

## THE WAY WE ACT

We play many different roles on many different paths, some we are conscious of and some we are not. Let's think about the acts we are conscious of. To display certain reactions in some situations we know how we have to act and respond. We project a deliberate persona in these situations to produce the responses we need. If we do this over a period of time we become good at it, and if we are sufficiently aware of other people's requirements, we are also good at knowing what personality will evoke specific responses from others. We acquire a list of characters we know how to play, we have an index of acts we know how to play. As we encounter different situations in our life we pull out these different acts and personas.

It took years to develop the cast of characters, it took years to understand how to use them, how to manipulate situations to make them turn out the way we wanted them to. We are now so good at this they do not appear to be acts any more, not to the people who watch or to the people with whom we interact. If we do not sustain the consciousness of having developed these acts, if we do not have a broad view of our own history, we forget how and why these acts were developed. We forget how difficult they were to develop, we forget the unsuccessful situations when we said afterwards, if I had only said this or if I had only said that, situations which taught us how to build our act, how to fill out the persona, so that the next time something similar came up we remembered to say this and we remembered to say that.

We are the culmination of years of role playing, of developing characters for each of the roles we play. Our success as it is measured by the world often has a lot to do with

our ability to play these roles effectively, our ability to play these roles so that they do not look like roles, they do not look like acts, they look genuine. When an actor prepares a performance he has to rehearse, first learn his lines and study his character. He rehearses to learn the staging, to be comfortable with the scenery, with the choreography of moving and walking, to be comfortable with the costumes and with the time period, then he begins to know his character. Method actors try to leave their own sense of self and inhabit the person they are portraying.

Are we not doing the same thing in all our roles, do we not have a rehearsal period to study who we are, an educational process to teach us the role we want to play, to learn appropriate lines for that role? Isn't our education learning the intricate details about situations so that we acquire the ability to play a role correctly? Think about it, think about the way we have developed a set of personalities and characters through our life, think how what was brought into this world by God becomes a character for the play of our life, in some cases, many characters for the play of our life.

What is this act we play, what is this act which has become our method for traveling through the world of illusion? How conscious are we of our act, how conscious are we of the person we play, have we forgotten the training we had to come to this point, where we play the act we play? Can the actor on stage forget himself to such an extent during his performance that he actually is the character and no longer himself? They say the best actors do that, and the best actors of the world do that too. Forgetting their true nature, forgetting themselves entirely, they have given themselves away to the character they have created for this world. They have done this with rehearsals, with practice and the constant perfecting of the act.

There are so many different acts we perfect, the kindness act, the anger act, the generosity act, the resentment act, the embarrassed act. We have gone through so many of these emotions again and again, so many of the same situations again and again. Do we ever really have any fresh, new encounters, are we ever really new, is anything we do done for the first time, or are we so rehearsed there is no longer any originality, there is just a smoothness, a slickness which is so well developed we have fooled ourself into thinking our performance is the reality?

There is another act we have to start rehearsing, we have to start practicing, the act of having no act. Courtesy, the right conduct, means rehearsing how to do this. We do not know how to act appropriately, and so we are told how to act appropriately. We do not know how not to have an act, and so we have to rehearse the act of having no act, we have to make that our state, part of our daily routine. We have to investigate our acts and say we are not going to behave that way any longer, we have to go through our reactions to things and say we are not going to react that way again. We have to understand why we have rehearsed all these acts. The simple reason is the motivation of selfhood, the urge to advance the self. If we look at what we are doing to advance the self, then say to ourself we are going to stop trying to do this, even if only for an hour a day, we will stop this routine behavior advancing the self. We will enter the act of no act, we will enter the place where there is no self-motive, we move without the motivation of selfhood, our motive is changed.

We need to know what the new motive is, we need to understand how to develop this new act because the world does not teach it, we are not educated in this at school. Nevertheless we have to see this is still an act, we do not know how to be selfless, we do

not know how to exist without anything, we do not know how to act without self-motivation. We have to try to act without the motive of self, rehearse it, practice it, practice being without the slickness, the smoothness and the rehearsed acts we have put together all our life.

