

Two Basic steps, With A Right-Angle Turn Between Them (Or, Why You Can't Just March Up The Staircase Of Spiritual Accomplishment With Your Eyes Shut)

Drawing on the wisdom of the most complete and altogether cogent spiritual traditions, it must be recognized that the biophysical/organic model of mechanical transformation is in itself inadequate for authentic Realization. It constitutes a *step*; it is usually given as a preliminary step whereby the necessary mechanical modifications of the mind/body form may be made, enabling nonordinary availability of cognitive potentials through willed changes in the "static variable" (i.e. modification of the contributive patterns giving triangulation-values of the Coordinate Point, which sets typical limits for the framework of focus, sensory-motor orientations etc.). Therefore a certain minimum success in the biophysical/mechanical aspects of the Work, makes possible a magnification of the overall potential readily available for the Greater Step of *conscious* reorientation. Such conscious reorientation requires an intelligent inquiry of the being into fundamental values of existence; it may be summed in the *gyana* abstraction: "Who Am I?"

Since such a question—necessarily—has meaning for the ordinary state of mind as well, the mistake may easily be made that such inquiry can be successfully conducted at the normative level. That level, however, is chronically inadequate for the sustained degree of intensity or quotient of concentrative fixity needed to obtain the requisite *perdurable* value indicated by the place-of-honor assigned such Inquiry. The ordinary level of chronic physical focus globally presumed as "the real world", has already locked-in the limit of resolution for the complementary terms of cognition before the fact in order to *intensify* overall potential for the quotient of resolution, the contributive components of that lock-in must be modified.

This is the proper place for what we identify here as *the first* step: biophysical practices of a purely mechanical type such as exercises of breathing and concentration etc. In order for coordinates fixing the range of perception and cognition to shift so as to alter the potential quotient of resolution for cognitive faculties, the very rates and rhythms of thought to which those faculties are chronically coupled must be modified. This corresponds to the stage in Buddhism known as *absorption*, in Patanjali yogi as stilling the "modifications of the thinking principle", in Alchemy as "fixation of the volatile".

Such targeted *equilibration* in the fluxes of chronic thought-patterns (to which all forms of perception and cognition are mechanically adjusted) imparts the requisite *stilling* of the interior monologue enabling awareness to address the implicit question-of-being more directly, without discursive mediation of the ordinary conceptual processes. This is still an expression of the purely *mechanical* part of the practice, and buddhism (for instance) recognizes that a very conscious and volitional investigation of the total Ground must ultimately be conducted. This brings us to a less known or understood dimension of the Practice, one in which the tendency of the thinking process to persist is *allowed* and accommodated as legitimate self-endowed means of engaging the fundamental Inquiry.

Thus it is possible to have a clarified form of awareness and to engage the thinking faculty in ongoing Insight into the ultimate character of being; what's mandatory in relation to awareness *and* the thinking process is not some permanent "extinction" of the necessary modes of either, but a modification of the implicit "static variable" or fixed coordinate reference (and its related typology) setting the normative limit of Resolution for both.

Thus, "thinking" must continue in *accompaniment* of an intensified form of awareness, but through a medium of cognition coordinatively aligned in such a way as to furnish a denser/ richer field of potentiated Being-value.

In this way rhythms, rates and overall patterns of the thinking process become harmonized to a threshold degree of potential resolution, *below* the Initiatic minimum of which no such Insight-resolution may be accomplished (owing to the indigenous *turbidity* of the prevailing medium). In a true state of overall value-intensification induced through biophysical/ mechanical practices of the *first* step, thinking may take its point of departure from a critically different quality-of-being, as expression of the informing factor of *Identity* largely relieved of the discursive pattern-formations of preferential *identifying/identification*.

Free from serving strictly as a function of *identification*, thinking is allowed to serve the whole-being value of *Identity* more directly.

The very state in which thinking discharges, then necessarily returns a decisively different quality; rather than forming impressions restricted to flat, one-sided surface values parading linearly through the monologous circuit (for instance), the process of thinking now tends to exhibit a type of *translucency* whereby the obverse and complement of every polarized impression spontaneously gives itself to the overall item of cognition. Thinking then *thinks through* things rather than toward or on the surface of things. In this way awareness and volition are furnished an optimized medium for authentically-penetrating insight. (The domain of the *pun*, visual or verbal, gives light expression to the connotative bleed-through facility imparted by processes of cognitive intensification, and often laces even the casual communication of adepts as ajocular—if disconcerting—type of "zen-pointing". *Finnegans Wake* is a master's thesis on the genre, and characteristically assays to join that generator-of-groans to the most ecstatically comprehensive insight/overview on Being.)

Such insight comprises the distinct *second* step of spiritual development, a step which is necessarily discriminated from the mechanical approach of the first and proceeds by an altogether different means. Ordinarily the two steps are improperly telescoped into one, the second being confused with features of the first which *seem* manifestations of intensified awareness but are in fact contingent reflections of changed coordinates not necessarily allied to volitional value at all.