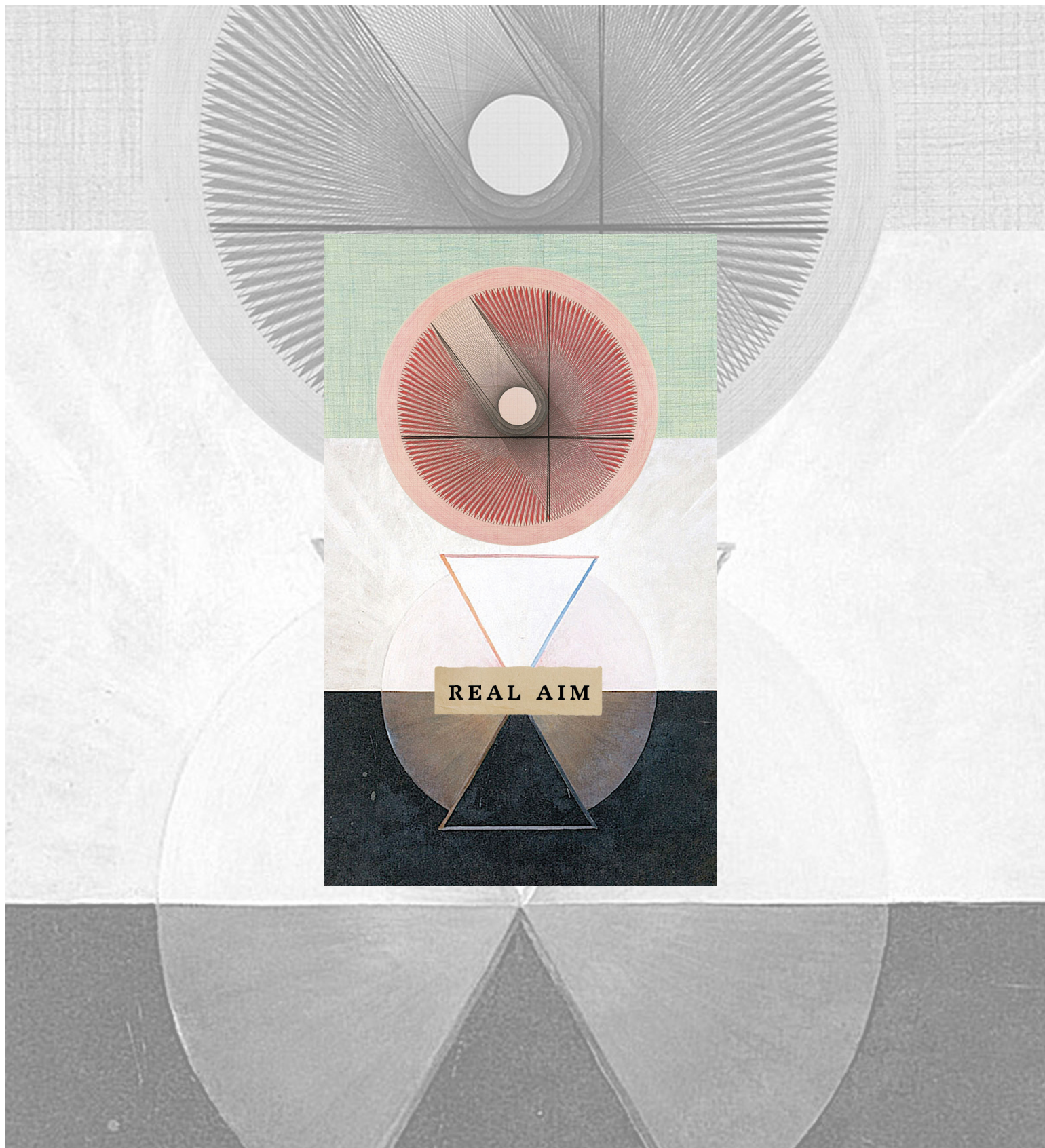


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THE MARK

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REAL AIM

TOWARD A DIVINE DESTINY

BY PETER HAAS

The global pandemic has given us all pause to reflect on the nature of how we live life, in every aspect. Through the paring back of our patterns of life and work, a deeper connection has been revealed. We are blessed to witness so much goodness, kindness, connectivity and creativity. Care, patience, resilience, generosity and courage have emerged all around us, like spring wildflowers bursting open with color after a bleak winter.

