

As you have relationships within the world, you have relationships beyond the world. In the world, you have your worldly family that has raised you from infancy so that you may have the opportunity to become an adult and find the greater threshold where the second stage of life may be initiated and begun.

Beyond the world you have a Spiritual Family that raises you up. Their work with you becomes active as you begin the second great stage of development. Here you must begin as an infant, just the way you began as an infant when you came into this world. Here you learn to rely upon them to raise you up, to give you what you need, to orient you towards your new life and to give you the resources that you will require.

The Unseen Ones oversee this development and act as an intermediary between your Spiritual Family and you while you are in the world. Here you are literally beginning a new life, and you must begin as a beginner, like an infant, like a little child. If you think you are mature and that you have learned enough already in order to embark on this second great stage of life, you will be greatly mistaken and greatly disappointed, and the mistakes you make will have serious consequences for you.

It is truly dangerous when people think they know and they do not know. This leads to many mistakes and many tragedies as well. Do not think you know. You either know or you do not know, and if you know, your Knowledge is pervasive. If what you know is real, others will resonate with Knowledge with you, and you will not have to persuade them.

To begin the second stage of life as an infant, as a beginner, as a beginning practitioner of Knowledge, you require a new kind of relationship—a relationship with a focus that is in keeping with the great stage upon which you are embarking. Here your Spiritual Family becomes more active, and those who are seeking to find you, who were sent by your Spiritual Family, will be called to you, for you need them now, and you will rely upon them in the future. And they need you now, and they will rely upon you in the future. Neither of you can be successful apart. You need each other. This is the great relationship that you yearn for, but until you begin the second great stage of life, you are not ready for it. For this is not a romance. This is not a mating game. This is something much greater and much more complete.

You come to this second great stage because the world has disappointed you and because you come to realize that you need a greater calling and a greater reality in order to find your place and your work in the world. You also come to realize that you need greater relationships. You need dedication. You need to devote yourself. And you need to be around people who are capable of devoting themselves to you. You need a new education, and you need a new beginning. This realization does not come all at once. It comes in stages, and you will not likely realize the moment when you cross that invisible line. But after a time you begin to feel differently. Your values are changing. Your orientation is changing. What you seek in life is different from what you had sought before.

It is at the beginning of this threshold that your Spiritual Family realizes that you are ready to start. They know you are not complete. They know you are not advanced. They know you are weak and vulnerable and prone to error. But they celebrate your being able to arrive at this threshold, an accomplishment not seen by many people. For you, at this moment, everything seems confused. You are like the trapeze artist who is between the two bars. You cannot go back where you were, but you have not yet landed where you need to be. You are in between, and things can seem very confusing.

At this stage, because you are at a new beginning and because you are calling upon your Spiritual Family, your relationship with your human family will change, for you are changing now, and what you need they cannot provide. In a sense, you are not their child or their brother or their sister anymore. Though you can accept that role up to a point, you are now a child of your Spiritual Family. You are at a new beginning. Life will give you some distance from your blood family to give you this freedom to start anew. You must leave them for a time to have this freedom and to be able to think clearly for yourself without their influence. Yet do not deny or reject them. They are like the first stage of the rocket. They have gotten you here. Be grateful for all the love and all the pain, for all the errors and for all the problems. They have given you the opportunity to develop character and capacity, and they have launched you into the world. Your parents, your siblings—if you have siblings—your other relatives—they have been the nest. And now you must leave the nest. Now you must find a new foundation and a new network of relationships that represent your future and your destiny.

During this period of transition, you will have relationships that represent this transition—very close associations with people who will only be in your life temporarily, but will be catalysts to help you bridge the gap between your old life and your new life. Some will help you, and some will try to take advantage of you. But if seen clearly, you can use your experience with them to enable you to step into a new arena. You will meet people in a very similar stage as yourself, and you will also meet people who think they are in the stage you are in, but in reality they are not there. You will find help and hindrance respectively here. But you are clearly moving into a new arena.

You have become a person in the world. Congratulations! Now you are ready to begin the next great stage, and that is to become a man or a woman of Knowledge. You cannot take your former learning with you. You must start as a beginner. That is why when you begin the study of Steps to Knowledge and when you begin to build the foundation for learning and living The Way of Knowledge, you start as a beginner—someone who is starting out anew, someone who is entering new territory that is unfamiliar. Yes, the geography looks the same and even the people can look the same, but the experience and the emphasis are different now.