Give up the acts, even if for just a moment, see what we are like without them, see where we go without them. Try having no preconception of what it is like not to have an act; we do not know what it is like not to have an act because we have lived our life with these acts. When we give up all our acts we find ourselves beyond where we were; we know only where we are, we do not know where we are not.

We cannot make up what we do not know, but we do need to practice understanding that we do not know, we need to practice staying in the open space, practice giving up the conceptions we have and see what happens. Just see what happens when we sit in a quiet space without conception, without association, without conjecture, without motive for ourselves or for others. See what happens when we go into that open space where we do not know what exists, but we are ready to take what is given by our Creator, where we are empty of everything that has filled us, empty enough to take what is given by our Creator. We have to become what we first were in our life, before we became all the personas we use in illusion, we have to rehearse giving up these personas to be ready for reality.

Reality is beyond anything we know and understand, reality is that open space where all the games, all the motivations of desire and the mind have no place. We need to go to that place, go there step by step, slowly but consciously, and consciously means with wisdom. Wisdom is knowing that we did not understand before, an important step,

coming to the place where we can say I do not know. This means wisdom is dawning, wisdom is beginning to break through the hard crust of that ego which proclaims to know everything.

When we enter the space where we are humble, truly humble, without the act of humility but with real humility, it takes courage. Part of this humility is admitting that I do not know, we enter accompanied by the fear of I do not know, going to the place of I do not know to see what happens there. It takes a certain courage to go there because even though the fear of I do not know is with us, we say I am going to pass through this fear, I am going to allow it and see what happens. I know my God is merciful, I know my God is compassionate. If I let go of everything I have and rely on Him alone, it will be all right.

We need to step into this state for some part of our life. If we cannot, if we cannot consciously make this kind of effort, we are destined to live in illusion. That is the alternative, the choice we have to make. Do we want to search for worldly gratification, and there are so many different forms of gratification, or are we willing to enter the place we do not know, the place we fear? To go there we have to give up everything we know, our sense of importance, our narcissistic ego, our self and the motivations of self. We have to do that to enter the promised land, the land promised by the saints, the prophets and the friends of God. Do we want that or do we want the world of sight, sound, touch and feel? This is the choice given to us; we need to decide where we want to go. Just as we need to practice courtesy in order to become courteous, we need to practice the nonactive to enter the active reality. Even though we are merely rehearsing the nonactive

we have to do it, but we do it with the understanding that we are only acting, unembarrassed about our acting because we have to begin somewhere.

We have been attached to things all our lives, to detach ourselves from them will take time. We have to practice detaching ourselves, practice letting go, practice becoming something other than what we are now, we have to develop the new persona of no persona. It is not an easy thing to do, but it is the only way. There is nowhere to go, we confuse ourselves by thinking we need to have directions. We are there, we are always there, we have never been anywhere else, but we keep looking for directions. Excuse me, how do I get there? By sitting still. What kind of direction is that, sitting still? We sit still and forget everything we have learned. What kind of direction is that? It is different from the old directions which did not take us anywhere. The directions we received to go everywhere else make a big circle taking us right back to where we started.

We have moments when we are there, when we can be still for a little while, my God I am here, this is the place I am supposed to be. I exist now within the understanding that You are all that exists, that the separation between You and myself is beginning to disappear, and the 'I' that I keep talking about is beginning not to matter anymore, the You I do not understand is gradually becoming all-encompassing, gradually being understood.

We have to pray for such moments, begin rehearsing these moments because a time will come when everything else will disappear, that moment is all there will be. If we have not rehearsed, if we are not ready, we may not be allowed to enter. We have to be prepared, we have to be prepared to be here, to be there while we are here. Let us prepare to be here, to be there. God will help because that is what He does, He wants us

to be here, he wants us to be with Him, he wants us to understand. He wants us to give up our acts because when our acts are finished we have His act, an act beyond imagination. May this happen for each of us.