We are connected from our homes to our sanctuary through our computer screens. It is inspiring, heartwarming, and gratifying to bear witness to the transformation of a culture remembering how to care, attend and speak to and love one another in new and practical ways.

Attuning the Great Choir of Humankind

I am grateful for everything this season has shown me, about myself and about life, especially the opportunity to see the great choir of humankind

come together through an unexpected attunement to the new coronavirus conductor. Who could have predicted the sacred music we would make together through this fierce spring?

As I sing my note, you sing yours. We send this awareness to all our beloveds who may feel uncertainty, fear and doubt as to their well-being. The pandemic upheaval has shaken all of us, but none more than the most vulnerable. We are all rattled to our core, our sensibilities of what we took for granted as security and survival. The story grows in starkness the longer the shadow of this disease is cast.

With you, I wonder how to sing my note for, with and to these beloved ones; the vulnerable ones on the edges of the great choir of humankind, in every nation on our shared home-planet. I ponder how to encircle them with this attunement of care and invite them to take rest from their long-suffering into the heart of our deep contemplative silence.

Aim Rises to Shape the Song

The songs we sing on The Fourth Way, in tune with the wisdom lyrics of Maurice Nicoll, are deeply inspired and attuned to the idea and practice of making aim.

Making aim is a kind of remedy for the disharmony of life, for the out-of-tune moments that leave us haggard, lost and confused. Aim is a small, yet mighty, tool for consciously navigating our personality and its memorized habits, negative emotions, reactions and choices. Aim is also a caring shepherd to walk beside and guide us through the valley of the shadow of death – with all its invisible thorns, easily lodged into soul and flesh.

There is much in Maurice Nicoll's *Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky* on aim with a special emphasis on how Real Aim contrasts with artificial or shallow aim. Here are a few key aspects to Real Aim taken from page 630 in Volume 2:

“A superficial aim will lead nowhere, especially if it is from acquired conscience...vanity.”

“To begin to have real aim you must already know that you cannot keep it and, as it were, not tell yourself what this real aim is. Real aim comes from something deeper in you, something emotional.”

“In real aim you cannot go directly towards it but like a sailing ship at sea which endeavors to sail to a certain goal, you must tack one way and then another way ...”

“Real aim depends on an *emotional perception* of something you dislike in yourself and which you wish to change eventually. It depends on a certain integrity of feeling that persists in spite of downfalls. Thus great patience is necessary in connection with any real aim.”

I remember one evening, just after sunset. I sat on a park bench under great old pecan trees in full bloom, swaying in the big Texas

southerly wind. The dedication plaque affixed to the bench read, “A great captain is not made by sailing calm seas.” I whispered with the wind, “nor a great Aim.”

We are in the big swells of life, navigating pandemic, unemployment, hunger, global instability, and death.

Aim Kneels to Scale

Scale teaches us that our life and so-called problems cannot be addressed from the level at which they are created; we need to *rise* to new levels of seeing, being and understanding. To understand scale is to understand that there are levels upon levels of creation and being, from the infinitesimal to the infinity of the cosmos. In seeing there are levels of being, levels of consciousness, levels of meaning, scale teaches us that our perspective is small, relative, and full of error when not considered in the context of the Whole.

Recall that the word universe literally means – one verse. One hymn. One song versed together,

riding on the unconquerable sea of life. Knowing we are not alone. Our earth song is attuned to the great sea of galaxies. Our galaxy, spiraled around vast unending energy, holds us even now, though unseen.

Consider the vastness of the cosmos, approximately 2 trillion galaxies in our observable universe. Untold numbers of these galaxies are so massive that they could fit many of our Milky Way galaxies within their own seemingly infinite circumference. And yet, it would take 100,000 human years to reach the other side of the Milky Way galaxy at light speed. Now compare this to the scale of life on planet earth. Apprehending scale can inspire feelings and states of awe, wonder, humility and oneness.

