

Meditation – Bringing in the New Aeon

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THE VIEWS OF THE PAST

Meditation has always had a religious purpose in one-way or another. Its practice has always been an integral part of the Asian religions and in many cases absolutely central. In the West, meditation, at least in the form of prayer or contemplation, has also been very important in the spiritual life of the adherents of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In recent years meditation has taken hold in much more secular ways as a form of deep relaxation with its resultant salutary effects upon one's health. This paper considers meditation in a very different way; as the way to accelerate the development of the human species.

If we consider meditation in this new light, it becomes apparent that there have been many misconceptions put forward about the true purpose of its practices. Usually these misconceptions take the form of cultural and religious bias. The aim of this paper is to consider meditation in a new light, a light that dispels the confusion and misunderstandings surrounding it. To help us in this endeavor we will invoke the instruction and expertise of a controversial and colorful but astute mystic Aleister Crowley (1875- 1947). It probably took such an irreverent character as he to strip off the pomp and ceremony to see what really was underneath. It was he who first gleaned its high purpose of ultimately transcending the religious and even philosophical bias that had accumulated around it from the various religious backgrounds in which it was taught and promoted.

While relying heavily upon Mr. Crowley's work, it will not be necessary to delve into all the mystical and magical avenues that his name

inevitably brings up. We do not need to talk about the *Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn* nor the fraternal order that readers may associate him with known as the *Ordo Templi Orientis* (O.T.O.) or even the mystical and magical order *Astron Argon* (A.:A.:) for that matter. Nor do we need to talk about the ever lovable but controversial *Beast* and *Babalon* drama or even much of the metaphysical theories and “way of life” known as *Thelema* – but a wee bit maybe. All we need is a little common sense and some clear vision. That requirement assumes an open mind. At least open enough to consider that the “road to Damascus” in the Near East is closer to the “Bodhi Tree” in the foothills of the Himalayas than previously thought. Mr. Crowley perceived the underlying identities of various mystical experiences through the lens of his own experience. These experiences gave him the insight to see the implications for human evolution. He also knew what wasn't needed anymore. The legacy he left was his attempt to prepare us for that coming new stage in human destiny.

There is little doubt that the world is on the verge of another great epoch in history. We can call it anything we want: the emerging Aquarian Age, a New Aeon, or even - the Apocalypse. To whatever we attribute the incredible changes as well as the increasing rate of change, the fact remains that the monumental transformation will be global like never seen before. Take for example the global social change being caused by the current technology of the Internet and other communication ability. We can now gather information about other cultures like never before; we can more easily converse with people of every religious and philosophical persuasion. And with the ever-increasing mobility of people to live in different lands, our very neighbors can be practicing Buddhists, Moslems, Hindus, Jews, pagans and so on. These factors must cause further blending of worldviews and the breakdown of traditional barriers - physical and mental - thus freeing us to see things from a much higher perspective. This situation then calls for the emergence of a new philosophical paradigm; one that not only encompasses but also surpasses the old ones which have lost much of their original luster and lure, not to mention their relevance.

The old ways of religious expression are breaking down everywhere. The evidence is in the continuing decline of membership within traditional religious organizations. We see this across the spectrum from Roman

Catholicism to Freemasonry. No doubt, some more fundamental types are growing, but like small pockets of nationalism, any breakdown in tradition will cause reactions from the extreme elements, however short-lived they may be. These institutions must understand the nature of this dissolution, align themselves with it and embrace the emerging paradigm or risk extinction. Crowley felt that some seers of old (e.g. St. John the Divine) saw this coming era with horror and considered it an apocalypse in their myopic visions. There are still some of those even today who instinctually fear the future with its inevitable changes. But the more enlightened see the coming age as a new era, one filled with promise and infinite possibilities.

The advance of science and technology alone will cause much of the cultural changes that will set the foundation for the new era. It has to be noticed that advances in transportation and communication are key areas specifically emphasized in all descriptions of the coming Aquarian Age. As this unfolds, the areas of human endeavor that have been culturally bound will begin to be transcended. One special area is the practice of meditation. Taken to its ultimate, meditation will unfold an indisputable realization of one's immortality. Despite the stark appearance of death, one will realize that one does not and cannot cease to exist. This will not be a religious conviction or a philosophical argument but a living reality of day-to-day awareness – or as Crowley wrote: a “consciousness of the continuity of existence”. It must be emphasized though that this particular realization is only one characteristic of this new stage in the evolution of consciousness. So with this new world that has begun to emerge, a new more expansive consciousness must emerge; indeed it is necessary. What has been called “meditation”, stripped of its past cultural and religious encumbrances, is the key that opens this possibility.

