

Stepping Into The Dark

By William Meader

To walk the occult path is often a journey filled with uncertainty. In some sense, it is a choice akin to traveling in the darkness of night. Sometimes it's difficult to live a life where one is committed to the Hierarchy, while at the same time feeling ambivalent regarding what to do next in the service of the Plan. Comparatively, the everyday decisions seem to come much easier. Perhaps this is because these sorts of decisions have a greater degree of predictability to them. In any event, decisions that relate to modes of service are usually quite obscure and varied. The common pattern is to see many possible roads to travel and the challenge is to sort out the one path that is occultly the path to pursue.

Most of the optional paths provide a certain predictability to them. They represent avenues previously explored by others and are therefore well lit. Yet strangely, among the possible roads to travel, a route is sensed but cannot be seen. When casting an eye in such a direction, darkness engulfs the vision. It is a darkened gate, and is somehow frightening and enticing at the same time. One's first impulse is to disregard this darkened path in favor of any of the alternative paths, all of which are better lighted and easier to understand. For a while, the disciple may begin to pursue one of these alternative routes, in the belief that this is the occult direction s/he was meant to travel. Yet, even while traveling down this safer route, the memory of the darkened path not chosen lingers on, still beckoning him/her to travel its course.

Deep within us all is the knowledge that the occult path is always obscure and hidden from view. For darkness is truly the gate into Light. Admittedly, it sometimes seems impenetrable. To move toward it seems to

violate logic; a system of thought that works well in one's day-to-day affairs. It can be frightening in a variety of ways. Often, it will bring up fears of inadequacy, or concerns about one's ability to physically survive such an uncertain path. Still others may fear rejection from loved ones for going in such a direction. Something that, in their eyes, seems reckless and irresponsible. Yet the darkened gate continues to beckon. It is a mysterious something that is sensed, even though the rational mind continues to discredit it. The ability to sense this invitation is perhaps the most important thing to consider here. What is this sense? For the disciple, such an experience likely indicates that the light of the Spiritual Triad is breaking forth into his/her consciousness. It is buddhi that makes it possible to sense a hidden passage beyond the darkened gate, and atma provides the forward thrust toward it. This, while the personality lays trembling with fear.

It is often asked by people unfamiliar with occultism, why it is that the Path is unlit? The answer, of course, relates to occult fitness. For what is the occult path, but a movement back to the Source through the demonstration of that which has been learned? As difficult as it is for average humanity to grasp, true spiritual development must be demonstrated. It is to evidence that a level of consciousness has not only been achieved, but can also be held; it is to make visible that which had previously been viewed as theoretical and therefore invisible. This explains the necessity of occult blindness at certain points on the Path. The disciple has to be able to demonstrate that the lessons learned thus far have been properly assimilated. This, without the aid of light from above.

It is important that disciples grasp the dynamics of occult blindness. To understand it is to comprehend the rules of the road, so to speak. First, let us realize that occult blindness is brought about by the Soul itself. Why is this so? The answer to this question is best understood by observing the behavior of someone immediately after they have experienced their first glimpse of the egoic light from above. This experience is extremely exhilarating, and often results in a frenzied effort to reunite with the newly discovered inner light. It is this impetuosity that forces the Soul to impose occult blindness upon the hastening personality. The Soul seeks to infuse Itself within the personality. Yet, a persona that does not take the needed time to assimilate what it has been given is of no use to the Soul. In a sense, we can say that the Soul longs to establish a vertical relationship with the personality. But, such is not possible until the personality learns the lessons of horizontal living. It must demonstrate balance in its outer affairs. This it does by gradually understanding the nature of horizontal duality and to find the means to stabilize it. Short of this requirement, the Soul is unable to grant any further gifts of Light upon the eager personality. Verily, progress upon the Vertical Axis of Being can only occur through the perfection achieved on the Horizontal Axis of Living. This is a process governed by Law, and is therefore unwavering.

