

THE TWO PATHS

or

The Parting of the Ways

Private Lesson Given to His
Personal Pupils

by

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THE TWO PATHS, OR THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

For a time it is possible for one to tread both Paths: that is to say, for a considerable length of time, we see mankind alternating between the two extremes. It is seldom that any individual devotes all his energies to any particular tendency. We may say that the story of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza is expressed throughout all life. Don Quixote is the extreme idealist; he is the one who always is inspired by the ideal, while Sancho Panza is extremely practical, and so we all manifest these two tendencies, the practical and the ideal, and it is doubtful if there is a single individual in all life who mani-

feels any one tendency to the total exclusion of everything else.

It may be stated, also, that we represent selfishness and unselfishness in a mixed state. Very few people there are who are absolutely unselfish, and, fortunately, there are very few who are absolutely selfish.

Now, understand, in the Two Paths we do not deal with the more gross form of selfishness, with that which inspires one to seek only the material ends. No, no; on the contrary, by selfishness we mean that which inspires one to seek his own highest advantages spiritually, advantages without reference to how this course of procedure may affect humanity; without reference to the duties which he owes to God. It is spiritual selfishness in the very highest conception of the word that we mean when we speak of selfishness. We have the conception of one seeking to develop himself as the end of his entire life, as the one thing needful. Versus

devotion to the race spirit, we have one seeking liberation for himself rather than devoting his life to the service of humanity, and this human service must not be confounded with the idea of individual service. It is not the service of individuals, but rather of the Race Spirit, that we have to take into consideration; but, for a time, one is able to serve both ends: that is to say, he finds himself concerned for his own development, looking out for Number One in the highest spiritual sense of the term; conserving the end of his own illumination and also working for humanity, feeling toward the race spirit a great outflow of Love Divine and thus working for it at the same time that he is conserving his own best interests; and a man may go very far along the path before he realizes that these two mental attitudes are inconsistent. He may have gotten very high up while still believing that in following his own advancement, in conserving his own spiritual

illumination as the end of life, he is still consistently fulfilling his duty to the race spirit. In fact, there are very few persons upon the earth at the present time who are able to realize the absolute unselfishness which must manifest in all life. Perhaps there are not two hundred persons in the world today who are able to form an intellectual concept of the absolute unselfishness which the Path of Renunciation entails.

But there comes a time in the life of every aspirant for final emancipation when he comes to the Parting of the Ways, when he must decide between his own individual perfection, whatever it may be, and disinterested service to the race spirit. You must do it. Sooner or later, you come to the Parting of the Ways, to the place where you must raise yourself above this; where you must get out of the individual self; out of this illusion which you have called high, and stand for the advancement, for the glorification, of the great spirit of the universe—in other

words, where benevolence in the highest sense of the word must take the ascendancy over all self-seeking. Self-esteem is all right until the time comes when it must be laid aside; until that time when it is to be directed toward the only self, that Kosmic Spirit which is the self of all the selves. You come to the Parting of the Ways, you must decide the momentous question. Will you look at life from the point of view of how it affects you individually, or will you turn in the grandeur of conscious renunciation and ask, How can I conserve the Race Spirit?

That is the great lesson which you and I and every one else must learn. The Parting of the Ways means that throughout your life, throughout endless ages, you will seek self-advancement or else advancement of the race spirit, and it is so difficult for almost everyone to realize what this means because of the subtle sophistry with which humanity has glorified and idealized its selfishness. Who stands today as the recog-

nized philosopher? Herbert Spencer. And what is Herbert Spencer's philosophy but the glorification of selfishness? Happiness is the end of life according to Spencer, therefore, all things are right which conserve the happiness of yourself or of some one else, and, by the same reasoning, as the Irishman would say, all things are wrong which interfere with your individual happiness, or that of any one else. Spencer goes so far as to say that it is incredible that anything can be wrong that does not make mankind miserable, or that anything can be right that does not make it happy. The conception of renunciation is, to him, absurd except as it may be conducive to the individual happiness of some one, and so we are told that the real end of ethics is the greatest happiness to the greatest number. Poor, blind creatures! They fail to realize there is no such thing as happiness apart from misery; it is an illusion of the senses. Pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, happiness

and misery are merely so many aspects of the Law of Opposites, and if you were not miserable you would not be happy; if you were not sorrowful, you would not have joy; and were it not for pain, there would be no pleasure: and our poor, ignorant children fail to realize that pain is the great teacher. It is through pain that we are lifted up. No one ever rises above himself outside of agony, sorrow, misery. It is over our broken hearts that we rise above emotional feelings. Apotheosis is ever by way of the Cross. The man who surmises to reach liberation, to rise above himself save through pain, is deceived, blinded. Only through misery, only through that pain which racks every nerve of the soul, which tears our very entity to pieces, can we rise. Any philosophy founded upon pleasure instead of pain as the means of rising necessarily must go into the hell which it has dug for itself. If we would rise we must sacrifice ourselves.