The underlying structure for consciousness that must emerge has to be able to allow an individual to not only cope with the ever-present consciousness of the eternal but also enable that person to thrive within its expanding implications. What this new model will be is still speculation but understanding how consciousness evolves points us in the right direction. One of the major seers of this century has undoubtedly been Aleister Crowley. He presented a theory of three broad stages of human religious development and, helpful or not, he used the 3 names of the Egyptian deity family for each stage: Isis, Osiris, and Horus. He felt that the primordial

religious consciousness of humankind developed beginning with the matriarchal (Isis, the Great Mother) pantheistic and “primitive” mode that eventually developed into the patriarchal (Osiris, the Great Father) theistic and institutional mode. Eventually, he theorizes, consciousness will or must grow out of the patriarchal into a new stage, the offspring of Osiris and Isis so to speak, for which he used the name of the child of Isis and Osiris: Horus. This new stage or New Aeon (as Crowley calls it) will not be a blending of the previous two but a new growth, one that surpasses the previous stages. The immediate and most obvious characteristic of this evolution of human spirituality will be the shift to individual responsibility in this dimension. One would conjecture that this paradigm shift would cause a breakdown of all religious institutions. This is not to say that this would invalidate all past religious works; indeed, there is much valuable information contained within them. It would be more a shift in focus or a shift in perspective. The value of these historical works would not be considered in their religious dimension, but in their pertinence to one’s endeavor in the evolution of consciousness.

There does seem to be a direct link between human stages of consciousness and religious expression. In the psychologist Erich Neumann’s valuable work: *The Origins and History of Consciousness*, he argues an almost parallel theory to Crowley. Stated simplistically, the earlier stages of religious behavior can be loosely grouped under the category of animistic and nature based religious beliefs and practices. He uses the term the “Great Mother” for this stage. Whether or not female deities are completely prominent is not relevant. We obviously cannot know the state of consciousness of the early humans but their everyday experience must have been experienced at least very close to the threshold of what modern psychology calls the subconscious or unconscious – thus the attribution of the Great Mother. The overwhelming notion is that the world is alive and permeated with Spirit and spirits of every kind. It is pantheism where there is really no distinction between God and the world. The idea is that religious expressions will correspond with the particular mental stage. The social relationships of tribe or clan are of utmost importance. Rituals and practices are immersions into nature and her cycles and processes. The aim is the ever-deepening identity and relationship with nature.

According to Neumann, we see humankind emerging out of this stage at some point in history. As larger civilizations grew, there gradually emerged another stage: what we call the "great religions" such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. The human relationship to God and nature changed dramatically. In extreme cases, God is actually seen as alien to this world; and, in others, God or Ultimate Reality is seen as outside of, different or at least separate from the world. And of course the religious practices followed suit. Now everyone is trying to get out of here. The religious practices become expressions of release, liberation, or awakening from this illusion, salvation, reunification and such concepts as heaven or of the "time to come".

And now, for some, that time has come. Humanity is on the threshold of the next stage in the evolution of consciousness.

THE VISION OF THE FUTURE

Aleister Crowley, in his dramatic way, articulated the emergence of this new aeon or stage in the development of humankind. He fancied himself to be the prophet of this new era – the Aeon of Horus. And, in his view, the conception of this child Horus, the New Aeon, took place in the womb of time in the Spring of 1904 with his writing of *Liber Al vel Legis* – a short treatise making the birth announcement. Whether or not that is the case, only time will tell, as it is said. I will point out that the theories of relativity emerged at that time and caused a paradigm shift in the scientific world that superseded Newtonian physics; humans took flight as well as a general acceleration of technological changes. But my purpose here is not to promulgate the "*law of Thelema*" as it is my contention that much of what passes as *Thelema* and the organizations founded to promote it still see the new aeon with old aeon eyes. As human consciousness becomes aware of its unique and immortal nature, a system will emerge that promotes human consciousness to encounter and embrace this new and profound reality that it had not previously known. This new system will absolutely transcend religion; it will not enable us to see all religions as one, as so many are now touting, it will enable us to see religions as now obsolete and even useless. For the normal mode of consciousness in the

New Aeon will be that of conscious immortality -making traditional religion irrelevant.

