

STATES OF BEING

There are times when our everyday, familiar world is transformed. Things take on a magical quality. Colours seem brighter, shapes more sharply defined. It is like a child waking up on Christmas morning. Everything is the same but different. The world seems at the same time both simpler and more mysterious. This new perception of the world seems to be accompanied by a transformation within oneself, a different 'state of being'.

Transformations of being may occur in other directions. There are times when we may harden our hearts against the world. Things no longer have meaning in their own right. Such meaning as they possess is defined in terms of our own desires, likes and dislikes. The world is one of things to be used by us. This is the level of "looking after number one". It is a principle of this cosmos that you have got to be tough to get ahead. In this state of being everything you see in the world appears to back up your cynical conclusions.

There are states in which the world is not even meaningful in terms of your own will. You can do nothing and neither can anyone else. The world is a rigid, soulless mechanism. You are a small and dispensable cog in a huge mindless machine. There is no escape from a world governed by heartless laws.

At the other extreme the world may appear meaningless in a different way. The world is overwhelming by its very complexity. No patterns can be discerned in the constant, chaotic flux of events. One is in terror of being swamped, individuality shattered with no centre of balance. You cannot "pull yourself together". You are going "Out of your mind".

You can have too much of a good thing, even your own individuality. Your will isolated from the rest of the Universe burns itself out, leaving you an empty shell. You are dead and empty inside. You may be able to see the life of others but be unable to join in real living. You are cut off from life by an invisible barrier. You are a man dying of thirst whilst watching others drink. In such a state a man may seek to deprive others of the meaning and purpose that seems to animate them. All things must be killed to prevent their exuberant life mocking your own emptiness. You are lonely and isolated in a world of separate entities, void of purpose. All is meaningless. There is not even the will to escape. A world of empty shells. This is living death.

But there is another type of emptiness, an emptiness that charges everything with meaning and life. This is not the emptiness of death but the emptiness of a heart opened to life. You and everything else seem empty but filled with something that cannot be expressed. Objects and events are still perceived separately but there is an underlying Unity that pervades all things. Some men speak of the presence of the 'Divine' within creation others of an all-pervading unseen radiance. These things cannot really be expressed in words, yet we must try.

It is evident that what many take as the 'normal' type of consciousness is just part of a whole 'states of being'. The accompanying diagram shows some of the types of state accessible to us. These states are not fixed. Our state of being changes, it can be changed. The transformations suggested on the diagram are not necessarily the only ones possible. Nor is the diagram meant to be a complete and accurate description of states. They represent just a few of the possibilities always open to us. They can be seen as a hierarchy in terms of apparent separation, meaning and simplicity. But no one state is really 'higher' than another. All states are reflections within the same Unity. Unity is present within all states, although this fact may not be realised by the beings in some of those states.

