

Running Commentary Following Gertrude's Death

Part 21 of 53

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Something happened about quarter to five yesterday afternoon and has been developing since which may have a significance that I can scarcely believe is true. I am, therefore, putting this down on the tape as it seems to be. To get the setting I shall give the surrounding details in some elaborate degree.

Yesterday was Friday, our usual shopping day. We went to town prepared to do laundry, to get the groceries, the mail, and do some banking. We received in the mail notice of the fact that the reading glasses were ready for me. After we had attended to the details in town, we communicated with the Wilcox office. We found they would be open till one o'clock and being twenty-five minutes of twelve, we figured that we could make the trip up there. We did, and secured the glasses and paid for them. We also had lunch at Hobo Joe's, and then returned, did our shopping, and came back home. By that time it was about four o'clock. I had become rather tired, so I took the afternoon nap at that late hour. I slept a little, and was awake and up by quarter to five.

Then, I had the sense of having Gertrude with me. Not simply within me, nor exactly without, but as a something that was rather enveloping. It alleviated, at once, the sense of pain that has continued with me nearly all the time since her departure. She was present with me. I found my state of consciousness was not the normal waking state. It was like a very light trance combined with the normal waking consciousness. As it was near the five o'clock hour, when we get news, I went out in this state of combined consciousness, turned on the news broadcast and listened to it, holding a very gentle, close balance between the light trance and the waking consciousness. The waking portion of the consciousness seemed to be a peripheral kind of consciousness. It did not involve concentrated focusing, but rather a hearing and seeing that was peripheral rather than central and concentrated. It was not one in which one could handle a difficult problem that calls for external concentration. I received the news as a sort of peripheral intake, not sharply perceiving it or conceiving it, not particularly trying to remember it, meanwhile holding to this subtle, gentle, trance-like consciousness that carried the balm that freed me from the pain of Gertrude's departure—a sense of her being present neither within or without, but in some subtle way. In varying degrees of intensity, I held this divided state throughout the evening and to retiring that night. It took a certain effort of maintaining a kind of balance in consciousness, not letting it eternalize or internalize further, but a within and without consciousness at the same time. When awakening in the morning—or in fact earlier in the night, since I slept very little—I still found myself in the state.

I, of course, began to interpret it. It seemed to me at first that I might have at last succeeded in reaching into a *devachanic* consciousness while here in the physical. The literature indicates this is possible, but the quality here seemed to be very possibly like a *devachanic* consciousness. There, it was bliss-like. There was not the sense of

meeting a tangible, objective human entity, more like a sense of intangible presence; but it carried balm in it. I was thinking along this line this morning and the question arose: what kind of embodiment was Gertrude in? Clearly none of the forms of matter with which we are familiar here as solid, liquid, or gaseous—more subtle than that. Then the words came into my mind: the stuff of space. Then association arose, what is the stuff of space but the *Akasha* itself. Oh, yes. Yes, this has a bearing upon the principle involved in the formula: *substantiality is inversely proportional to ponderability*. But if the vehicle of Gertrude was *Akasha*, then this was not simply the *devachanic* state, for there, from all evidence that I have been able to attain, the entities do have a tangible form; they can have a certain objectivity. Then my thought recovered something from “The Mystery of [the] Buddha.”¹ There is a short chapter there called “A Not Hitherto Published Discourse of the Buddha.”² In this the quotation starts with the Buddha addressing the Bhikshus, as is usual, and in the concluding statement he remarks: there are three things that are eternally real and these are the Law, Nirvana, and Space; but these three are ultimately one, namely, Space.³ But clearly in this case “Space” is a translation of the word *Akasha*. In other words, *Akasha* is the Ultimate Reality. We all are eternal here. We abide here forever. Nothing whatever is lost on the level of *Akasha*. So this stupendous thought passed through my mind, that I had contacted the eternal, *Akashic* Reality—which here I called Gertrude.

I can hardly believe this to be true. I will report this merely as the impressions that have passed through my mind. What seems to be true of this state of consciousness in which I am moving at the present moment is that it is neither outward nor inward, neither extraverted nor introverted, neither death nor life, but a state that is the composition of all pairs of opposites. Neither either side of a pair of opposites, nor the other side, and yet at the same time both of these. And as I speak now, part of me is in that state of light trance and part of me is moving in terms of the external mind. This experience, or imperience rather, is very subtle. I don't think it could happen at the apex of life when the forces towards external activity are strong, but that it is capable of happening now because I am at the twilight phase of life at the age of ninety-one, and I seem already to have had a flirtation twice with death and beginning to become familiar with it. Somehow this state is neither life nor death, or rather both at the same time. Oh, I could go, legitimately, either way. I could take another companion, legitimately, or choose not to take another companion. I seem to have a very great freedom of choice. I am not wholly alive nor am I dead. It is a strange state, and I find that I hardly can believe it myself.

There is something in this experience, or imperience, that reminds me of the description of the process involved when meeting the Clear Light after death as given in the Evans-Wentz form of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. The important element in that experience is the attaining a state of subtle balance. It is a balance between the

¹ H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 3 (Wheaton: The Theosophical Press, 1910), 393.

² Actually, this is called “An Unpublished Discourse of Buddha.”

³ The actual quotation is, “There are three things, Bhikshus, that are everlastingly the same, upon which no vicissitude, no modification can ever act: these are the Law, Nirvana, and Space, and those three are One, since the first two are within the last, and that last one a Maya, so long as man keeps within the whirlpool of sensuous existences.”

indeterminate ultimate and the manifested, as represented there; but there is a certain parallelism that I note in this process in that there is a neither going into deep trance, which in its more extreme forms involves a blacking out of outer consciousness, nor a strong movement into the objective consciousness such as we commonly experience at the apex of our outer life. It is a kind of subtle holding of these two types of experience and that seems to be a kind of parallelism. And a weird thought has come to me that I may be, in a degree, going through this process while still alive—that I may be in a sort of intermediate zone where that which belongs to death and that which belongs to life is experienced, or imperienced, at the same time. This balance doesn't seem to be too difficult to maintain. It permits one to move over to a degree either way, as for example, I have just passed through a discussion of some account technicalities with Karen and come out of it feeling myself still in this balance. The outer processes are possible in it, and yet one can hold to the inner delight at the same time or at least immediately afterward. This is just a speculation. I don't know this state that I'm in from my reading, where you are close to death on one side and yet functioning life-like on the other; but there is a feeling of a familiarity moving both ways.

On March 10, I took the afternoon nap at approximately the time that I was accustomed to taking it. This time I slept better than I have slept since last May, but when I woke up I was out of the state which had started at quarter to five the day before and seemed to be unbroken by the night's sleep. And I also felt a deep fatigue—the kind of fatigue that one would say makes him feel burnt out. Now, this was an experience I had had more than once in 1936. I did not realize that this state of what seemed to me to be a very light trance would have so much effect, but the fatigue with which I awoke was very deep. I had learned back in 1936 to keep the states light, as it were, so that the fatigue would not develop. This time I thought it was very light, but judging by the fatigue that I felt and am now feeling it made a heavier demand than I realized. This is put down just for completing the information concerning the whole experience.

Postscript.

The period of this state in a light trance was about eighteen hours; the one in August was fourteen. In that case there was no sense of fatigue afterwards, and it was connected apparently with the heart center. This was a state of another kind.