And for poor Mr. Crowley, his role was not only that of prophet but also that of midwife. A considerable amount of his life's work dealt with teaching aspirants to unfold awareness of that immortal self. A major part of that work involves deep meditation but not meditation to liberate us from this illusionary world or save us from this evil place, nor was it prayer to become conscious of or unify ourselves with some remote deity. No, unless what we mean is to liberate ourselves to enjoy this world and live more fully. Or if it is to liberate us to be who we are in truth to pursue our paths boldly down through the corridors of time exploring the infinite possibilities that lie before us.

The meditation techniques and other practices taught by Crowley will bring birth to a new era for humanity by evolving a new expanded consciousness in more and more people. As the numbers increase and the percentage of the population bearing this new banner expand, there will naturally occur vast changes in society. The old gods will die and be buried but they will not resurrect. Humanity will not need them anymore. These changes will not occur overnight. But they are inevitable. The old ways will not go down quietly and there will be much "wailing and gnashing of teeth." There is not much we can do about that. The task at hand is to produce these changes in oneself as soon as possible and to that we will now turn our attention.

THE UNIVERSAL MEANS OF ATTAINMENT

The core technique that Crowley taught consists of a completely straightforward approach to the system of Yoga derived from Patanjali's *Yoga-Sutras* (2nd-3rd century C.E.). Even though he also employed several Buddhist and other techniques as *techniques*, he did not teach Buddhist meditation per se, or Taoist, or Christian prayer. Crowley very much stresses the classic *eight limbs of yoga* as the best and most direct approach to the goal of yoga, from whatever background, in the endeavor to explore the capacity of the human mind. For Crowley these eight limbs or stages conveyed the practical essence of all systems of mystical

techniques. He felt that this was valid for all persons: "I say Hindustan, but I really mean anywhere on the earth; for research has shown that similar methods producing similar results are to be found in every country. The details vary, but the general structure is the same. Because all bodies, and so all minds, have identical Forms."¹ This is the beauty of the system of yoga that Crowley presents in his many works on mystical attainment. It is a system that can be applied in every circumstance that we are liable to find ourselves in the future. We do not need caves, ashrams, gurus, retreats, hidden masters or any such nonsense. What is needed is summed up by Crowley thus: "There is no sense in being frightened of Yoga, awed by Yoga, muddled and mystified by yoga, or enthusiastic over Yoga. If we are to make any progress in its study, we need clear heads and the impersonal scientific attitude."² Therefore, our task is to define meditation, understand its purpose, delineate its methods, know the signposts and bylines, and recognize the symptoms of its success.

Aleister Crowley defines meditation in the subtitle of his work on mysticism *Book 4: Part 7* as: "the Way of Attainment of Genius or godhead considered as a development of the human brain."³ In other words, meditation stimulates a development of the brain that Crowley refers to as "genius" and "godhead". The mind is trained to focus upon one mental event whether that is an act or a thought. Traditional practices have included prayers, *mantras*, *yantras*, and various religious objects and symbols. As the mind is not used to more than just a momentary session with any one mental object, it takes effort to hold thoughts or images for more than a few seconds. It takes will. The development of this "will" is tantamount to the successful outcome of this task. A question arises as to when do we make the transition from mere concentration to a state called meditation. In practice it really does not matter where we draw that line. There are, however, technical definitions that will be pointed out later.

One of the effects of the concentration practices is not only the development of the normal ability to change or maintain the focus of the mind at will but also the ability to reach mental states not commonly known and experienced. As we free or disengage awareness from the external sensuous objects (by following the eight limbs), our consciousness naturally shifts to more interior objects of consciousness. When the awareness frees up its attachment (Buddhist - *tanha*) its tendency is to slip

onto another; eventually it tends to shift inward upon more internal “objects of consciousness”. Like the process of sublimation and distillation, when the fixed is volatilized at a lower level it rises and reformulates at a higher level.

