the largest part of our nature – our unconscious – is invisible, yet it influences our acting and thinking in many ways, often more than we realize.



Our conscious being is embedded as it were in a much larger, unconscious part of our nature. This may reveal itself through the symbolic language of our dreams, for example, and through the often unexplained impressions and impulses that affect us from “inside.” The parts of ourselves that we deny or do not admit into our consciousness (because we fear them, or don’t know how to cope with them) are continuing their existence “invisibly” nevertheless. Thus what is drawn in the above diagram as a little dotted circle around the “I” can, through repression and a shutting off of oneself, easily become a solid line, blocking the harmonious communication with our deeper nature or with large parts of it. It should be stressed, however, that what is commonly repressed does not just concern our sex drives or our libido (as Freud emphasized) but can

also be our feelings (the feminine aspect, for example), our religious nature, our creative urges and our intuitions.

Roberto Assagioli, M.D., the father of Psychosynthesis, has made a helpful distinction between different levels or regions of the unconscious, as in the following diagram:



1. Lower unconscious
2. Middle unconscious
3. Higher unconscious, or superconscious
4. Field of consciousness
5. Conscious self, or "I"
6. Higher self
7. Collective unconscious

The *lower unconscious* is related to the functioning of our biological life; it contains our fundamental drives and primitive urges as well as many complexes, pathological urges, phobias, etc.; it is the source of our dreams and imaginations of an inferior kind.

The *middle unconscious*, directly surrounding our field of consciousness, consists of those psychological elements that are of the same kind as our daily awareness and can easily be recalled by our conscious mind. It is the inner region where our various experiences and thought activities are digested and assimilated.

The *higher unconscious* is the area where we receive our intuitions, inspirations, enlightenments and heroic impulses; it is the source of higher feelings, such as altruistic love, and genius. This region is sometimes called the “superconscious,” for it is felt to be “beyond” our conscious range, containing elements we have not yet fully and consciously mastered, but toward which we are growing and into which we seek to penetrate. Abraham Maslow refers to this area as “the farther reaches of human nature.” In terms of human evolution one could say the lower unconscious represents the past, the middle unconscious the present and the superconscious the future – that which is still to be.

High up in the region of the superconscious abides the higher Self. The dotted vertical line linking the personal self to this higher center symbolizes the way of ascent.

Glimpses of this area of the higher unconscious and of our true Self come to us usually only in “peak experiences” – those higher moments of realization, love, wisdom, strength, insight, beauty and creativity. A peak experience comes to us as a gift, a “grace.” However, there is a *path* upward, and the *outstanding way to deliberately communicate with and raise our consciousness into our higher nature is meditation.*

Meditation indeed is our “Jacob’s ladder,” the way by which to ascend to the world of meaning, and the approach to contact the higher, true Self or Soul. It makes it possible then to see ordinary life from the viewpoint of that Self, bathed in its light, with the beneficent and liberating effects this has to our insight, understanding and life. Meditation implies developing the mind in such a way that it opens to its higher dimension, which functions normally in these higher regions – the higher mind and intuition.

Meditation, in this sense, is more than just stilling the mind or finding inner peace, although these aspects are part of its practice. The first step is always right preparation: quieting the body, the emotions and the mind, and aligning them as far as possible with one’s inner being, the Self. Pure stillness and full presence to oneself! Then, through concentration on a well-chosen seed thought for example, the meditator gradually seeks to penetrate into the deeper meanings behind the words – first through reflective meditation, then “re-

ceptive” meditation and, ultimately, that deeper stage of contemplation, which essentially means viewing things from the angle of the true Self.

It is not possible on this “way upward” to climb immediately to the top of the mountain, but there are several plateaus in between from where we can have a wider view than from “below.” If a regular practice of meditation is established, more and more often such vistas give us the reward of new insights of “truth, goodness and beauty,” which can be carried back to daily life. The realization dawns that the closer we come to our true Self, the closer we are to all, for (as Maslow pointed out so clearly), in that point of being where we are most uniquely and fully ourselves, we know ourselves at the same time to be one with all others, and the dichotomy disappears. True *group consciousness* therefore is experienced on this level of the higher Self. It is from this center that the illusion of alienation and separation falls away and a more inclusive way of thinking and being begins to influence the life of the individual. The Self or Soul is also that “divine spark” in the human being that knows itself to be part of a greater Whole and can relate to the Divine.