The greatest possible indictment which can be brought against the silly, insane, idiotic age in which we live is the fact that it has come to the conclusion that the law of sacrifice is unnecessary. We will do away with all those things; we scorn the Cross; we scorn the misery. No, that is not necessary. Poor fools, failing to realize that it is only through the cross and the shame, only through the agony, that it is possible to realize the heights. Then, one must from choice turn to misery and pain when one comes to the Parting of the Ways; one must make pain and misery his pride; one must unite himself to the Cross, must wilfully stretch himself upon the ladder for ages, not for years—and why? Because it is only by bearing the burden of humanity, only by enduring the sorrows of endless ages that those miseries, those sorrows, may be crushed out, may cease to bear down all humanity that is unable to stand against them. You are strong—for what purpose? In order

that you may bear the sorrows of the weak, in order that you may bear the burdens which oppressed humanity is unable to bear. That is the one reason. Have you intelligence? Where did you get it? By reason of your individual achievements, because of your individual greatness, or was it not the heritage of nature? What has a man that he has not received? Therefore, if you have any intelligence, it is in order that you may use it for the illumination of the less intelligent. Have you genius? Have you art? It is that you may use them to uplift the race spirit, to elevate those manifestations of it who stand below you. Have you the wisdom of religion? Have you the spiritual touch? Has your life been touched with the live coal? Then it is in order that you exercise those powers to inspire the race spirit with the glow of the celestial fire and thus lift it up. You and I and every one else who has received the slightest touch of the apotheosis have received

it for no other purpose than that we may apotheosize the human race spirit. Away with this subtle sophistry, this absurd, ridiculous, idiotic stuff about self-realization, about every one seeking his own happiness! Away with this absurd nonsense about "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness" being the inalienable right! You and I and every one have just one right—the *right to serve*—and, if we exercise that, we shall not need to worry about these lesser rights. No one has a right to happiness. To say that we have a right to happiness is to say that misery is wrong. If there were no misery there would be no happiness. Here again we need to learn the great lesson that all these things are but manifestations of the pairs of opposites.

Again, have we a right to liberty? All talk about liberty is absurd. Who is free? That man who has emancipated himself from everything else will find he is a slave to the idea of liberty.

Liberty is to be found only in service, in obedience to the will of God, nowhere else.

Life—and what is life? Is it an individual, circumscribed life, a life humanly circumscribed, or is it the great kosmic spirit of life manifesting in all? If it is the latter, then you can not be deprived of it. You have life in proportion as you live; apart from this, what is life but an illusion? What does it amount to? What difference does it make? Life and death are but incidents in the great Kosmic process, but you come to the Parting of the Ways and you must decide one way or the other, and if you are actuated by this theory that all is for the purpose of procuring happiness, you will select your own way of ease or inclination rather than the one of serving humanity. Oh, my friends, how deceitful is this search for individual advancement!

What is individual advancement, anyhow? Is not that individual the most advanced who

is absolutely reconciled to the Divine Law, the one who stands separate and apart from all life except as it manifests the one life, the one who asks nothing but the privilege of serving the Absolute—is not that one expressing the true selfhood more than any one else? But, alas! humanity finds it very difficult to learn the real secret of existence, the real key to the mystery, and so one wants wealth. What does it amount to? Another wants pleasure, happiness, sensation. Happiness is always accompanied by misery; joy by sorrow; pleasure by pain. Another wants intellectual achievement and wants a brain with which he can speculate about this and that; and what has ever been achieved by this intellectual speculation? Nothing, absolutely nothing. Man spins his ropes of sand—and what is the result? Does he know any more about the problems of existence than he did before he began? What do they all amount to—the intellectual discoveries? Nothing, because

they deal with the realm of phenomena, not with the real things of life and existence. And so he goes on. Perhaps he wants powers. What does he want them for? What are they to be used for? Is it for their own sake? He fails to realize that the possession of powers brings responsibility; he fails to realize that powers are only to be exercised for the universal good, free from all selfishness, from all self-seeking. The one realization of truth for its own sake, the approaching to the Divine, or merging one's entity in the Divine Consciousness is something of which the intellectual seeker has no conception whatever.