Reaching these higher levels of awareness at will is the purpose of meditation. It expands the possibilities of human progress and its fruit is the advancement of human knowledge.

Many interesting phenomena can occur to the “yogi” and some of these will be discussed later. The supreme purpose is to ever expand the horizon of the mind or to use other language, to “raise your consciousness”. From this vantage point, it is then possible to “see” clearer and understand more fully the deeper truths of life. Much like a person surrounded by dense thickets and fences, early experiences in meditation are like quick glimpses through a periscope. Finally one becomes elevated or “taken up” to such an “altitude” that it is possible to see far beyond one’s present set of circumstances. With this supreme vision comes such deep understanding that one knows from whence he came and where he will go; and go with an absolute certainty and freedom. As Aleister Crowley states: “Energy being increased, Nature will herself supply clarity: our vision is obscure only because our Energy is deficient.”⁴ This high calling is the purpose of our endeavor in meditation.

The method of yoga is encapsulated in the doctrine of the eight limbs. They are: *yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana*, and *samadhi*.

A full explanation of these eight aspects of the yogic discipline can be found in numerous books. Especially important to this discussion is Crowley’s little masterpiece *Eight Lectures on Yoga* and his earlier discussion of yoga in part one of *Book Four*. But I would also recommend reading one of the better translations of Patanjali’s *Yoga-Sutras*. Here, I will give just a quick overview of the first four (dealing basically with “external” concerns) with the aim of a more in depth discussion of the latter four (dealing with internal concerns). The headings of ‘*yama*’ and ‘*niyama*’ are usually discussed together. These initial two “limbs” are sometimes spoken of as the ethical preparation to the practice of yoga. Crowley translates

'*yama*' hesitantly as 'control'. It is usually translated as 'morality' but that misses the point. There are certain behaviors you should not do to support your practice of yoga – this is the practice of *yama*. There are a ton of them listed in the classical texts; but, they are all, in Crowley's view, geographically and culturally based and should be dispensed with completely. The aspirant must decide for oneself what interferes with their practices and stop or avoid them. It is really not that hard to determine. One can see that smoking three packs of cigarettes a day along with an hour of breathing exercises is counterproductive. It is impossible to slow the heart if one drinks several cups of coffee a day. Crowley's position is that the aspirant of yoga must cultivate the life that best suits his needs. As an athlete leads a life specially tailored to a chosen sport, one that entails special exercise, special foods, sleep, equipment and the avoidance of those things damaging to his or her performance -a life any normal person would balk at -so should the yogi lead such a compatible life for the demands of yoga.

The next limb *niyama* is translated by Crowley as “virtue”. He immediately bemoans that translation in frustration. Other writers have used the term “observances” as a translation. To me, it is more like the inner side of “*yama*”. The aspirant to yoga must have or cultivate the inner strength, commitment and courage to take on the discipline of yoga. A half-hearted practice of yoga will bring no results – at least, none of the goals. There are more subtle meanings that Crowley explains but it would be useless to delineate them here. In essence, in complying to these two limbs, the aspiring yogi must lead the life that promotes its practice, avoid those persons, places, things and situations that upset and disturb the body, emotions and mental state; and, as your yoga proceeds, cultivate with ever increasing sensitivity newer things that arise that will promote your work and remedy newer things that arise that now have become obstacles.

The practice of *asana* is the next limb. *Asana* is translated as “posture”. Notice I said posture and not postures. Basically, it is the chosen bodily position one adopts for the purpose of attempting the next limbs of yoga. This is not to be confused with the exercises and postures of hatha yoga called *asanas*. Crowley is only dealing with the practice of assuming one posture for the purpose of meditation. Again, one can consult any

number of books on the subject. There are a variety of meditation postures. Each different posture has its advantages and disadvantages not to mention those that have damn near mythological stature! The most common posture for Western practitioners is a simple seated posture without back support seen in many statues of ancient Egyptian pharaohs and deities.

