



Live Intentionally, In Freedom, by Eknath Easwaran

Modern psychology commonly asserts that we cannot enter the unconscious fully aware. The mystic responds, "Oh, yes, you can! I have done it." The journey cannot be adequately described, but I like to think of it as a return from exile. Into those strange and wonderful realms we too can go, to challenge the wild beasts that roam there, search out the castle where old King Ego reigns in our stead, and claim our throne and the vast inner treasure that is rightfully ours. For this is our own land, the one to which we were born. Even if temporarily we endure banishment, even if the kingdom lies in some disorder because of the usurper's misrule, we can return triumphant and set everything right.

But "challenging wild beasts"? It is no exaggeration: I mean the selfish desires and negative feelings that stalk us. How powerful they are! It has always seemed to me a little wishful to say "I think" or "I feel." For the most part, our thoughts think us, our feelings feel us; we do not have much say in the matter. The door of the mind stands open all the time, and these unpleasant mental states can pad in when they will. We can have a drink, pop in a tranquilizer, lose ourselves in a best-seller or a ten-mile run, but after we come back the beasts will still be there, prowling about the threshold.

On the other hand, we can learn to tame these creatures. As meditation deepens, compulsions, cravings, and fits of emotion begin to lose their power to dictate our behavior. We see clearly that choices are possible: we can say yes, or we can say no. It is profoundly liberating. Perhaps, we will not always make the best choices at first, but at least we know there are choices to be made. Then our deftness improves; we begin to live intentionally, to live in freedom.