My friends, what does it all amount to? What do all these powers amount to? There is but one thing of any importance; and that is the merging of the self into the non-self; the ego into the non-ego, thus transcending the limitations of our entity and realizing that Divine Consciousness which stands above all things.

Everything else is illusory, is of no consequence, has lost its value. What does it signify that we know this or that? Those things are all illusions. Unless one knows the source, the beginning, the first Monad, which is God, one knows nothing—and what does it all amount to? Nothing. A study of a saner knowledge is to be sought, not for one's self, but for the race spirit in order that we may lift it up; for, as a matter of fact, man knows nothing until he has learned his nonexistence, until he has learned the one great force, the one great truth which makes for humility. As long as one considers himself apart from others, apart from the race spirit, he has not learned the first lesson—the first real lesson, the identity of yourself. All that is the expression of life, and until you have learned that, rest assured, you have learned nothing. Hence, we may conclude that truth is to be found only through renunciation.

Now, in approaching the Parting of the Ways,

one must decide whether he is going to seek his own advancement without reference to the needs of humanity, without reference to the advancement of the race spirit, or whether he is going to seek the advancement of that race spirit without reference to his own advancement. He cannot compromise the matter any longer when he sees the real truth. He must renounce human entity, renounce his selfhood and work for the race spirit, or else he must renounce everything pertaining to the race spirit, all human endeavor, all effort for the betterment of the spirit, and, in lieu thereof, seek his own individual advancement, when he will get that which he seeks. Undoubtedly one can bring himself to liberation by self-seeking, and when he gets liberation he will then discover that he has but one mission in life—and that is to help—and he has given up all opportunity to help, the only thing worth while. Therefore, although one seeks and attains emancipation through his own efforts,

as the end of all endeavor, he will find that it does not satisfy, for the very sufficient reason that, in realizing this, he discovers that all his former endeavors were useless. The moment you reach liberation you lose yourself, and all interest in this self is lost, and you have a kosmical consciousness; in a way, a consciousness which unifies your self with all manifestations of the one self. Your self-consciousness is no longer individual but universal; you have the consciousness of the one self, and you are just as deeply interested in the manifestations of that self in other forms as you are in your own particular manifestation of it, because they are just as much yourself as is your lesser manifestation. What is the result? You see that all you have accomplished is of no particular importance to the self because that self takes no more interest in you than in anybody else, and you have that self-consciousness; hence you see that you have not achieved anything.

Therefore, the path of self-realization is folly for the simple reason that, when you have realized emancipation for yourself, you then have the same interest in the race spirit that you would have had at the Parting of the Ways had you chosen renunciation. You have had to go through all this seeking for your own realization in order to get the consciousness which one who chooses the path of renunciation gets at the Parting of the Ways. Therefore, the only sane course for you is to renounce this liberation, go back into bondage, and work for the race spirit—the only really sane course, but very few are able to do it.

It is not possible after having attained emancipation for many persons to go back into the life of service, but all effort to seek for happiness is wasted. There is no such thing, that is to say, apart from misery. And what is the course of wisdom? Seek that peace in which both pleasure and pain, happiness and misery,

joy and sorrow, heaven and hell are allies. The man or woman who wants to go to heaven has my heartfelt sympathy. I really sympathize with people who go to heaven more than I do with people who go to hell. What is heaven? Ask any person to tell you; he will invariably describe a place of sensuous pleasure. Why, the streets are paved with gold; all is harmony; everybody lives on milk and honey; flowers everywhere. Well, we can get milk and honey in Chicago; go to the Southern states, out in the country, and you can see flowers—plenty of them—most anywhere. Let them describe heaven any way they please, it is always in the terms of sensuous gratification; and so when they leave our physical plane their spirits are going to take just as much delight in sensuous pleasures as they do now. And what, to the average person, does Hell mean? Space and place where there is a very warm climate and the atmosphere permeated with sulphur—phys-

ical miseries, purely. Do these folks in telling you about hell ever remind you of the memory of the meanness you did? No, nothing mental there, nothing of that kind.