The point is simply stated by Crowley: "Any posture will do."⁵ And that's that. I want to expand upon that a little. One has to be reasonable and thoughtful in your choice of a posture. I would advise selecting one that you can do almost anywhere at anytime. It also cannot be a "posture" of leaning back in your easy chair and going to sleep. On the other side of the spectrum it should not be some complicated advanced yoga posture that is nothing but painful. Once you are passed that hurdle you can proceed to serious practice. Now that you have decided on a particular form you must now make that form a habit. Everyday you assume that same form as long as possible (increasing the duration gradually) and at set times if possible (this is very helpful). The immediate push is to be able to assume that posture, without moving, for long periods of time. As one increases the duration, the numerous forces that sustain the body's posture come into awareness. This posture can, well, does become very painful. At first it is fine when you first assume it but later in the session it gets painful. An odd thing happens in continued practice: as soon as you assume the practice it is very painful! This phenomenon does not get any better and most people will quit. The overall goal is an experience that is really one of the signposts along the way. The goal of practicing *asana* can also be referred to by the term: *asana*: it is a distinct and profound release from this intense pain – which ends this very unpleasant characteristic of *asana* from then on. It happens only after prolong practice of the posture and it does not come easy.

There are some further comments of the technique I want to point out. If you read either of the two books of Crowley's mentioned above, you will get the notion that you pick a posture; you dare not move; in time no matter what it will become painful; you endure the pain until and beyond it becoming extreme; (one gains a hell of a lot of will power in the determination to continue); at some point the pain suddenly vanishes with the resulting release from the pain. This is all true. But it does not always

happen that dramatically and this particular process can be mitigated by the use of certain types of *mantra* and particular breathing practices where one gets so involved in the inner practice that one day you realize the posture is not even an issue anymore. As soon as one assumes the *asana* the awareness begins to withdraw from sensory stimuli, a distinct trance-like state occurs but where there is perfect clarity and one's attention is completely caught up in mental phenomena.

Regardless, this should not deter you from beginning the practice in this most basic and simple form. There is an amazing amount of self-realization that occurs in just this very basic practice of assuming a fixed position for lengthy but reasonable durations without the addition of other practices. I knew a yoga teacher that was emphatic that this practice alone causes a natural unfoldment leading to the highest states of consciousness.

The practice of *pranayama* is the next limb. *Pranayama* has been continuously translated as breath control. It is true but only half true. The word "prana" has been translated as "breath". And as seen above, "yama" means control; so, you can see the translation as meaning the control of breathing. But the teachers of yoga maintain that there is a subtle essence in the air that is ultimately extracted in these practices. I will not deal with that here. There are many *pranayama* practices taught in yoga. The basic ones cover the spectrum from simply watching the natural breathing process, using ratios such as breathing in and out to the same count (in 10 seconds – out 10 seconds), or, a 1:2 ratio (breathing in 7 seconds – breathing out 14 seconds), or, a 4:16:8 ratio (breathing in 4 seconds, holding the breath 16 seconds, breathing out 8 seconds). And there are practices where you utilize alternate nostrils in the same practices as above. It is always best to get instruction from someone that has had good experience in this practice. Breathing practices, done with calm and attentiveness, help to make one sensitive to and distinguish the subtle energies of the body in their circulation. By becoming conscious of this circulation one can gain some measure of control over them. Over time there are subtle purifying effects that occur as well but they need to be experienced in order to understand what is meant and this is when those arcane theories of *pranayama* are important.

Any basic book on hatha yoga will provide the beginning breathing exercises. It is prudent to be cautious in regards to breathing practices. Do not do these practices at the beginning for long periods of time. Certainly do not read Crowley's explanation and do what he says – he is speaking to experienced practitioners. In the beginning, these practices should not be done for more than a few minutes. Also, at the beginning, do not hold your breath except as directed in the basic and beginning practices in the beginning yoga books. Actually it is much better to just observe the breathing as you sit in *asana* and let it slow down naturally because this brings about a profound stillness that will cause a deeper withdrawal. The point here is that the control of *prana* is intricate to and associated with both breath and intention. Not only does *pranayama* produce physiological states conducive to meditative states it is also linked with control over the mental fluctuations as well. It is this aspect that we are immediately concerned with: the first inklings of mental control. This will lead us on our way to the next limb -*pratyahara*.