Your Spiritual Family will raise you up, those beyond the world and those within the world as well. They are your parents, your brothers and your sisters now, and The Unseen Ones are your elders who guide and oversee your development. Because you do not live together in a state of Knowledge, they must help you. Though you will rarely experience them directly, they will work behind the scenes on your behalf. That is not to say they will take away every obstacle and risk from your life. Of course not. But they will seek to give you the greatest opportunity to face problems, obstacles and risks effectively

and successfully. They will help you negotiate the world. They will stand behind your true decisions, and they will send warnings and messages when you make decisions that are not correct. Your Spiritual Family will take you to your greater purpose, for that is their mission.

What is a Spiritual Family? Our explanation for this cannot be complete because Spiritual Family is an experience and not a definition. Let us say for the purpose of clarification that your Spiritual Family represents a small learning group that has been developed over a long time. At your stage of development, you work best in small groups. That is why your Spiritual Family represents a small group. Not all of your Spiritual Family live within this world. Some of them exist in the Greater Community. Not all of your development has been in this world because you yourself have had experiences of the Greater Community.

Your Spiritual Family lives beyond the physical, in a spiritual reality. They are active in the world though they cannot intervene directly. Only if they come into the world and emerge here and live within the physical reality can they play a direct role. This speaks of your emergence into the world and the greater purpose that you have brought with you, which is as yet unknown to you.

The Unseen Ones can function within a transition zone between spiritual reality and physical reality. They can influence the mental environment, and they will have an influence on your thinking—a very important influence to help you to strengthen your resolution and to counsel and correct you when you are in error. They will do this without becoming the object of your attention, for they understand that they must remain hidden if you are to find your own way. For if you should recognize them directly, you would simply seek to be with them at all times, as a child would seek to be with their guardian at all times. Yet they are preparing you for the world, and they must prepare you to venture into the world. You venture into the world well equipped and well prepared, for Knowledge is with you now and your Spiritual Family is with you.

One of the most important developments you will have in your relationships is the development of discernment and discretion. Discernment is knowing what you are seeing. Discretion is knowing what you are saying and what you are doing. At the outset, people think that anyone they feel close to and anyone they like is automatically a member of their Spiritual Family and somehow represents one of the key individuals in their lives. But these estimations are often wrong. Only contrast will show you the difference between someone with whom you experience personal affinity and someone who represents a member of your Spiritual Family.

You are looking for your Family. Now you need them. They are looking for you. Now they need you. For if you have been developing adequately, you will come upon your great thresholds in life around the same time. You will come to great conclusions generally around the same time. If one of you falters or fails, the others will be held back. This is how important these relationships are, and this is how important your responsibility as a student of Knowledge is, for you work for your own behalf and you work for your Spiritual Family. Your success is for them, and your failure is for them as well.

Do not feel this is a great burden because in essence this will give you the strength to carry on, for if your development in the second great stage of life were for yourself alone, you would not have the strength or the incentive to do it. It is only when you are responsible to something greater and for something greater that you find the inner resources and the great encouragement you need to carry on. Remember, this is a stage where you emerge from being an individual to recognizing that you are a part of a greater order of life. The Way of Knowledge is oriented to preparing you for this intrinsic relationship.

You seek affinity with others in the world because that is your natural state, but only with those who represent your Spiritual Family will you be able to experience this completely. That is because their purpose and their message in the world corresponds with yours.

If you live at the surface of life, if you are dominated by your thoughts and beliefs, you will not be able to fathom this great understanding, and you will assign the idea or the role of Spiritual Family to anyone to whom you feel a great attraction or resonance. But students of Knowledge can see beyond these initial mistakes and can look more carefully and more completely. They will be more prudent and less reckless in their observations of others. And their success in exercising their discernment will become greater and stronger in time.

Discretion means you know what to say and when to say it. The rest of the time, you remain silent. You are not governed now by a need to express yourself to offset your sense of inadequacy or insecurity. You realize that your words have power and that they commit you, and so you want to use them carefully. You do not want to use deception, but you want to place your words well. Words are forces in and of themselves, and once they leave your lips, they travel beyond you. And you will be held accountable for them, particularly as you gain strength.

Here you learn to wait as much as possible to have certainty before you make an important decision. Here you seek verification from those who can be your true allies in The Way of Knowledge. Here your decision making becomes more sound, more complete and more carefully exercised. Here you select people based upon their ability to participate with you in the most important parts of your life. You use these criteria instead of personal attraction. For you realize that no relationship can succeed if you cannot participate together, regardless of the initial experience that you might have together. Here you have an opportunity to develop real honesty within yourself. For you have the opportunity to experience, to feel and to represent what you know and to leave the parts of your life that are unclear as they are, without pretense, as if your life were a puzzle that is only partially constructed. You are careful not to fill in the spaces with your hopes and ideas. Here you are not governed by the need to make an impression upon others or to seek their approval. You are willing for your life to be incomplete because it is incomplete. And the truth is a greater companion than anything else.