Sometimes what may seem to be an obstacle can later be interpreted quite differently. Nothing could support this idea more than in our consideration of occult blindness. Strangely, it is a blindness that can be viewed as a blessing of sorts. For just as physical blindness results in a heightening of the remaining senses, so too occult blindness forces the cultivation of one's intuition. When our traditional modes of assessing reality are temporarily arrested, the light of buddhi is more easily recognized. It is a sense that is extremely subtle, though undoubtedly ever-present. Through this imposed blindness, the

personality is forced to look more deeply to determine a higher truth and a direction to follow.

For the would-be-initiate, buddhi is the gift that occult blindness offers. This newly discovered sense helps the disciple to see that the darkened path is truly the upward Way. Admittedly, the accurate interpretation of this intuitional sense does take time to acquire. Nonetheless, with continued use, the disciple gradually develops trust in this higher sense. And, in this process s/he begins to realize that a new mode of seeing has been cultivated. Eventually this intuitive sight will become the primary method used for spiritual navigation. Such is the challenge, and the reward, of occult blindness.

In truth, occult blindness is nothing more than a veil, obstructing light. It is similar to shielding light from entering through a window. Do we not veil the window with a cover, then call it a blind? And though we darkened the room by way of this blind, we never really forget that behind it there is light. Is this idea not also true of one's relationship to the darkened gate? On purely mental and emotional levels, this obscure gate seems quite dark. The personality looks at it and is often left with a feeling of foreboding. Yet, even with this, our intuition still senses the Light beyond. It only requires that one be attentive to its message. Just as the window blind is a veil to the light, so also this darkened gate veils the Light of Divinity from human sight.

Intuition is the mysterious beacon mentioned earlier in this discussion. It draws the disciple toward the darkened path, encouraging him/her to step through the veil into the Light hidden on the other side. The personality trembles at such an act of daring and trust, but the Soul knows that there is nothing to fear. After passing onto this daring path, one can look back and see that the veil of darkness was truly a gift. For darkness forces us to listen to the intuition and trust in its guidance.

Up to this point, we have been discussing

this darkened path as a road leading to greater service. It involves the choices made in life and whether these choices further align one with the Hierarchy and the Plan. It has been suggested that as the disciple looks over his/her options, often the obscure path is the one that leads into greater participation in the work of the Hierarchy. This is particularly true if the disciple is also sensing that s/he is at a turning point in his/her development. The subject of occult blindness can also be discussed from the perspective of initiation. Regarding this, the Tibetan states, blindness is a prelude to initiation of no matter what degree (RI 197). From this statement it becomes obvious that occult blindness is a predictable experience as one nears an initiation. Presumably, this includes those many lesser initiations existing between each of the major initiations. It is important that disciples be reminded of this fact. If forgotten, the experience of this sightless condition may wrongly be interpreted as indicating failure. Instead, it is a clue that the disciple may be nearing a significant point of spiritual transition, and that an expansion of consciousness is at hand. It has been said that it is always darkest just before the dawn. Clearly, this idea has metaphoric value when trying to understand the darkened gate. Periodically, in the life of the occultist, a kind of darkness does enshroud him/her. This darkness is a form of blindness, preventing the disciple from seeing the upward Way. Interestingly, this blindness sets up the final challenge for the disciple as s/he nears the portal of initiation. If successful, entry through the portal is permitted, and an expansion of consciousness is the reward. In the case of the third initiation, it is the gift of intuitional sight. However, the use of the word gift is here woefully lacking. Traditionally such a word implies that something has been transferred from one to another. Yet such is not the case here. For what appears to be a gift is merely a thing one has always possessed. Verily, it is the Self giving unto Itself. The giver and the

receiver are but One.