Like *asana*, the term *pratyahara* has been employed to mean both the process and the outcome. Because this power of the mind is not one that is familiar to everyday experience, it is not easy to define. Therefore, the definition varies somewhat by author. (It also varies because some authors give definitions of it but have never experienced it.) Some have defined it as complete sense- withdrawal from its objects – an image of a turtle pulling its head and limbs back into and closing its shell is often used to symbolize this state of consciousness. We could call it a consciously willed state of sensory deprivation. One of the earliest yogis to come to America, Paramahansa Yogananda, speaks of it simply as turning off the phone lines to your senses. What is happening is a much more complete withdrawal than the above experience of *asana*. Crowley explains it as: "...introspection, a sort of general examination of the contents of the mind which we wish to control..."⁶ Actually, under the circumstances this becomes the natural next step. On the surface his definition does not sound like it is anything special but in *Eight Lectures on Yoga* he defines introspection a little better: "...by introspection we mean the exploration of the sub-strata of the consciousness which are only revealed when we have progressed a certain distance, and become aware of conditions which are utterly foreign to normal intellectual conception."⁷

But Crowley can hardly speak of *pratyahara* without immediately going into the practice of the next limb - *dharana* - which can be translated as 'concentrating upon something' or to "focus the mind upon one thing". That is because the attempt to maintain concentration upon one mental object to the exclusion of everything else will initially cause mental disruptions. It is through witnessing these mental reactions that one begins to gain insight into its inner workings and understand the depth of its underlying structures. As practice and insight grow, a type of absorption into the practice occurs and the world of the "mind" becomes expanded and more profound than ever imagined. The key to this development is the practice of *dharana*.

Again, *dharana* is restraining the mind to hold just one object before it. (This could be as simple as visualizing a red triangle. Or one could use a technique called *trataka* like gazing at a still candle flame for a few minutes and then closing the eyes and concentrating on the afterimage that is produced.) There are many ways to practice *dharana* and not all are related to visual objects. Because consciousness is "conscious of an object" we can also look at it as restraining the mind from moving from one object to another, which is its natural inclination. In fact, we are initially producing a mental state of constant recall of our chosen object. Crowley considers *dharana* as meditation proper.⁸ In practicing *dharana*, Crowley advises keeping track of the interruptions in concentration by counting on a string of beads – a *mala*. The nature and number of the 'breaks' is a guideline for any progress in the practice. In speaking about one of the advanced stages (technically a break in the concentration) in the practice of *dharana*, Crowley compares it to that unnerving experience of waking up with momentary forgetfulness of where you are and what you are doing.

During the practice of *dharana* one can experience a somewhat corresponding lapse. Crowley states: "The similarity of these two things is rather significant. It suggests that what is really happening is that you are waking up from the sleep which men call waking, the sleep whose dreams are life."⁹ Continuous and considerable practice and effort brings one to the next stage. Aleister Crowley comments on the successful outcome: "In the course of our concentration we noticed that the contents of the mind at any moment consisted of two things, and no more: the Object, variable and the Subject, invariable, or apparently so. By success in *dharana* the object has

been made as invariable as the subject. Now the result of this is that the two become one."¹⁰ When this result is achieved the practice of *dharana* becomes the experience of *dhyana*. And *dhyana* is an ecstatic state. There are some yogis who only consider this state as true meditation – and all previous work only attempts.

THE UNIVERSAL ATTAINMENTS

With the advent of *dhyana* we have left method and have entered into the realm of result; and, the results are staggering. The initial shock from this experience is like a blast from heaven. We can speak of it as the ultimate wake up call. From that point on, the world is different. It is not that it has changed in substance but in quality. In a sense, the genie has left the bottle. Crowley explains: "...the conditions of thought, time, and space are abolished. It is impossible to explain what this really means, only experience can furnish you with apprehension."¹¹ But with repeated success in entering this state of consciousness one becomes completely liberated. Not liberated from this world but liberated to be in this world. In Crowley's words: "Now the man who has experienced any of the more intense forms of *dhyana* is thus liberated. The Universe is thus destroyed for him and he for it. His will can therefore go on its way unhampered."¹² I consider the key word here is "unhampered". From the earliest experiences of *dhyana* the person finds that he is liberated from all those things that held him back from being truly and fully himself. And this is just the beginning of its effects upon the psyche. It is here that we are getting a glimpse of the "New Aeon" and the quality of the people that will populate the New World. Obviously all the old ways will fall away naturally, as they should.