Now, let me tell you something. No person ever went to hell when he died unless he had been there at least ten or fifteen years while alive, and nobody ever went to heaven when he died unless he had been living there long enough to get well acquainted before he passed out of his body. It is a state; that perfect Peace of Nirvana is a higher heaven. Heaven and Hell merge in Nirvana.

The average person wants to go to heaven in order that he may have the society of God, in order that he may see God. Now, it may be that I am somewhat biased, but from my point of view it is much more blessed to work for God than it is to see Him. I would much rather love God than to have Him love me. Some folks think it is much better for God to

love them than for them to love God, but from my point of view, it is not. I fully believe it is much more blessed to give than to receive; it is more blessed to give to God than to have God give to you, particularly when you realize that all that you are giving or getting is His all the time, so you cannot even have the solace of patting yourself on the back, speaking about your great sacrifice, because it is His already. Therefore, let us realize that pleasure and pain are merely aspects of the one great vibratory law, and let us, in the light of this, consecrate all our sensations to the one service of getting nearer to the Absolute. The conquest of the Absolute is the only thing worth while in life. What does it amount to otherwise?

Life is for the purpose of finding the Absolute. How can we find the Absolute? By doing as nearly as we can what the Absolute would do under like circumstances. The conquest of the Absolute is successful only when we live

the absolute life, not otherwise. Then sacrifice is the law of life. Let the ignorant say what they will, no person ever realized anything except through renunciation of himself. Our sorrows, our pains, our miseries are but experiences which lift us higher. You doubtless have heard about people crying over "spilled milk." Well, if you would only realize it, all the tears we ever shed are over spilled milk. There is really nothing to worry about, to be miserable about.

The law is good, is just; not only just, but infinitely merciful. All that comes to us is for the purpose of lifting us higher, and yet there are men who are willing to impeach the justice of God, if a financial investment goes wrong; if they invest a sum of money in some business, or what they consider judicious rascality, expecting to beat some one else and thus enrich themselves, and their judgment happens to be a little wrong or something goes wrong with the market one way or the other, and so

they get beat instead of beating the others, why, God is a tyrant; he is impoverishing them. Such folks ought to be impoverished. The man who always is actuated by greed should have to eat crumbs from the gutter until he learns sense enough to see something higher than greed.

I have said on a number of occasions that the mother at no time has shown as much love as she did while spanking her children. In the same way, I maintain that nature never is so prodigal of her benefits, of her kindness, of her care for us as when she makes us suffer. It is only through great tribulation, through anguish of soul, that we are ever made free. What birth ever takes place without travail? And the new birth of the soul must be a millionfold more painful, must entail a millionfold more anguish, more suffering, than any physical birth—and remember, you give birth to this.

Away with this absurd nonsense that all is joy, all is happiness, if we just realize it! Of

course, all may be the means of peace. If we realize that pleasure and pain are of like value; if we maintain an attitude of absolute indifference to those things, then, indeed, shall we find them the means of full, complete satisfaction, when we ask for nothing, want nothing but to be permitted to serve. Service is the keynote of all existence. The whole universe is built upon the conception of service. Stop and consider a moment: The earth is the only inhabited body in the Universe. This talk about the inhabited worlds emanates from gentlemen who do not know anything about the nature of the kosmos. Life is separated slowly upon the earth. The seven planets fulfill their purpose in existence by giving to the earth certain elements, by stimulating the seven principles of existence here, so the sun and moon are for the purpose of giving electrical and magnetic forces to the earth; and the great twelve constellations exist solely for the purpose of throwing off, of giving

forth in emanations the diverse forces represented by the Twelve Signs of the Zodiac; and so we might go on; and we find the millions of stars in the universe are for the sole purpose of enabling the earth to fulfill its functions. And what is the function of the earth? The support of individual life. And so we find it giving up the mineral, nourishing the vegetable, the vegetable the animal, etc. Everything is for the purpose of serving something else.

Well, the most of us are willing to admit this, and so we come to the conclusion that everything in the universe is for the sake of man, and some of us get so high that we conclude all the other men are here for the sake of serving us, individually; but what are *we* for? Why—why do you ask such a question as that? I am not for anything; everything is for me. If you are not for anything, you are the most unimportant case in existence. If you do not exist for anything, and if everything exists for you,

you are the most miserable specimen that a just God ever made the mistake of permitting to exist. The balance must be found, and where? As everything in the universe exists for the service of man, man exists for service to the universe. As all things conspire to provide opportunity for man to express himself, that self must be expressed in the service of the one spirit which is back of everything. Everything in the universe serves the purpose of God. Man alone, in his arrogance, presumes to dispense with this sacred obligation and, while taking everything for himself, appropriating all the benefits of universal causation, absolutely refuses to make any return.

