

## **Sorry, But You've Come To The Wrong Office**

An excerpt from a talk by Vernon Howard given on 12-07-77, Side 1 at 40 minutes.

Student: Vernon, the unconscious, is that merely thoughts, feelings, sensings, that we don't -- that is running through our mind so fast that we don't catch it?

Vernon: The unconscious, did you say? Yes. That's a very good way to put it. It's running through our mind like a reckless wild horse. And we're on the horse; the same thing as the horse; so that we don't see it at all. Our opportunity to see it is for someone to jump out in front of that horse and wave a red flag.

That horse is running like crazy, and someone jumps up and waves -- the horse rears up. His motion -- forward motion is broken, isn't it? And this is what the shocks we're trying to give to each other here are all about.

The horse is not going to reach out and get a red flag and put it in front of his own face. He's incapable. He doesn't want to do it. Something outside of that horse has to do it. And what that is is the first little bit of understanding that you gain in the office when you've exhausted all the other offices.

Student: To be able to reply to life as far as, "You've come to the wrong office," you have to -- wouldn't you have to have begun to be able to separate from your false self a little?

Vernon: Of course. Of course. That's the start of it, isn't it? If someone -- look, when your evil is the same as my evil, we're buddies, right? And then we fight all the other what we call evil in the world. If I begin to get tired of what my evil is doing to me, then I can recognize my evil and therefore your evil. That's the separation, isn't it?

Can any of us here begin to see what phonies we are? I'll get one maybe even closer home than that. Can you begin to see -- well, take a pad with you sometime -- better make it pretty long -- a 100-page notebook would be better. And you carry it with you -- and about ten pencils. And you make a little mark every time you feel ill at ease over anything.

You walk down the street, you'd be writing as you walk down the street. The way that man looked at me -- you won't have anything to do but write down one, two, three -- all day long, right? How many have felt ill at ease in the hour we've been here already? More than once? Twice? Thrice? Frice? (Laughter)

That's because we have -- we're still visiting the office called Useless Agitation Supplied Here. You glance at me, or I see there's only one cookie left and there's two people there. Can I catch myself right in the middle of the discomfort, the embarrassment, the ill at ease, and see it going on inside me at that instant?

Some day you will be able to catch it. And when you catch it, another bell will ring, and that bell will consist of one word. You see you're ill at ease about something out in the kitchen. You really see it. And for the first time you say, "Ah, for the first time I've seen it. The other times I imagined I saw it, and I wanted to blab about it." The minute you see it clearly, another bell will ring that will say -- another voice will speak -- that will say, "Unnecessary."

Why should there be any ill-at-easement at all? Discomfort at all? Why? It exists because a certain little machine inside with calculation and cunning that says about 100 things at the same time. "How can I keep that person in the kitchen from seeing that I've gained ten pounds? Huh? How can I keep that person thinking that I'm nice -- if they thought it in the first place -- I hope. How can I come to this class and experience the least amount of discomfort?"

Oh, you waste this class. You come here after this to see how much discomfort you can become aware of so that you're not ill at ease unconsciously by trying to put on a front, by trying to protect something.

Nervousness is very important to study. The word nervous -- very simple word, right? You might even write it down. "I will study nervousness." That would be good. "I will study nervousness." Try to see how many things are involved in it, one of them being -- notice how much more at ease you are when you're all alone, when you don't have to see whether other people are approving or disapproving or whatever.

Of course, you're ill at ease about other things when you're with yourself because you're living with your own agitated mind. But at least with other people, when you're a little bit at ease -- no masks or anything like that -- and that should be evidence that our contacts with other people

arouse the false parts in us that want to be impressive, that want to keep the delusion going that "I'm okay," that "I'm strong," that "I'm intelligent," that "I'm normal."

Look at the strain we put on ourselves, trying to keep the other person thinking well of ourselves when we don't even think well of ourselves.

You don't think very much of yourself, do you? You really don't. Well, of course, that's a mistake because you've identified with all the nuttiness inside you and called yourself that. That is why you don't think well of yourself, which is simply self-centered conceit. But that's another debt to explore. But you don't think well of yourself at all. And yet you want other people to, which means that the actor or actress has to be pretty busy out there.