Whatever is happening in our life and lifetimes, it is all set against the backdrop of untold possibilities. The seas will rise and fall. The earth will shake and rift. The years will come and go. But we can awaken, evolve and rise to the level of Christ-consciousness. And the one-verse will grow in its beauty

and strength, thanking each of us for our part to the Whole, for each note into the song.

Aim for the Bridge, Beyond Being

The 19th century philosopher and novelist Friedrich Nietzsche, said “what is great in man [humankind] is that he is [they are] a bridge and not a goal...” This is a helpful corrective to the notion that “man is the measure of all things.” Our purpose is not to remain as we are, but to be the human vehicle toward a divine destiny. So like St. Paul, we can say *it is no longer I, but Christ who lives in me.* (Galatians 2:20) I, not I, Christ. This reminds me of Teilhard de Chardin’s idea that humankind as a collective is evolving and moving toward its full realization at Omega and Christogenesis.

From this evolutionary perspective, God is within and ahead. This view urges us to recognize that our lifetime and the lifetimes of all humankind are a kind of bridge to beyond-being. As Julian Huxley quipped, “we are nothing else than evolution become conscious of itself.” I think Bernadette Roberts would correct Huxley and say that while human beings may be ‘evolution become conscious of itself,’ when we cross the bridge to beyond-being at death or no-self, consciousness will dissolve too.

Our human existence, much less our various extraordinary and vulnerable ways of existing, including the evolution of our human consciousness, is not the ultimate goal or purpose of our existence. Rather, our existence, this way of being, is an opportunity, a possibility to grow and evolve deeper into Christ as “*participants of the divine nature*” (2 Peter 1:4) – which will require an emptying of self, so as to serve others.

While we are free to just be human and just take care of ourselves, we are also invited to let the spiritual journey engage and draw us on our way – as if crossing over many bridges in a

lifetime. From one way of being “Me-centered” to another way of being “We-centered” – in God, cosmos, earth, humans, indeed all things living. Such a transformation is a way of being where *our life is hidden with Christ in God* (Colossians 3:3) – a note hidden and bidden in the one-verse.

Let us make haste slowly. Let us aim to cross the bridge of this moment’s unworkable ways of being into the yet-to-be-revealed new ways of being together in union as the song of God, sung through each heart opened to the vast becoming of light, life and love that we are awash in. ☉

BEYOND THE HUMAN CONDITION

“God is both hidden and revealed, and there is no access to the hidden God except by way of God manifested in creation. We long for God because God longs for us; God eternally desires to give Godself away in love so we can give ourselves in love; love always stands outside itself in the other. To be united to God we must “break through” the sensible world and pass beyond the human condition to move beyond knowing to unknowing, from knowledge to love. In his *De Mystica Theologica*, Denis [the Aeropagite] wrote: ‘As we plunge into that darkness which is beyond intellect, we shall find ourselves not simply running short of words but actually speechless and unknowing.’” ☉

Ilia Delio, *The Birth of a Dancing Star*

MORE ON REAL AIM

There are three kinds of aim. Invented aims have no practical meaning. Imaginary aims are based on imagination about oneself. Real aims have only one possible source. Real aim must grow out of one's own self-study in relation to the instructions given by this Work. Remember one person's aim is not another's in the Work, as individual centers work differently in us. But the supreme aim of the Work, to awaken, will be the same for all of us.

Real aim changes at different stages of the Work. For what has already been done is no longer necessary to do. Each stage opens a further state, as in the case of a journey. So real aim changes but some things remain, for example *always* remember yourself.

Unless we know how to ask, we cannot receive. When we begin to notice what puts us asleep, we are nearer the possibility of asking aright – that is, making real aim – for aim is really request to which we desire response.

Real aim needs no audience. It is deeper, more genuine, essential.

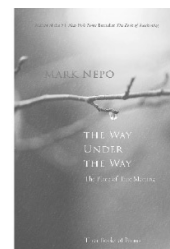
Without efforts, nothing can increase. But if we turn all our Attention, all our Will, and all our Efforts, towards our big Aim, little by little, like the caterpillar, we will approach it: the big Aim. ☸

Compiled from Nicoll's *Commentaries*, pages 1058, 1059, 1097; and a talk by Thomas de Hartmann from the diary notes of Thomas C. Daly.