Of all the trifling, low down, dirty, abominable foolishness in the world, the worst is that of the man who wants everything for himself. Everything else exists for service.

What is the logical nature of man? Renunciation. Those who look upon renunciation as

something unnatural, something "out of joint," as it were, inconceivable, do not know what they are talking about. Why, man has been developed for the purpose of renunciation, and only the man who renounces has found himself. The man who refuses to renounce has not learned this lesson; he is in a childish state. When people are children they want everything. Manhood and womanhood are reached only when renunciation is definitely assumed. When we realize that life for the race spirit is the only life, and we separate ourselves from everything else and devote our energies first to God as the source, and, second, to the Kosmic race spirit as the manifestation, then indeed and in truth have we reached our majority, and never until then.

So, what does it matter what we suffer? Remember, all our sufferings but lift us higher, and it is on the corpse of our dead selves that we rise to higher things. Stones are in the path;

when you come that way, stumbling over them, just sit down on the nearest one and rest awhile, and then get up and go on. There is no other way. Humanity has been trying to find salvation without renunciation for six thousand years, and many a man has found damnation that way, and not one has found salvation and never will. The reason is obvious. The thing you are to be saved from is yourself; that is what you are to be saved from, and, of course, you cannot be saved from it without renouncing it. The worst, the most red-eyed, cloven-foot devil in the world is your own ego, and so you have got to get rid of it if you get away from the devil. People are afraid of the devil without realizing that he has always been in a comfortable house within their own souls. Don't you know you have a nice, well-furnished suite of rooms, prepared and offered to his Satanic majesty, within your own heart and always have had? Then, if you want to get rid of the

devil, get rid of yourself, and that can only be done by spending that self in service. His Satanic Majesty always is uncomfortable around anybody who is trying to serve God and humanity, and he always finds a most congenial environment in the neighborhood of a person who is looking out for the self, taking care of *Number One*. Rest assured you will be a hale fellow well met, a good fellow to the devil as long as you take care of Number One. When you get to looking after the race spirit, get to looking for opportunities for service, for renouncing your self, you will see he will not be comfortable there any longer.

Therefore, when we come to the Parting of the Ways, we must decide whether we are going to choose pleasure, satisfaction, sensation, or service; and when you choose service, remember its choosing means heartache, self-effacement, misery and sorrow for continual companions; and when you have chosen them, when you have

expressed them, behold! you will find to your inexplicable joy that pain is pleasant, misery is happiness, and sorrow is joyful. You cannot tell the difference because you are now neither one nor the other, and that state of perfect peace in which all sensations are merged, which lifts you up to the Absolute—in this field of service, this bitter-sweet peace, the quest for the Absolute will be found, for that is a state of consciousness—God Himself. The pleasure and pain, happiness, and misery, joy and sorrow in a perfect blend are the feelings of the Absolute God. Do you suppose He can really enjoy himself apart from sorrow while contemplating the folly of the human family, while watching it give way to such absolute selfishness? Are you so simple as to imagine that God can contemplate this without sorrow? Of course not! God cannot be happy when all the world is choosing happiness and finding misery, neither can you if you have your senses. Hence,

remember, pain is the life heritage of every one who finds the Absolute, because pain in a certain sense—this blending of pain and pleasure—is the consciousness of the Absolute. You will find the Absolute by becoming absolute and, therefore, you experience the same state of consciousness that the Absolute does.

At the Parting of the Ways you must choose renunciation because, so long as the self—the illusory self—predominates, so long as it subsists, realization of the Absolute is impossible. You cannot become the one self so long as you are a part of it, so long as you are merely an aspect, so long as the illusory self continues, the one self can not be realized. It is necessary to renounce this illusory self.

So what do we conclude? You will in the most perfect way accomplish your own development when you renounce yourself. In the final analysis, self-realization is through renunciation. Paradoxical as it may seem, you are achieving

most when you give up all. When you renounce everything and ask for nothing you are giving the most, because, as a matter of fact, we get only what we express. We become that. Hence, renounce all if you would have all. Of course, do not renounce in order to get, because then it will not be renunciation. But the Law of Compensation is so complete that it gives to us in proportion as we give. The Law of Sacrifice is the Law of Life.

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