It is not possible in the scope of this article to go further into detail about the practice of meditation, how to do it skillfully and avoid its pitfalls. There are training courses and books that can give guidance according to the background and motivation of each student. One such training program is offered by the School for Esoteric Studies. Some recommended books are: *From Intellect to Intuition* by Alice A. Bailey, *The Silent Path* by Michal J. Eastcott, and *Active Meditation, the Western Tradition* by Robert Leichtman, M.D. and Carl Japikse.

Two aspects of meditation, however, will be considered more closely here, because they are the consummating stages that give meditation meaning in creative living and bring it into the category of service to humanity. These stages are those of *illumination* and *precipitation*.

Illumination and Precipitation

What is meant by illumination? A few points could be made that might help to convey the idea, though words can only approximate the reality.

First, illumination occurs in *various degrees*. It not only refers to that enlightened state of being that may finally be achieved after a life of spiritual aspiration and struggle (such as when we speak of a person who is “illuminated”), but it also is that brief flash of light that may enter or pour into the mind during meditation and by which Reality is seen in true undistorted perspective. At such a moment it is as if the sun breaks through the fog and clear sight suddenly replaces the partial or distorted view.

Technically speaking, illumination is the *result of contact* with the higher Self or spiritual being, the Soul. The Soul is light; so as one approaches the Soul in meditation, there might come a flash of contact giving the experience of standing in a totally new light, different from that of intellect or of normal thinking.

This conscious contact with our true Self or transpersonal being can be developed through a regular practice of meditation. At first it may be rare, just a brief flash, but later on, as we progress on the path of meditation and consequent service, this contact may gradually become more frequent. It can then be “induced” and become more permanent.

Second, illumination can take place on *various levels* of our inner nature. It can occur in the emotional nature, which is our life of desire, feelings and aspiration, but it can also primarily affect our mental nature. The results of the two are different, and they can happen in combination too. If illumination takes place on the emotional level, it gives that wonderful experience described by many mystics as the transcendence of all desire, a surrender of all personal selfishness and of all personal ego. We are raised *inwardly* to a level where there is union with all. There is a realization of love and compassion. In mystical literature there is much testimony of a sense of exaltation, of mystical ecstasy. All this is the result of illumination on the level of the emotional life.

On the mental level illumination is realized as the irradiation of the mind, and this is happening increasingly through our modern meditation practices. It means an enlightenment of the intellectual nature and thinking, showing all previous thinking to be only preliminary and partial in comparison with the flood of

light coming in. It is here that there can be true intuition, seeing things in their wholeness, not limited by time and space. We perceive not in a logical or linear sequence as in ordinary thinking, but all at once, in a synthetic and comprehensive way.

It is impossible to describe fully what illumination is, but perhaps the more important question is: What does it lead to? What comes after? Is the receiving of light or illumination the final goal in meditation? We may also ask: What are we really meditating for? Is our aim to bathe in light for our own pleasure? Is it to find salvation? Is it to find a place where we would like to be eternally? Of course, through meditation we may feel better, we may feel “high,” we may stand in the light, but is this the final goal? To be sure, from the angle of the higher Self it is *not* the goal at all. It is not the end but only the beginning, because light is the normal state of the true Self or Soul, and illumination means that we are nearing the region where we are the true Self. Thus, in the light we begin to function as the Soul.

Of course, from the point of view of the “little” personal self, we may consider illumination as the end. It *is* the end in a very literal sense, because the personal self seems to be ended or transcended; it ceases to be the center of the universe. It gives way to another center where we are much more truly “ourselves.”

What comes next, after reaching – perhaps momentarily – that flash of light? We may remember that Buddha, after achieving illumination, went back to the world and gave out a new teaching. He served the world with the fruits of his illumination; he showed us the cause of suffering and he taught the noble eight-fold path. Another ancient example, Moses, went up the Mount of Sinai where he experienced the light, the countenance of God. However, he did not remain there in bliss, nor did he come back with empty hands to the people of Israel. Indeed he brought them the Ten Commandments, the laws for their social and spiritual life.