BOOK LOOK

The Way Under The Way: The Place of True Meeting

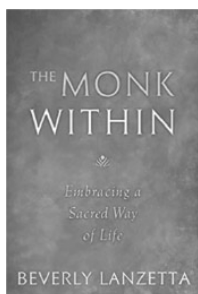
by Mark Nepo



Over the last twenty years, Mark Nepo has emerged as a beloved and trusted companion on the spiritual way. Nepo proves particularly wise and tender as a companion for all who suffer. This collection of poems and essays makes for nourishing company, and is a helpful resource to open the heart and speak words that bear presence.

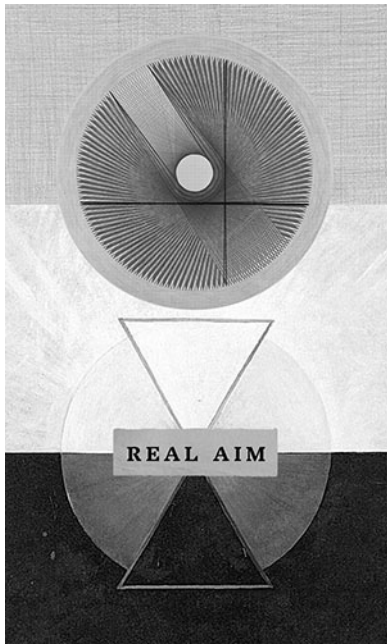
Nepo integrates nearly 100 pages of new, previously unpublished poems into the theme of the place of true meeting that is always near.

2020 ANNUAL COMMUNITY READING



In 2020, we invite you to read one book as our community reading. Beverly Lanzetta's *The Monk Within* offers a significant resource that supports our evolution of The Journey School and its Oblate's Vow and Rule of Life.

Lanzetta's description and call to re-imagine the spiritual life through the lens of the call to become "A Universal Monk" is one of the many compelling aspects of this book.



I am the way, the truth and the life. John 14:6

ANNUAL AIM: THE WAY DRAWS US DEEPER

REAL AIM by Dennis Clopper

If we experience a longing for God, Truth, Beauty, Happiness, the Peace and Silence that have no opposite, then we have in some hidden way known God, and for this hidden knowledge to have taken place, God must first have known us in some hidden way.

Our very longing for God is a *response* to having already been touched and embraced by God. Desire is but our homing instinct for God, even when there is static, confusion, and missing of the mark yet again.

Martin Laird, *An Ocean of Light*

When I found your words, I devoured them ... your words ... the happiness of my heart.

Jeremiah 15:16

Real aim always nourishes you, nourishes your understanding, Maurice Nicoll, *Commentaries*, Vol. 2

“Real aim comes from something deep within you, something emotional. As it is said in Matthew, *Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth*. In the language of Parables, ‘left’ is the weak side – i.e. the Personality – and ‘right’ means the deeper and more real side of you. Now if you make an aim with your left hand and tell yourself you will get some advantage from it, some merit, some praise from other people, that you will be better thought of (even in the Work), you will not be doing it from your right hand or your real side.” Maurice Nicoll, *Commentaries*, p. 630.

Looking for Something More Real

From childhood, I had an interest in some knowledge or understanding that was somehow beyond what I was told in school, in church, or in daily life. Some of this interest was a fascination with the exotic or unusual and part of it was looking for something more real. In a college philosophy course, it seemed there were possibilities; but, I found no answers. The professor did teach that there were non-

rational ways of knowing, perhaps mystical. I was intrigued. However, in my busy young adult years full of career, first marriage, and other interests, this desire to know got little attention. Soon enough that busy life was disrupted by a divorce and a realization that my career was not right for me. Every choice I had been living from, based on what I thought I should do, was in question and I felt that everything important to me was going away.

I became depressed and wondered if life was worth living. One night, very discouraged, I was suddenly given a knowing of such certainty that I could not doubt it. The wordless message was that there was more for me to learn and do in this life and I would not be let out early. Because of the clarity of this knowing, I took it to be mystical, and likely from God. Of course, this experience didn't solve all my problems, but reawakened serious questions: What is my existence about? How does one find answers? Real aim was established.

