

What is Real I?

It is usually said in the System that we have no permanent or real 'I', we have to acquire it. Only at the level of Man No. 5 is there permanent 'I'. The alternative view, from Advaita, is that permanent 'I', the Param-Atman, already lives within us but its existence is veiled. In both cases the aim is to find the True Self; in both cases the methods to acquire or reveal the True Self are likely to be similar.

We have already used four terms for what we seek, so here we choose for simplicity to use the term 'Real I'. It is not that far away, according to Ouspensky, and one may sense it:

"You will feel after some time that there is someone in yourself you can trust." [*A Further Record*, 11.8.43]

Self-observation is the first necessary step in seeking 'Real I', but how may we go about it successfully?

Sri Nisargadatta says;

"We are slaves to what we do not know; of what we know we are masters. Whatever vice or weakness in ourselves we discover and understand its causes and workings, we overcome it by the very knowing; the unconscious dissolves when brought into the conscious. The dissolution of the unconscious releases energy; the mind feels adequate and becomes quiet.

Q. What is the use of a quiet mind?

A. When the mind is quiet, we come to know ourselves as the pure witness. We withdraw from experience and its experiencer and stand apart in pure awareness, which is between and beyond the two. The personality, based on self-identification, on imagining oneself to be something: 'I am this, I am that', continues, *but only as part of the objective world*. Its identification with the witness snaps."

(The objective world is the Reality which we do not know. The subjective world is the illusory world of our personal psychology.)

We all know the phrase, 'To be what we are we must come out of what we are not' — but perhaps we also have at some stage to come to *know* what we are not. We are constantly acting from this 'what we are not' without realizing it, but sometimes we become painfully aware of the inconsistencies, the 'vice and weakness'. If we realise we need not dwell upon these, merely observing them as they pass as part of the wonderful show, allowing the quiet mind to reflect them with humour and tolerance, then a new level of enquiry into 'What is Real I' becomes available. We need just to 'give ourselves a break', and into that break the light starts to shine.

And yet we seem curiously reluctant to take this gentle path. Mr Ouspensky used to tell a Russian story to make this point:

Passers-by were intrigued one day by seeing a man sitting by the roadside with tears streaming down his face, eating hot red chilli peppers. The more he ate the more he cried. In response to kind enquiries he managed, between sobs, to stammer out, 'I'm punishing the fool who bought these damned p-p-peppers.'

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If we remain identified with the subjective world, our inner and outer life, dividing it all up into 'good' and 'bad', we remain in ignorance, because ignorance is the 'substance' from which all our perception and conception is formed. Time and space themselves are functions of this ignorance—and without time and space what would be left of our deep conviction of the reality of our ordinary lives?

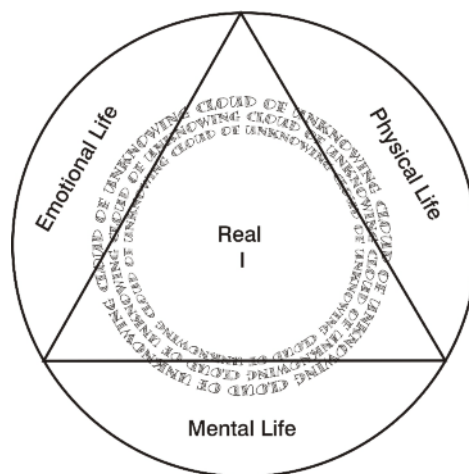
The process of enlightenment we are describing is not one of acquisition, for in our habitual state we can only *acquire* yet more ignorance; enlightenment arrives by giving up this ignorance, a process of giving up until into our awareness arises the one objective truth we perpetually ignore.

So one indication of the nature of Real I is that it is what remains when ignorance dissolves.

H.H. There is only one influence—that is Unity. If we consider that being destitute of certain things is the cause of trouble, then the logical concept is that possession of the thing must bring happiness. But you see that it does not. What is it that brings the trouble? Ignorance is the real trouble—it is not having lack of possessions, (inner or outer). Ignorance of one thing only—ignorance of Unity is the trouble.

We do not know what Param-Atman is, or what the Holy Man is saying, so we keep on dividing things in our own way. Division is the cause of all the trouble.

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There are two questions for each of us:

Are we looking for the right thing? Are we looking in the right place?