Thus today, all who have learned to work deliberately and knowingly toward the “light,” and who are beginning to contact their Souls, will face the question: How can we make use of what we have seen? How can it be made effective and practical to others?

This brings us to the next stage, which could be called the work of *precipitation*.

We find that what is realized “in the light” is of a different, subtler, nature than what is experienced in everyday life where things are more concrete and dense. Often it is very difficult to convey to the world of daily life what has been realized in that peak moment of light; people cannot understand. Many who have had great and revealing experiences of light have found themselves unable to express to others what they have seen. Some, then, may fall into the trap of isolating themselves with their experience, separating themselves within a little circle that they think is their new world. But such a reaction, of course, is of no practical value and will only create problems. In fact, it should be realized that one has *omitted* a stage of meditation, and the job has been left incomplete!

The difficulty of this stage, as we have seen, is that on that higher level we experience a different “wave length” in comparison to our ordinary way of thinking and our ordinary way of living and speaking to each other. It is as if we have contacted a high voltage power; while in our normal state of being we can only use a lower voltage electrical current. What is needed therefore is a transformation of the energy. We have to step it down from that high voltage to an understandable and practical lower voltage for use in ordinary life. We have to “bring it down” from the level of subtlety to the level of increased density. And for this process the word “precipitation” is a very apt word.

What has been seen in the light, in meditation, and in the peak moment of deep being, is in fact formless, intangible, abstract. What is needed is the added mental work of letting it precipitate into the alert, concrete mind as concepts and practical truths that can be used in daily life and in any field of service in which we find ourselves engaged.

This “downward approach” of seeking to “ground” and make of practical value the results of deeper insight reflects a major cultural-spiritual change at this time. Spiritual life during the past 1500 or 2000 years has emphasized first of all a rising upward, symbolized by the towering spires of our gothic cathedrals. “If you want freedom, ... flee the world and seek God,” as Guido Gezelle, a Flemish mystical poet, expressed it.

The emphasis, however, seems to be changing in this century to a more downward direction; rather than rising to heaven, there is a focus on bringing paradise *on Earth*. As a potent modern invocation has worded it: “Let Light and Love and Power restore the Plan *on Earth*.” While the past era has produced and strengthened the higher vision, the next stage and emphasis may well be to manifest that vision, here and now. “Bring down to Earth what you have seen in heaven” is very apt keynote for meditation today.

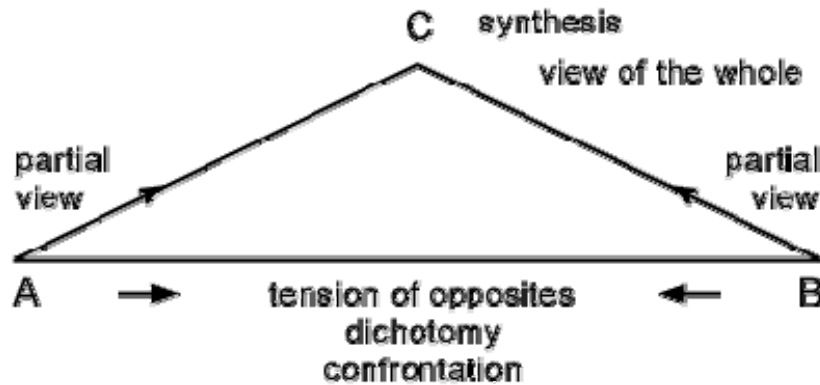
Also, for meditation to be a safe and psychologically healthy process, it is desirable that it be accompanied by a life of service. This will insure that the energies invoked through meditation will find an outlet, and over-stimulation or mental indigestion will be avoided. At the same time, the intention to serve provides the right motive for the practice of meditation. How rightly it has been said: “The way to the inner sanctum is the way of outer service.”

Meditation for the World We Live In

Let us consider the objective need for meditation in relation to our present world situation. The following examples illustrate what forms such meditation may take.