The Gifts of Silence and Awakening

Soon a small church came to my attention that sought wisdom in *all* religious traditions, a fresh spiritual form of nourishment for me, especially Hindu and Buddhist. While participating there, I was given the gift of silent meditation. I remember a weekend retreat with Sufis. It was my first time to be in a large group that was so quiet – a profound and spiritually enriching experience. This church also showed me the value of chanting, which helps slow down the thoughts and is a time of emotional comfort. Additional teachings included recorded meetings with Ram Dass when he told his own story of awakening. Here was someone who

experienced and understood about what I wanted to know. I loved his storytelling and wanted to be like him. With friends, I traveled twice to hear him teach to large audiences. Those evenings also included chants. I was struck when he said, “Don't take my trip, take your own.” This awakening gave rise to a variation on my real aim.

A friend in that little church suggested a movie in an art theater in a town about 40 miles away and it sounded interesting. Six of us went to see “Meetings with Remarkable Men,” the film made by the Gurdjieff Foundation about G. I. Gurdjieff's early life and very intense search for wisdom. The impact of the story, of searching for something more real, was enough to take me back the next night by myself to see it again. Clearly, this man had a real aim and offered a teaching of value. For a few years, I knew little more about Gurdjieff. My own search for answers led me to Unity teachings, and I continued with the recorded Ram Dass material that I had.

Meeting the Work

After moving to Austin and attending a Unity church, I wondered if this place really had anything to do with my spiritual search. Then, Tim Cook arrived to be the minister. When he began a

Thursday night class on Maurice Nicoll's *Psychological Commentaries on the Teachings of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky*, I knew I had been led to the right place. What I didn't know was that Tim and his wife Barbara would become so important to the rest of my life. I began learning the esoteric teachings of the Work of Inner Christianity, about multiple parts of my personality, and how this multiplicity reacts automatically to life events. With the practice of self-observation, I saw that my idea of who I was needed to be questioned, so I began setting aims for practicing the Work ideas internally. Many of these early efforts were not real aims and could not be kept, and the learning process seemed slow.

When The Church of Conscious Harmony was established, Tim's Work teaching became more important and available. The difficulty of maintaining attention and aim became clear and I appreciated Nicoll's advice to “Work when you can” as daily life provides many, many moments to remember aims and apply Work principles.

Towards Real Aim

One of the opportunities to Work came in learning the Gurdjieff Movements, a collection of specific physical exercises consisting of positions and actions that would

not occur in day-to-day life. These movements require directed mental and physical attention and often bring emotional reactions. Often before a Movements class, I would set a real aim to be aware and present to the event, particularly to the need to let go of thoughts and feelings from some other part of life. My primary experience of a class has been of always trying to bring attention back to the present moment. Gurdjieff's genius in creating these exercises seems to be to keep each moment quite busy. The effort to remember aim and stay present was real work and left me usually feeling more conscious after the class. I continue to value the Movements as a way to practice awareness and being present in the instinct-moving, emotional and intellectual centers.


The years of practicing all three lines of the Work (working on oneself, working with and for others, and working for the Work itself) are a gift. I have learned much from fellow students, whose reports, often in small groups, left me in awe of their Work. In one case, a student told of a decision made to be willing to die for the benefit of another, a choice made from a deep place and, to me, an example of a real aim. A similar example from a different student was a clear commitment to someone else that risked this student's way

of life, including loss of family and money. With God's grace, these situations ended well. I have been challenged, or at least reminded, by other member's work efforts around aims not kept and needing attention. In this way, being with fellow students has supported my own work, and I expect theirs as well. I find, at times, my Work efforts have been busy and other times slower, with less energy. The Work, as presented by Nicoll, doesn't promise a steady process. In fact, it promises second force or resistance in response to setting aims, along with practices to help us navigate the way.

Another opportunity to witness real aim is with our youth group as they prepare to leave for their annual pilgrimage to the Lama Foundation. The clarity of each of the young people's declaration of aim supports my setting of aim when I have been able to join their early morning departing ceremony. Those mornings with the youth and their adult guides have fed me spiritually every time. Other commitment rituals in CCH history have also been inspiring in the same way. For example, the New Year's Eve burning bowl ceremony, which includes choosing a wish or aim for the new year. I have seen how the energy in a group that is setting aims supports everyone in the effort.