Student: Vernon, is a lot of nervousness caused by suppressed hostility and rage?

Vernon: It's certainly involved in it. When you are nervous or I am nervous, I hate that state. I really hate it. For a number of reasons. First of all, I don't like the pain. And I don't like you telling me that I'm nervous because – you single me out. You say you're calm; I'm nervous, therefore I'm inferior to you. It's always involved in it. How can it be separate from it?

When are you going to rebel against nervousness? I'll tell you how to rebel against it with complete success. Just be nervous. And take all the criticism, all the stares, all the disappointment.

"Oh, we thought you were poised and in charge of yourself, and you broke up – you cracked up at that crisis that happened." But it won't do you any good to be nervous unless you know you are and just stand there and suffer consciously from it.

Do you know what will happen if you do that? Nervousness, which is a part of our general neurosis, will run its course for the moment. You're in a situation where you're nervous. Okay. Go ahead – go ahead. Be it. As if you can do anything else. You can cover it up, but cover it up – a monkey is still a monkey. You put a hood over it, and there's still a monkey underneath it. It's just an invisible monkey or something. (Laughter)

The energy in the false state will run its course. That is, it will get tired because there's always a change in motion, in movement, in energy. You're not nervous all the time, are you? Sometimes you're relatively at ease. So it will run its course.

And as you stand there and remain nervous, without doing anything about it, repeatedly – as you repeatedly do this, then each time you do this – without fighting it, without resistance – to make it clearer, each time it will last 30 seconds shorter each time. It will exhaust itself faster each time until it won't arise at all. Because you are no longer a part of the nervous person with its imposter and all that, that is not there to be set off, to be made nervous, by any situation at all. Not in the courtroom, not at the wedding, not at the family quarrel, not at the loss of this or that. There's no one there to be set off. And when nervousness tries to walk in, you remember, "Sorry, but you've come to the wrong office. I'm not getting involved in that anymore."

You can actually – you'll be able to actually see sometime where you're in a – say in a social crisis situation. You'll actually be able – because you're working on yourself at all times, you'll be in the same situation you were, say, ten years ago, and because you're sitting there quietly, you can see how the idiot in you ten years ago got up and tried to prove himself, tried to straighten out the mess of other people. And you can see why you were nervous, because you were being a phoney, thinking you were helping or trying to be intelligent, making that dynamic remark. No wonder you're nervous; you're a dummy. Dummies are always nervous.

How many – let's find out. How many nervous people are there? What does that – (Laughter) All right. I couldn't resist.

And you'll sit there calmly, and you'll be able to see the progress you have made by only visiting this one office of information all the time, every day instead of the other places. And that – I don't care how many times – how long you stay in it – the time will come when you'll move in. Then, curiously, in one sense – in one sense you'll move out because you're no longer depending on knowledge to tell you how to behave; you're depending on something that is higher than knowledge.

Then this something that is higher than knowledge can speak to knowledge and say, "Say this," in that situation, and it will be the right thing to say. "Do this," in that situation, and on the social, everyday level, it will be the right thing to do.

In other words, we're trying to get our instructions from a higher source than our own nuttiness. Our own habitual nuttiness.

Student: With all this knowledge that we keep putting into our head, is it going to connect with something higher? Is that what is going to come out?

Vernon: Well, it's a part of the whole – knowledge has its part as the whole wholeness, but you use it as a stepping stone. Once you're up there, up in the castle, you don't use the stepping stones anymore. Except for practical purposes. We're using stepping stones called words. If by a great miracle all of us in this room suddenly understood everything about life, would there be any need for words? We would sit here and just look at each other, stare at each other. (Laughter) Stare nervously – no.

You work on this from now on, too, in this room. And everybody else. Notice the little nervous eye contacts you have with people. When I come here early – which I always do – and I look out at some of you, what goes on in your mind when you have eye contact with me? What goes on when Gordon looks at Joe or Rod looks at Allen, Connie looks at Mr. DeFrancis?

Are you ill at ease? Let's look. I'm going to look at some of you. Nothing the matter with eye contact. Anything embarrassing about it? Anything uncomfortable about it? Well, let's find out. I think I'll look at you. But our imagination goes to work. "What's he thinking?" (Laughter).