To begin the second great stage of life, you begin to enter the Mystery. Here you go beyond the well-worn paths that people travel, and you enter a kind of wilderness experience—a wilderness where there are trails, but you are not certain of the way, a wilderness where your parents and your siblings

and your friends cannot go with you, a wilderness you must enter. Here your outer life may look the same, but you are experiencing new dimensions of life, and they seem strange and wondrous and perhaps even frightening to you. You enter here because your mind is expanding and because the reference point within you is changing. No longer can you rely upon your beliefs and assumptions. And as a result, you realize how little you really know. No longer can you rely upon the beliefs or assumptions of others, for you realize that they may know less than you.

Here you know enough to begin, but you do not assume you know any more. Here you know enough to continue onward, without assuming the result of your efforts or journey. Here you seem to travel alone because so many whom you knew before were not able to go with you. And yet you feel a Spiritual Presence in your life. Here you go where life seems open and unshielded, where pain and happiness are sharper and much more clearly experienced. And yet, before long you find others who are venturing into that wilderness as well, and they are as uncertain as you, though they may not admit it. Here you will find that those things that interested you before no longer hold appeal or attraction now. You seek quiet instead of stimulation. You seek honesty instead of charm. You seek affinity instead of attraction. You seek inspiration instead of entertainment. You seek meaning instead of escape. Something has changed within you. Somewhere mysteriously you crossed a line, and everything began to change—to change just enough that you feel you have a different orientation in your life. Here you begin to recognize that life is a mystery and that all the assumptions and all the beliefs that you had that seemed to explain and organize your experience so conveniently no longer hold true. Here there is wonderment. Here there is great expectation. Here every day is something new, rather than a dreadful repetition of the past.

You do not walk this wilderness alone, but many of your companions are as yet unseen. Perhaps you feel them. Perhaps in the quietest moments you feel there is someone standing around you. Perhaps in a moment of anxiety or despair, you feel the graceful hand of The Unseen Ones on your shoulder.

Once you enter the wilderness, you must continue, and if you continue, you will find great companions. You will also find dangers there as well because people are not accustomed to living without definitions, and so you will see within yourself and within others the propensity to define or to project your ideas upon your new experience. Many serious mistakes are made here as a result. Here people try to extend their past life into their present life. They try to exercise the familiarity of their old ideas with the challenge of meeting new experiences. Here you see people making grandiose assumptions about the Divine and the Divine presence and reality in their lives. Here you see people making grandiose proclamations about their abilities—calling themselves healers, calling themselves advanced practitioners, thinking that they are at the final thresholds of their learning when in reality they are beginners like you.

There are no masters in the world. The world is not the environment for mastery. Perhaps this idea comes as a shock, but if you consider it honestly, you will see it with a great relief. The world is but a limited arena in which to experience life. There are greater arenas beyond the world in the Greater Community. You may become a proficient learner here, and you may become an advancing student of

Knowledge, and this represents a very great accomplishment, we assure you. But do not call yourself a master because life is the master. Knowledge is the master. And the ability of Knowledge and the depth of Knowledge will always exceed your understanding.

Be on guard for the errors in discernment and discretion that people make when they enter the wilderness. And be on guard for those who think they are in the wilderness when in fact they are simply confused within their own minds. And be on guard for those who claim to be masters and for those who claim to be advanced. With Knowledge you will see that they are but deceived and deceiving. For what they tell themselves is incorrect, and as a result what they reveal to others is incorrect as well.

Be vulnerable in the wilderness. Be like the plants and the animals in the physical wilderness. They are vulnerable to life. They are open to life. Be vulnerable. Be alert. Be cautious but not afraid. Be careful and move slowly. Observe others. Do not condemn anyone. Take time to make your decisions, if you have time. Do not be in a hurry. Learn patiently and your learning will be solid and reliable.

Entering the wilderness means you are facing life without assumptions or with fewer assumptions. The mystery of life has always been there. It has simply never been experienced for more than a moment here and there. Now you are living in it. Now you are feeling it. Now you are responding to it. It is exhilarating and frightening all at once. It is a precious time, but it is a risky time as well. You must have a very sincere heart to negotiate the beginning journeys into the wilderness successfully. Many people stop by the side of the road and give up or claim they have arrived at a final juncture or make great assumptions about their abilities because they think they have come so far. But there is much further to go and there is much more to do.