Attending multi-day Centering Prayer retreats, often with our retreat mother Barbara Cook, who developed the CCH silent retreats, also provides group support. I sometimes set a real aim for the retreat itself, though it has often altered in the days that followed, and a couple of times pretty much lost. Some weekend or longer retreats were led by guest retreat masters and I felt blessed by leaders such as Fr. Thomas Keating, Fr. Carl Arico, Brother Wayne Teasdale, Fr. William Meninger and others. These men each brought an inspiring spiritual presence.

"The great aim was given in the Gospels: *Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven*, i.e. seek another actual level of being, promised to us both by the Gospels and by this Work. ... But if you ask me to define what real aim is, I leave it to you." *Commentaries*, p. 631.

For me, the desire for another level of being and the hunger for a deeper way, have given occasions for setting aims, and sometimes a real aim. As Nicoll reminds us, we do not need to know what our next step in development is, but if the aim is sufficiently genuine the influences of the Work will modify it in the right direction. See the differences in what you *thought* you had to do and what you have to do. Help always comes as long as we stay connected to the Work. 

BEHIND REAL AIMS ARE DEEPER DESIRES AND POSSIBILITIES OF OUR ESSENCE

The question of aim is not easy. It is not so much that one 'accepts' any particular aim. For this suggests that there is a choice. There is no choice. My wish is that each person should find what their real aim is, what they want. For no aim that isn't real, no imitated aim or wished for aim is going to move anyone anywhere. So I would rather someone said frankly: 'My aim is to produce a first-class play', than for him to say: 'My aim is to wish to become conscious.' For from the first he can begin to move here and now, whereas he may sit twenty years in the second without any appreciable change at all. My experience is that behind real aims, even apparently material or worldly ones, a man may if he wishes find the deeper desires and possibilities of his essence. Whereas 'noble aims' often (though not always of course) arise from beautiful imagination of personality and can find no daily nourishment. It is most clear that those who know certainly what their own immediate first line is, who take full responsibility for it, and willingly overcome all obstacles connected with it, by that very fact make openings for others and create all kinds of possibilities that those who only wish to 'work on themselves', or something subjective like that, never do.

You remember one of Ouspensky's last meetings:

Ouspensky: If I know your aim, perhaps I will be able to say something.

Question: How can I find permanent aim?

Ouspensky: Find an impermanent aim first. Why do you begin with permanent aim? It is very difficult and very long. How can you find it?

Question: Can one find a permanent aim by seeing one's situation, seeing what one is?

Ouspensky: I don't know. Depends what means permanent aim.

Question: An aim stronger than those we ordinarily know in life.

Ouspensky: Why are these aims bad? Why cannot they be used? If you cannot find permanent aim, why not begin on impermanent?

Rodney Collin, *The Theory of Conscious Harmony*, pages 4-5



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My Father is still working, and I also am working. John 5:17

LIVING THE WORK OF INNER CHRISTIANITY IN DAILY LIFE

WILL BY NATHAN JONES

Work Idea:

The Work has much to say about will. Will as we commonly understand it is associated with determination, capability and a furrowed brow. A person who resists a significant temptation (be it material goods or desires) might be said to have a “strong will.” In the Work, will is broken down into two categories: Real Will and small daily wills that are the effect of our various ‘I’s. Small daily ‘I’s constantly want their bidding done. One common outcome is feeling pulled in many directions with long to-do lists – obligations that two humans couldn’t possibly fulfill in any given day.

When I awake in the morning, there is a peaceful moment just after sleep, prior to the onslaught of ‘I’s. Once I step out of bed, I can feel them demanding my attention. One demands coffee immediately, one needs to return the phone calls, one encourages sitting in silence and reading, one wants to be a good father and engage my child, one wishes to just do nothing, and many more.