For the occultist, the darkened gate is the path to be searched for and followed. However, this cannot be viewed in an absolute way. To do so spells sure danger to the disciple and, therefore, a statement of caution is worthy of note. It is extremely important that one realize that a perceived darkened path is not always the correct path. In fact, more often than not, there are at least two darkened avenues of travel to choose from. With two obscure paths, how does one choose? It is here where care must be followed. This is because one of the paths leads the disciple to the gate of initiation, while the other is a dangerous deception. One has behind its darkened veil the Light of Divinity, and the other, a chasm that awaits its next victim. The first indicates the right-hand path that leads to the Brotherhood of Light. The other, the left-hand path leading toward the Lodge of the Dark Brothers, the darkened gate of ill-intent.

The ability to differentiate these two paths may seem easy, but this is far from true. To begin, both paths are equally obscure. In addition, both somehow seem occultly inviting. Fortunately, these similarities can be differentiated by most occultists. The greatest danger relates to the apparent direction of each of these darkened paths. As is well-known, the right-hand path is conditioned by the spirit of inclusiveness, while the left-hand route is based on the illusion of separateness. This is where the great deception is to be found. For though the ill-intended path travels to the left, it does so only after having first veered to the right. In other words, at its entrance the left-hand path gives the false impression that it moves in the direction of the White Lodge. It can draw one in through the lure of hierarchical blessing, falsely proclaimed. It will summon the disciple to yield to a higher wisdom erroneously hidden beyond its entrance. It uses as its banner the cause of brotherly love--a standard quite opposite of its true intent. Indeed, the power of misdirection is its weapon of choice. Shortly

after the disciple has stepped through this deceptive gate, the path begins to shift to the left, and toward the Dark Brotherhood. Sadly, from this point onward, the disciple will have great difficulty in recognizing that s/he has been deceived. The leftward tendencies will affect the disciple, but only subtly at first. Ever so slowly, selfish motives will begin to condition his/her thoughts and actions. At the same time, the disciple learns how to conceal these selfish intentions by clothing them in a variety of altruistic disguises. A wolfwearing sheepskin clothing seems an appropriate description here. Tragically, this concealment is a form of self-deception. In short, the disciple's personality has fooled itself, while the Soul helplessly looks on.

The question still remains--how does the disciple tell the difference between these two darkened gates? How can the aspiring pilgrim avoid getting ensnared by the left-hand path? To be sure, the answer will not be found by simple observation of their appearance alone. Both are dimly lit and both have something compelling about them. In fact, the solution to this problem has very little to do with the study of the gates themselves. Instead, the means to choose the correct path can only be done through an internal analysis of oneself. The disciple has to look within and examine the nature of his/her reaction toward each of the darkened gates. S/he needs to truthfully sense what aspect of him/herself seems drawn to each of the two options. This is because each of the darkened gates will have a slightly different impact on one's bodies of manifestation.

The magnetic quality projected by the right-hand path is one experienced through the disciple's buddhic sense. Conversely, the left-hand path will tend to magnetically impact one's astral body. Usually it is here that the disciple's attraction to the ill-intended gate can be found. One gate, therefore, is sensed by the disciple's egoic nature, while the other appeals to his/her personality. At first glance, this distinction may seem easy to determine, but

this is simply not true. Remember always that astral perception is really a lower correspondent of buddhic perception. It can rightfully be said that one's astral nature is buddhi after being conditioned by desire. This is why recognizing the difference between buddhic and astral impressions is often so difficult. At their core they are essentially the same.

The ability to distinguish between buddhic and astral experiences is one of the greatest challenges facing most disciples. This is particularly true prior to the third initiation. The difference can be recognized by examining each response under the microscope of self-reference. If one is having a truly buddhi perception, it will be void of self-reference. A buddhic impression (via the causal body) is never self-referencing. Instead, it will give to the mind an image based on decentralized inclusiveness. On the other hand, astral experiences are self-referencing. This is the key to assessing which of the darkened gates truly leads toward the Hierarchy. Always the ill-intended entrance will appeal to the disciple's personality, and therefore it is self-referencing. Making this determination is by no means easy. For, just as the ill-intended gate creates the illusion of movement to the right prior to veering to the left, so too the personality can falsely convince itself that its only concern is for the welfare of the whole, and not of itself.