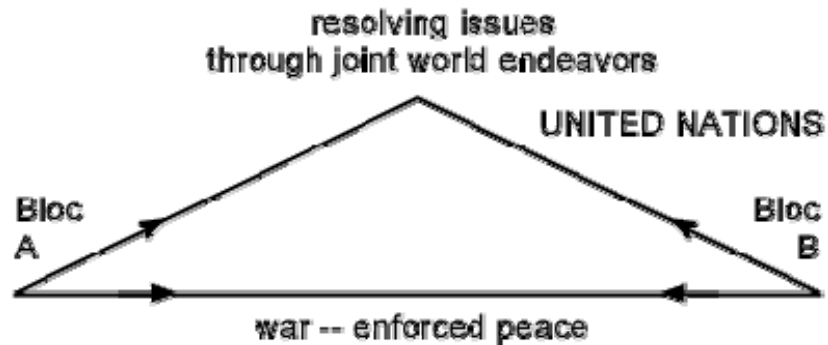
Meditation and the resolution of conflict. Our world today is in a state of flux. Great and necessary changes are taking place in response to new emerging realities. Accelerating technological development has brought to the foreground the actual global interdependence of humanity. However, the lagging development of moral vision and education in large parts of humanity has created enormous tensions and conflicts. These tensions are actually a healthy reaction, for they stimulate the attainment of greater consciousness and vision. Our natural longing for peace should not make us fall into the trap of merely wishing these conflicts away, seeking to restore the comfort of the status quo. Conflict, through all evolution, has been an impetus for change and growth.

A *spiritual approach* to the conflict (such as through meditation) accepts the fact of tension between polar opposites, but seeks to raise the level of conflict resolution to a point beyond them.



Instead of confrontation between the opposites (A and B) on their “horizontal” level, which usually would mean a seeking of mutual annihilation, there is a search for a higher, more inclusive viewpoint. This will imply, for instance, the renouncing of mere physical plane confrontation and focusing the consciousness on a more creative, mental level. Synthesis (C) – sought for often only under great pressure – is found by *rising* beyond old levels of thinking. It will be clear how *meditation* can be of help here in “holding the issue in the light.” If enough thinking people take an objective stand, and in the silence of their meditative thought bring the principles of the higher realm to bear upon the conflict, the greater vision will emerge with more strength and will ultimately prevail.

If we take as an example the conflict between two powerful blocs (A and B), dealing with the conflict on its outer material level alone (its horizontal disposition) means being preoccupied with arms versus disarmament, war versus enforced peace without resolving the basic conflict.



The cry for peace on this level is no more than a fearful cry to escape war. Meditation can bring in the higher vision needed to focus a *spiritual cry* in a demand for the fuller good of all. Such vision could imply, for example, finding a common human goal so inspiring that both might be able to meet on more creative levels, thus transmuting aggressive emotions and fear.

Gandhi, when asked by a Quaker about his view of the religious tensions in his country, indicated that the only way to prevent people from destroying each other is to have them cooperate toward a common social goal.

Perhaps one could say that *meditation* is the vertical dimension of *mediation*. The “way out” often proves to be the “way up.”

Meditation for the United Nations. The UN was founded on the basis of the belief that our only future is a united future. In the global age that is upon us, the need for global management of world affairs demands to be met, and in this respect the UN has already accomplished much of great value. The conflicts of interest between power blocs, however, threaten to destroy the UN and its vision, and hence the great need for those who think more inclusively to hold in the light the original purpose of the UN. This means, in fact, to meditate on it and on the underlying principle of cooperation and to strengthen and refine the thoughtform in which the UN as an entity expresses itself.

Such groups as Campaign for UN Reform, several UN associations, and Friends of the UN are addressing this need. The positive thoughts and meditations of millions of people who hold the idea of the UN close to the heart is invaluable to counterbalance the doubts and skepticism of those who are at present imprisoned in predominantly nationalistic, selfish thinking. The booklet *The Inner Life of the United Nations* [available from the School for Esoteric Studies] stresses this need in greater detail, pointing also to the evolutionary reasons for strengthening the idea of the UN.