Work Sources:

The Work says, “that such will as we have is the resultant of all our desires, and also that each ‘I’ has its own will. ... I said it was possible to see how from one moment to another what we call our Will changes and this was due to the separate wills of different ‘I’s so that whatever we did finally was the resultant of the desires of all these different ‘I’s. ... First of all, each ‘I’ uses us at the moment and so each ‘I’ speaks through the telephone – that is, through our mouth – and says all sorts of things and calls itself ‘I’. If there is any doubt, any hesitation, what speaks is the resultant of the several wills of these different ‘I’s. This resultant decides. It is called Will but it is not Real Will. It is a compromise between many different voices, like a Parliament (which means a Speaking-House). The final vote is the resultant of many different parties. It is the resultant of many different wills and desires. This is the state of what we call our will. It


is the resultant of many wills, many desires. But Real Will cannot be a *resultant*, for Will in a real sense is *Master* and is above the desires of life and all life-‘I’s.” *Commentaries*, pages 480-482, 485

“Patience is the mother of Will.” G.I. Gurdjieff

Application:

Observing the changes in our will is quite helpful in identifying what it means to have a multitude of ‘I’s. Upon awakening, observe all of the little wills that wish to be done. There are ‘I’s that feel they are obliged to perform a task, ‘I’s that seek company, ‘I’s that seek solitude, ‘I’s that long to study the Work, ‘I’s that resist and ‘I’s that are attracted. Observe, non-identify and Self-Remember.

Further Resource:

Review Matthew 6 considering the Work idea of will. Jesus touches on the birds of the sky, the eye is the lamp, the serving of two masters and, of course, the Prayer. 

GUIDELINES FOR CHRISTIAN LIFE, GROWTH AND TRANSFORMATION

Fr. Thomas Keating, in his seminal work *Open Mind, Open Heart*, lists 42 principles underlying the Christian spiritual journey.

Fr. Keating asks that these principles be read according to the method of Lectio Divina.

One principle appears in these pages each month.

GUIDELINE 29

The practice of a spiritual discipline is essential at the beginning of the spiritual journey as a means of developing the foundations of the contemplative dimension of life: dedication and devotion to God and service to others. Our daily practice should include a time for contemplative prayer and a program for letting go of the false self.

JUNE SERMON SERIES

STAGES AND STATES ON THE WAY

- June 7 The Way of Purgation
- June 14 The Way of Illumination
- June 21 The Way of Union
- June 28 The Way of Communion

JUNE CALENDAR

For more details, visit consciousnessharmony.org or call 512-347-9673

SPECIAL EVENTS

Online One-Day Centering Prayer Retreat
Jun 13 9am-3pm
No cost. Register online.

Online Introduction to Centering Prayer
Jun 13 10am-noon
+ 4 consecutive Tuesdays 7-8pm
No cost. Register online.

MONTHLY

Caritas Donations
To continue our long standing partnership, please consider making a donation of food or money directly to caritasofaustin.org

WEEKLY

Sundays
*Lectio Divina 8-9am
*Worship Service 10-11:30am

Wednesdays
*Contemplative Communion Service
6:30-7:15pm

Thursdays
*The Journey School Class 7-8:30pm

DAILY

*Centering Prayer Service 7-7:35am

*Join these services via Zoom video conferencing. Contact the website for instructions.

Recordings of services are available through the Bookstore and online at www.consciousnessharmony.org



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*Jesus said to the disciples,
I give you a new commandment:
love one another.
As I have loved you, so you also
should love one another.'*

John 13:34



Gloria in Excelsis Deo!

THE NEW COMMANDMENT

To love our neighbor from the perspective of the True Self, as one possessing the image of God, is a great insight, but it still is not the fullness of the Kingdom of God ... A new commandment characterizes the Christian faith.

It is to love one another as Jesus has loved us.

This is much more difficult. This is to love others in their individuality ... just as they are with each one's grocery list of faults, unbearable habits, unreasonable demands, and impossible characteristics.

The new commandment is to accept others unconditionally; that is to say, without the least wish to change them. To love them in their individuality is the way Jesus has loved us. This love is what Saint Augustine calls 'bearing the unbearable.' By showing love unwearyingly, no matter what happens, we imitate and pass on the mercy that Christ has shown for us.

... And by exercising this unconditional love, the dismantling of the false self takes place.

Thomas Keating, *Awakenings*