A further and very important development of *dhyana* is a distinct and profound encounter that Crowley, borrowing the terminology, calls the vision of *Vishnu-rupa-darshana* -the vision of the form of Vishnu (Vishnu is the Hindu god that incarnates into this world at propitious times). Actually this is a powerful and numinous encounter with what seems to be a divine "other" but seems so familiar as well. Explaining this, he writes: "A further development is the appearance of the Form which has been universally described as human; although the persons describing it proceed to add a

great number of details which are not human at all. This particular appearance is usually assumed to be 'God'."¹³

It is not God in the strict sense of the word but it is the most idealized conception of physical embodiment that is almost beyond imagination. And from this form emanates a wisdom that somehow registers within ones own consciousness as if it were speaking with you. One becomes so awestruck with wonder and overpowered with the sense of 'holiness' that you know with an interior certitude that you have forged a conscious link with the highest and inmost part of your being – one you never knew before but now know it always was. From that point on the individual has access to an expanded and profound part of his or her being and walks with a conviction and acts with a mission to manifest their personal contribution to this world. It is their Will, which they must do, and it is the only and complete law of their being.

Although it seems as if one could go no further down this path there are yet further visions and experiences. The next technical stage is called *Samadhi* – the highest state of consciousness according to Yoga. The distinctions between the limbs get increasingly blurred, and in one sense, increasingly irrelevant. In trying to find the demarcation between *dhyana* and *samadhi* Crowley explains: "There are many kinds of *samadhi*. Some authors consider *atmadarsana* (meaning: vision of the immortal self – writer's words), the Universe as a single phenomenon without conditions, to be the first real *samadhi*. If we accept this, we must relegate many less exalted states to the class of *dhyana*."¹⁴ Although these two states have resemblance, there does seem to be exceptional differences that were present to one who experiences them.

There is also an additional aspect regarding the importance of *samadhi* that Crowley points out when he states that: "*Dhyana* is an unbalanced or an impure approximation to *Samadhi*. Subject and object unite and disappear with ecstasy mounting to indifference, and so forth, but there is still a presentation of some kind in the new genus of consciousness."¹⁶ Crowley is depicting *samadhi* as a "new genus of consciousness" - as a type of consciousness that is distinct from and having different structural characteristics than that of what we normally experience. In other words, something new is emerging, is being born.

There is much more to discuss regarding the subject of *samadhi* but I feel it is pointless to go further here. More in depth analysis should be pursued in Crowley's works as well as other astute writers on yoga. My final points revert back to my initial statements regarding a different interpretation of the purpose of meditation; that it is the means to the next step in the evolution of consciousness.

UNIVERSAL INTERPRETATIONS OF THE ATTAINMENTS

Notice that Crowley uses the classification systems of Buddhism and Hinduism, Taoism and Kabbalah in his description of mystical states experienced in meditation. In one place he uses one system to describe a particular mental event or state and in another he uses a different paradigm. It is not the case that Crowley was confused about which system he was most attuned with; not at all, in describing these experiences he merely used whatever system best conveyed his description. He felt completely free to do so.

Being confined to one metaphysical system can be a limiting factor in spiritual awakening; one that Aleister Crowley recognized and tried to remedy. It has to be stated that the two books written by Aleister Crowley that I referred to in no way exhaust his work on the subject. There are many more meditations and practices that supplement the Work. And he wrote several commentaries so that you won't get lost along the Way.

Mr. Crowley is obviously uncomfortable with attributing philosophical certitude to even the highest states of consciousness, for example he states in one of his last writings: "... as has been constantly expressed in the mystical philosophies of the West; the only goal is 'Union with God.' Of course, we only use the word 'God' because we have been brought up in superstition, and the higher philosophers both in the East and in the West have preferred to speak of union with the Absolute. More superstitions!"¹⁷ And again in *Liber 0 vel Manus et Sagittae* he states: "By doing certain things certain results will follow; students are most earnestly warned against attributing objective reality or philosophical validity to any of them."¹⁸ The overall purpose of meditation in this new view is very different

than past traditions that have propounded its benefits. The meaning of its success is different as well.

