

The Inner Adventure and the Outer Life

To do. Yes. But what to do? The world is full of people ‘doing’. We are all so accustomed to doing things to achieve our ends that it is difficult to get the idea of a different kind of ‘doing’ which constitutes the inner work. This is why some people talk about ‘not-doing’.

The doing with which we are concerned is a psychic act – holding a particular sort of awareness, being aware of that awareness, being aware of the things (fears, desires etc) which run away with our minds and so obscure that awareness. We may (or may not) make use of certain outer actions, like sitting in a particular way, performing rituals, altering the breathing pattern, eating differently, which may act as reminders of our purpose or may react on our minds so as to put us in a mood where the awareness we seek is aroused.

You have to be able to hold your mind still – to stop the internal dialogue, as Castaneda’s Don Juan calls it. When the mind is still, you are you, just you, as opposed to the chaos of reflex thoughts/feelings with which you are identified when your mind is active. You have probably known this state when, for instance, you were entirely immersed in a totally attention-demanding cabinet-making operation, but you did not pay attention to it.

Wonderfully calm though this state is, people are frightened of it because it is independent of and cuts right through the personality image on which all men support themselves – their self-esteem. (Note that even if you think yourself a shit, that is still a false, personality image.)

Again as you see in the Castaneda ‘Don Juan’ books, stopping the internal dialogue, just being you, opens perception

to what the real you really is: the place of the individual in the total scheme of things, the extensions of your total being in the totality of being, the extensions of being beyond the limits of (physical) sense apprehension.

Outer life is the field in which you prepare yourself for the strains of the inner adventure. Facing the challenges of the outer life means stepping beyond the limits of one's personal self-assessment: 'I'm good at this. I dare not attempt that.' To be a true success outwardly, one has to summon the confidence to survive failure. To succeed inwardly, one has to have the confidence to let the whole familiar world go, confident in the certainty that what is, is, and that what is is all that matters.