The importance of sensing the difference between the impulses of the Soul and those of the personality cannot be understated. Most of us feel these two forces interacting within us. At any given moment either the personality or the Soul seems to have the upper hand. Because of this, it is important that a deeper understanding of the dynamics of this process be discussed.

First, to understand personality, we must accept the fact that it is fundamentally self-absorbed and seeks to express its independence. Moments of independent personality expression exist, even for the soul-

infused disciple. Quite honestly, this phenomenon does not disappear until the stage of the Arhat has been reached. Prior to such time, independent personality assertion is ever possible. But what is it that triggers the personality to assert itself! Obviously, the answers to this question are many and varied. However, the most likely catalyst is fear. When the personality experiences fear, it perceives its own existence to be in jeopardy. As a act of self-preservation, it will then lift itself into a position of dominance over the Soul.

Having this in mind, let us examine how this relates to the choice of gates. When the disciple first encounters these two shrouded gates his/her personality will likely react with fear. This fearful response is triggered by the obscurity of the gates themselves. As a consequence, the personality will assert its authority by showing disregard, or even disdain, toward both darkened gates. In its eyes, both offer little predictability as to where they will lead. And, in most cases, the personality is quite uncomfortable with unpredictability, particularly where life-changing courses of action are concerned. It is a form of avoidance and can be a powerful personality defense. Certainly, many disciples will recognize this personality tendency within themselves. If the personality is able to completely free itself from Egoic control, then it will favor one of the well-lit paths available to it.

Remember, the lighted paths are always safer and more predictable. They represent directions in life that are sanctioned by society. This, in itself, is attractive to the personality, for its nature is to seek social acceptance and admiration. More often, however, the disciple's personality gains only partial freedom from the wishes of the Soul. The grip of the Soul upon the personality has been loosened but not severed. In this case, the personality has some decision-making power. Ironically, this situation can be more hazardous to the disciple than the scenario just described. Because the Soul's influence is still somewhat present, the

disciple is more inclined to move toward a darkened gate. For the Soul convinces the personality that the darkened path leads to the Light. Unfortunately, the darkened gate chosen is often the ill-intended one. The personality sees this path as spiritually true, and is quite unaware of the subtle self-referencing that led to its decision.

It is worth noting that the left-hand path is not something that one encounters just once upon the upward Way. It is always present and ever lurking nearby. The disciple would therefore be wise to always remain vigilant to its presence. For it is when we loose sight of it that we become victim to it. Indeed, this idea is most true the nearer one approaches the portal of initiation. It is here that the ill-intended path wears its most convincing camouflage.

There is much that has been said regarding the dangers of occult blindness. Paths of deception are most certainly there and one needs to be alert to their presence. Yet, it is also true that these pitfalls should not paralyze us from the call of Spirit.

The work must go on, and we must always dare to forge ahead. There is much work that needs to be done. Perhaps cautionary expediency is the best formula for the pilgrim striving toward the Light. In some sense, such a phrase seems contradictory, for caution is thought to retard expedient action. As with most occult insights, the resolution of paradox holds the key to one's transformation. To live the life of the esotericist requires that one realize the value of occult blindness. Such a limitation need not be viewed with disdain, but rather, with a gesture of open arms. For when present, spiritual transformation is at hand. Buddhist realization is, for many disciples, the thing to be sought. And, it is for this that the darkened gate bids welcome. It is to trust that the inner sight is worthy of our reliance. Verily, this is thy challenge and thy reward.

Copyright © 1996 William Meader--All rights reserved.

William Meader has been a student of the Ageless Wisdom for over 20 years. He is an, educator in both traditional and esoteric psychology, and is currently involved in advanced Occult Studies through the University of the Seven Rays.