Aleister Crowley states: "*To sum up, we assert a secret source of energy which explains the phenomenon of Genius. We do not believe in any supernatural explanations, but insist that this source may be reached by the following out of definite rules, the degree of success depending upon the capacity of the seeker and not upon the favor of any Divine Being.*"¹⁹ Here Crowley denies that the doctrine of grace has any relevance to the process of meditation or its ultimate goal. This is contrary to much of the Christian stance on prayer, meditation and contemplation: that meditation is a process of opening and accepting God in the context of the free-flow of grace. Obviously this would be contrary to seeing the process as one of the evolution of consciousness.

Crowley is teaching students to develop the ability to make profound changes in consciousness at will without falling into the pit of some absolute metaphysical housecoat. It might be comfortable to wear but it is not proper attire in the new world of high fashion. The world is full of infinite possibilities and much of what passes as philosophy and religion only obstructs the soul from the wise selection of that which would most nourish its growth.

A prophet does not hide his prophecy and Aleister Crowley was no exception. His work on yoga was clearly written to instruct everyone who is interested in the most efficient means to the attainment of these rarified states of consciousness. There are no secrets here and there are no blinds. Crowley was no mystery monger. As he basically said: "There are no secrets; I have published them all." and also in *Liber Collegii Sancti* where he delineates the tasks of the grades of attainment he states boldly that: "... mystery is the enemy of Truth." This is a far cry from many of the mystical and "arcane" groups who wallow in the mire of dangling "higher level secret teachings" to impress and entangle those who are so unfortunate to believe them. Crowley was very aware of the damage and mischief those kind cause. The only mysteries and secrets are those that cannot be communicated in human language. As in Freemasonry, it is unlawful to even presume to reveal any of the secrets. There are some who want to make Crowley's teachings into a religion.

I can do no better than quote the master himself: "Call it a new religion, then, if it so please your Gracious Majesty; but I confess that I fail to see what you will have gained by so doing, and I feel bound to add that you might easily cause a great deal of misunderstanding, and work a rather stupid kind of mischief."²⁰ Woe to those who do not heed these words.

What we have to understand is that we are at the next juncture in the evolution of human consciousness. Presently there are very few who have come into this New Aeon but in time those numbers will increase and increase dramatically. The effect upon this planet can only be guessed but anticipated with the highest expectations. You do not have to wait upon the grace of God or fulfill some exotic criteria of guru, priest or prophet. The onus clearly rests upon each individual and the infinite possibilities are there waiting for fulfillment. It is the destiny of humanity to walk on consciously into eternity and the time to start this has now come. This, the prophet informs us with his characteristic delight:

"The Quest of the Holy Grail, the Search for the Stone of the Philosophers - by whatever name we choose to call the Great Work - is therefore endless. Success only opens up new avenues of brilliant possibility. Yea, verily, and Amen! The task is tireless and its joys without bounds; for the whole Universe, and all that in it is, what is it but the infinite playground of the Crowned and Conquering Child, of the insatiable, the innocent, the ever-joying Heir of Space and Eternity, whose name is Man?"²¹

NOTES

¹ Aleister Crowley, *Eight Lectures on Yoga*, p. 8.

² Ibid., p. 10.

³ Aleister Crowley, *Book Four*, p. 5.

⁴ Aleister Crowley, *Little Essays Toward Truth*, p. 59.

⁵ Aleister Crowley, *Book Four*, p. 15.

⁶ Ibid., p. 24.

⁷ Crowley, *Eight Lectures on Yoga*. p. 48.

⁸ Ibid., p. 46

⁹ Crowley, *Book Four*. pp. 28-29.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 31.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 31.

¹² Ibid., p. 32.

¹³ Ibid., p. 31.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 37.

¹⁶ Crowley, *Eight Lectures in Yoga*. p. 47.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 11

¹⁸ Crowley, *Book Four.*, p. 613.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 14.

²⁰ Aleister Crowley, *Magick Without Tears*. p. 219.

²¹ Aleister Crowley, *Little Essays Toward Truth*. p. 17.

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