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## A CONSCIOUS SURRENDERING

In Madame Blavatsky's spiritual guidebook, *The Voice of the Silence*, the disciple is warned of the "great dire heresy." This refers to the common delusion that the personal self exists separately from the universal Self, from which all life flows. The spiritual amnesia that accompanies embodiment in physical form brings about identification with the temporal self and a forgetfulness of our true nature. In this respect, one is like an actor, so immersed in the role to be played that he becomes, for the moment, that character. As aspirants to the spiritual life, it is our task to rise above the temporal self and realize our fundamental identity with the One. In *The Light of Asia*, Sir Edwin Arnold describes this sublime experience as the moment when "the dewdrop slips into the shining sea."

There is a parallel, I think, between this merging of the particular consciousness with the universal and that of the artist working under the sway of inspiration. In one of his essays of literary criticism, T. S. Eliot describes the creative process of the writer as one in which the writer steps outside of himself, so to speak, and becomes a channel for something greater and more enduring. "What happens is a continual surrender of himself, as he is at the moment, to something which is more valuable. The process of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality."

With both the aspirant and the artist, there is a conscious surrendering of the personal self. This willing relinquishment can result in an influx of vibrant energy and a wonderful sense of freedom unlike anything one may experience when hampered by the limitations of the personal ego. The supreme goal put before the aspirant in such guidebooks as *The Voice of the Silence* is to be of service. With the artist, the creative process is generally described as one of self-expression; that may be true, but it is not the whole story. When one considers the relation of art to society, there is also the element of service. Enduring art of high quality is a gift to the world. In referring to the poet William Butler Yeats (who was well acquainted with Theosophy), T. S. Eliot said, "He showed that an artist, by serving his art with entire integrity, is at the same time rendering the greatest service he can to his own nation and to the whole world."

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