Meditation Group for the New Age. Since 1960 people in many countries have carried forward a worldwide project of “unanimous and simultaneous” meditation under the above name. (Guidelines are available in several languages.) Participants seek to think through and “anchor” in the human consciousness some of the higher laws and principles that should govern our life in the coming era, i.e.: the law of right human relations, the principle of goodwill, the law of group endeavor, the principle of unanimity, the law of spiritual approach and the principle of essential divinity.

Instructions and practical outlines for meditation are written in Western psychological and easily understandable terms. The laws and principles are taken as themes for meditation. (See <https://meditationmount.org/>)

Peace, in the view of this group, is a *result* of bringing about right human relations, and for these to be created, *goodwill* is the essential principle by which it can be done. The sequence – goodwill, leading to right human relations, leading to peace – offers a sound psychological and creative approach for action. Goodwill has been called the *active principle of peace*.

Triangles. This worldwide activity has been in existence since 1938. Groups of three people (who are not necessarily in close physical contact) link up mentally with each other every day in a moment of quiet reflec-

tion, sending light and goodwill through their “triangle” into the world. They use *invocation* to spiritually empower this work. Since most members participate in more than one triangle, a network of light and goodwill is spreading over the globe, creating a “lighted” atmosphere that will support all other constructive efforts of world service.

Additional meditations could be listed, but the above few may suffice to illustrate how meditation can be a way of inner action to bring the potency of higher spiritual energies and values to bear upon world progress. It is an inner way of adding support to all constructive forces.

Reaction Against the Light

Finally, there is one point worth touching upon in connection with meditation. It will be clear that meditation is more than just a current vogue, more than a mere technique for feeling better. It is an undertaking of the “whole” person, and this has certain consequences that have to be faced. It may be found, for example, that the light one tries to bring through is not always received with gratitude or appreciated by everyone. Even offering new ideas that can potentially solve great problems may cause temporary resistance and antagonism in reactionary people, as many world servers have found. This is not new; Christ said that He did not come to bring peace, but the sword – the sword of the spirit.

Resistance may also be experienced when the field of application is not an outer field of service but our own individual lives. We can and should apply to ourselves what we see in the light. We can, in meditation, gain totally new knowledge about ourselves. We may also see, with totally new eyes, parts of ourselves that are hindrances to growth. The light may reveal to us not only our true essence, but also our weaknesses. This might cause rebellion and even fear in us. We fear the consequence of really having to work at these limitations, of transmuting them within the light, and of overcoming selfishness. But this is exactly the creative work we must perform on ourselves! It surely requires the courage to take risks and the persistence to follow through; these are the opposites of the love of comfort and safety. The latter can be a defense mechanism for those who fear growth. But as Krishnamurti once said, “Comfort and safety are the graveyards of the soul.”

The sublime (which is the region of the higher unconscious) can be threatening to those who fear to live in accordance with it. Repression of our higher nature may cause what Maslow interestingly called the “Jonah complex.” Jonah, in the Old Testament, received a prophetic vision urging him to give out a message to the people of Nineveh. But he was fearful and resistant, preferring to stay where he was. He refused the task and thus got into trouble! The Jonah complex, therefore, might well be the fate of those who prefer the comfort of letting things stand as they are instead of being true to their deeper selves.

The healthier reaction, however, is to work creatively with what is seen “in the light,” trying to make it useful and applicable to our field of service. This can give great inner joy. It is, in fact, participation in the great task of aiding evolution. It was Pierre Teilhard de Chardin who emphasized that only now in the history of humanity can we begin to cooperate consciously with the forces of evolution. We can consciously touch and mentally recognize some aspects of the divine Plan and pattern; then, in accordance with it, we can work creatively to manifest it. Ultimately, if there is a divine Plan for humanity, it will have to work out through humanity itself. And how could this be possible except through the use of our enlightened minds, loving hearts and firm wills? At this time, therefore, the processes of illumination and precipitation are of great significance. Through them we can aid in manifesting a more harmonious world, a more enlightened new age. Today, new qualities and new trends of life are only waiting to be precipitated.

For those who have their eyes open to the world problems of today, there is the impetus as well as the challenge to seek and precipitate the new ways and patterns of life.