When others stop, keep going. You may welcome them to join you, but if they cannot, you have to go on. You do them and yourself a disservice if you give up your journey to try and initiate theirs. You will do more for them by continuing on. This beckons them, and they will remember your demonstration.

The wilderness is the place between thinking and Knowledge. It is the area between a life of assumptions and a life of experience. Here everything you thought you knew becomes questioned. Here your assumptions are recognized as assumptions rather than facts or realities. Here you begin to experience new dimensions in life, and your sensitivity develops. Here you are able to hear thoughts and become exposed to the mental environment. Here you taste life's reality much more clearly and much more sharply. Here your ambitions are tempered. Here your approach becomes humble.

If you proceed, your approach will become humble because reality will always exceed your evaluations. Here you realize nothing is absolute because you are in between two realities. Here you will feel your mortality and your vulnerability to life, but it is here in the wilderness that you will find Knowledge ever so clearly, for you will be open to it. You will need it, and you will call upon it because you will have to rely upon it. No longer is it a distant option. It now becomes an immediate necessity.

In the wilderness, all the voices of dissonance can whisper to you and lead you astray, but here the Unseen Ones will glide over you, and you will feel their gentle urging to go on. Here you will meet many attractive people, and you will wonder, "Should I go with them?" But you must continue on. If after a long journey they are still with you, well, only then will you know that you are meant to be together. But be careful. This evaluation can be wrongly made.

In the wilderness, you become open to Knowledge. Here you become reliant upon Knowledge. Do not fall back into safe conclusions and familiar ideas. Do not seek refuge from life. Do not close yourself off. Do not assume a new mantle of ideas, which will only become a crown of thorns for you in the future.

Keep moving forward. Keep taking the steps to Knowledge. Be without conclusion. Develop your abilities. Be a beginning student. Become reliant upon Knowledge. Become respectful of life's dangers and life's great opportunities. Become genuine with what you tell yourself and what you tell others. Be willing to appear foolish and confused. Be willing to be certain when you are certain.

If you can do these things, you will pass through the wilderness. You will gain great strength here. You will gain great confidence here. And you will gain the assurance that your Spiritual Family is with you and that there are those in life who are truly meant to be with you and who are truly capable of understanding you and knowing you.

The journey is longer than you think. And you will travel more slowly than you think you can. This will require more of you than you think it will require. And it will offer more to you than you think that it can offer. And it will restore to you abilities that you never knew you had. And it will elevate and clarify those abilities that you have always felt you had. And it will bring real dedication and devotion into your relationships, for that will be their foundation.

Your Spiritual Family is awaiting you, but you must make the journey. The power of decision is yours. And the power of Knowledge is with you to help you make the right decision. But first you must make the decision, and you will have to make it again and again.

Enter the Mystery. Enter the wilderness. Leave the paved roads of life, which represent the popular ideas and conventional thinking that people rely upon and call reality. If you are not reckless and ambitious, you will find your way because you will be moving slowly and carefully. If you do not have great presumptions about yourself and your life, you will recognize your opportunities and the dangers along the way. If you become reliant upon Knowledge in others and Knowledge within yourself, you will have a sound foundation for real decision making, and your decisions will be lasting and effective. If you are willing to be without definition and without philosophy, without high ideals and without terrible fears, if you allow your mind to be suspended, your mind can then find its way back to Knowledge.

The mind will then come to realize that it must serve and that it can only serve, and you will want it to serve because you want to serve. You want to serve others, and you want others to serve life with you. And you see there is no real sacrifice here, for all you have given up is ideas and assumptions. All you are really facing is uncertainty and mystery. Now you have a greater possibility to not only survive in the world but to flourish here and to contribute your great gifts that you have brought with you over a long journey from your Ancient Home. Now your mind becomes sharper. Your perception becomes deeper. Now you have a deep and abiding patience within you. Now you wait for certainty instead of assigning certainty. Now you wait for truth instead of declaring truth. Now you look for reality in another instead of being fooled by appearances.

Only the wilderness can teach you this. Only the wilderness can initiate your relationship with Knowledge in this life. Enter gratefully and respectfully. Keep your eyes open. Keep your mind as clear as you can. Keep your eyes focused on the present and on the future, for you cannot go back and there is nothing to go back to. Have faith that your friends and family will some day, perhaps in the distant future, understand what you are doing. And remember, you can do nothing alone. Therefore, you do not walk the wilderness alone, but you must walk the wilderness to find out who is really with you.

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