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The Old Man who swallowed a Fly

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The Old Man who swallowed a Fly

By Jean de Cabalis

There once was old man, perhaps a simple man, who one day when going about his business happened to yawn and as fate would have it, a fly flew into his mouth. He coughed and sputtered at the shock of this, and unknown to him the fly was also coughed out almost immediately.

Failing to notice that the fly had been spat out, he continued to sputter; becoming more and more anxious. By this stage he had totally convinced himself, that the fly had been swallowed whole, and that the fly was alive inside his stomach. What is believed is real.

The fly began to drive the old man mad - and finally, when he could stand it no longer, he sought help to alleviate his suffering.

The first doctor he went to was a scientist of considerable scientific skill. This doctor tried to explain that the scientific point of view was quite clear, it was impossible for a fly to live in a man's stomach. He explained about the digestive system, the stomach fluids and its acids but all to no avail. The old man was not healed.

So the old man went to a second doctor - this doctor was a psychologist. The psychologist listened to the man. And then when finished the psychologist proceeded to negate the old man's belief. He shattered the old man's identity and his self esteem, by using clever theories concerning the ego, id, paranoid delusions etc. The old man was not healed. In fact he left in a worse condition than before.

Now it was a sad-old man with the fly living inside him. As a last resort, he tried the church. He saw the priest, and the Father took pity on the old man, and though he did not believe that such a thing was possible, he blessed and prayed for the man. Thus restoring some of his spirit, which had been so badly shattered by the psychologist. The old man left the church and though feeling a little better by the love of the priest still was not healed.

Now tales of the mad-old man with a fly living inside him travelled throughout the world until one day, by the Will of God, the story reached an Adept. The Adept took pity on the old man's story and knowing him to be a fool, still decided to travel to his home in the hope of healing him - as is the way of compassion.

However before reaching the old man's house the Adept caught a fly and gently hid this fly inside his bag of tricks. The old man welcomed the Adept inside and told him his story. The Adept did not negate the old man's belief, as had been done by the scientist and psychologist who had in all sincerity tried to help - for it is not the way of the Adept to unnecessarily negate another's reality.

The Adept placed his ear on the old man stomach and listened. 'Yes' said the Adept, "I HEAR the fly that you have inside your stomach". The Adept did not lie, for given his deep empathy he heard the old man's fly. Even though the fly was a creation of the old man's imagination, great empathy shares the reality of others.

The old man was thrilled, finally he had met someone who knew the truth as did he; that there was a fly living inside his stomach. What is believed is real.

The Adept said that he would need to mix up a special alchemical formula, which when swallowed, would soon be rejected by the body and cause him to vomit. Except, as this was a sticky liquid which the fly would be attracted to and captured. Hence the fly would stick to this liquid, and when thrown up with the vomit, the man would be free of his torment.

So the Adept went into the kitchen and used his ingredients from his bag of tricks, to make the substance necessary. When it was ready he placed the fly on the bottom of the cup and poured the liquid over it and mixed it well in - ensuring that the fly was well covered and could not be seen within. He then passed the cup to the man to drink, and firmly instructed the old man that the liquid must be drunk quickly, preferably in one guzzle.

The old man did what the Adept instructed and soon began to cough and splutter. In a few minutes, the old man was seen running into the kitchen. The old man reached for an empty bowl, and having just enough time - he threw up.

As the old man looked into the bowl, the Adept said "Search for the fly, to see whether or not we were successful in freeing you of this nuisance". The old man taking a fork ploughed through the bowl, until his eyes lit up. With a great sense of wonder, thankfulness and relief the old man showed the Adept the fly. The old man was healed. What is believed is real.

The old man who swallowed a fly is a tale of love. It is true that the old man was a fool and given the relief of his anxiety and delusion that he was none the wiser after his release - but such intellectual propositions are beside the point, the old man was healed. The old man did not seek enlightenment - he only sought an end to his suffering. It is true that the Adept used jugglery to trick the old man, however in this jugglery was the process of empathy and communion - all which are acts of love. There is another point to the story, and it has do with real magic as well as compassion. What is believed is real. No two persons in this universe share the same reality. Knowledge is which that is agreed upon by common consensus by a multitude of beings sharing a similar reality. It is nothing more. A simple shift in the phase of one reality to another can and does altar the level of truthfulness concerning a particular reality.

Just as it is evident that a change of perception also changes the truth! This is one reason why knowledge is represented as the oscillating world within the abyss. And it is more importantly why principles such as Understanding and Wisdom are placed higher on the Tree of Life of the Qabalists. And also why God doesn't pull down the veils of illusion surrounding this world, so that man can immediately see the greater truth - whether ready for it or not.

This tale was told to me many years ago by one of my mentors, as she in turn heard it from her mentor. The tale has to do with the ultimate power of Love, with reality and the negation of reality. Only recently have I re-learned this all too important lesson. It is the greater skill that when entering a lower world, that the Adept becomes given to meekness and virtue. A saying of the Guardian Order is "One cannot claim Adepthood, to have discovered the Heart of the Cross and unless one is enlightened to the principles of Communion, Compassion and Cooperation".

There are many virtues, but of them all, it is love which is the greatest. And it is love from which all the virtues come. Love is gentle in its approach; it is not hasty nor hard nor insulting. It never seeks to hurt and if it gives injury or insult un-intended, it does not seek to justify itself nor condone its actions. Love is strong yet it seems weak. Love does not blame, nor accuse nor judge nor discredit another. Love defends all that are within its power to love; seeking always communion rather than separation. Love does not offer its truth, if its truth causes loss of hope or injury nor will it lie.

Love will never negate another's reality - for it knows the higher truths which lead all gently out of falsehood and darkness. Love never seeks to glorify itself at the expense of any-other or to express truths which cannot be known. Love is forgiveness to those whom seek it and healing to those whom seek healing. Love is softness to those whom seek strength. Love is meekness and empathy.

It is love that binds the world together, and it is love that provides grace for life to exist; and it is love's warmth which is light. Love is both the baby-god-within and the Parent of All. Love is the child and is the challenge to us all within the community of Life.