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Of course our states will move almost imperceptibly from one to another – we may go forward spiritually only to take a step back. But what matters most is the general direction we are going in on the pathway of life – it ought to be in the direction from a self-centred state to a selfless state.

Jesus made very clear that this pathway is his pathway and it is a pathway of love for others.

“I am the way, and the truth and the life” John 14:1

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” John 15:12

Emanuel Swedenborg wrote in Divine Love and Wisdom 73:

Angels do not know what time is, and they think of state when time is mentioned. Further, when it is state that determines time, time is only an appearance. A pleasant state makes time seem brief, and an unpleasant one makes it seem long. We can therefore see that time in the spiritual world is simply an attribute of state.

Next time you look at your watch to check the time think instead about the spiritual state you are in and whether you are making the right progress on the spiritual pathway towards a selfless way of living.

Time and Spiritual State



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Time

Recently the publishers of the Oxford English Dictionary presented a list of the most commonly used words in the English language and the Number 1 noun was TIME. It seems that our day to day lives are so dominated by time that we use the word TIME more than any other word. Walk around your home and you will probably find the time all over the place; on watches and clocks, on televisions and video/DVD players, on cookers and washing machines, on mobile phones and computers.

And we measure the time it takes to do things in ever decreasing amounts. When the 4 minute mile was broken in 1954 the time taken was measured to a tenth of a second as 3 minutes 59.4 seconds but equivalent Olympic events are now measured to a hundredth of a second. Yet with all our effort to measure time accurately we sometimes never seem to have enough time to do all the things we feel we have to do. And yet at other times we have time on our hands. What dominates our practical day to day living is time. So much of what we do is determined by the time of the day or the length of time we have available for a particular task. We measure the time very carefully and we complain if buses or trains do not follow their timetables. When asked to do something we might say: "I haven't got time for that".

It is perhaps not so surprising then to find that TIME is the most used noun in the English language.

But are all our experiences of life dominated by time or are there times! when we experience a sense of *timelessness* in this life.

Reflect on the occasions when you have been bored with nothing to do or undertaking a task in which you have no real interest or just watching the clock waiting for the time to go – doesn't time drag! Or think about the week before a special holiday. The days seem to go slowly by as you wait for your holiday to start but once you begin your holiday the days seem to rush by! Or think about those occasions when you are engrossed in doing something you love or are simply being with someone you love. Our sense then is that time doesn't matter. You see, our sense of time depends on how we feel or the state we are in. Be in a happy and contented state and without you realising it, time has rushed

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by. But be in a sad and disgruntled state and time drags by very slowly.

We can begin to see from this that our deeper inner spiritual life does not experience time but instead experiences changes in state or being. Now we don't use the word STATE anything like as much as TIME but we do sometimes say of people – "what a state you have got yourself in" and doctors might treat someone in "a depressed state".

Just read the following two sentences.

Yesterday I was so wrapped up in my own problems that I couldn't be bothered with anyone else but today I have been helping a neighbour with their gardening.

I was in a state of being so wrapped up in my own problems that I couldn't be bothered with anyone else but my state has changed and I have been helping a neighbour with their gardening.

Whilst we may talk about how we felt *yesterday* and the fact that *today* we feel differently the time involved is very unimportant. What is important is that we have changed from one state to another - from a state of not caring for others to a state of wanting to help others. It might appear that we have changed because of the passage of time but this is just an appearance. In reality it is our deeper inner spiritual state that has changed.

But because of our worldly obsession with time we rarely take time to think more deeply about how our inner states change. And yet there will come a time when we pass from this world fully into the spiritual world and then our whole environment will be determined by the *state we are in* and not by time.

In this very physical world we inhabit we have become dominated by TIME and the need to do certain things on time or at the right time or before time. And yet spiritually we need to become more and more concerned about our STATE and how we can change it. Are we in a self-centred and introverted state or are we in a selfless and outward going state looking to meet the needs of others rather than ourselves.

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