

October 1960

READING 2

ALL GROUPS

TWENTY YEARS AFTER (Continued)

PART 1

We will continue to read the First Psychological Lecture:

To continue further our analysis of psychological teaching, it is necessary to note that both those which exist openly and those which are hidden can be divided into two chief categories.

First, there are those which study man *as they find him* or *such as they suppose him to be*; and second, those which study man not from the point of view of what he is, but from the point of view of *what he may become*, i.e. from the point of view of his evolution.

When we understand the importance of the study of man from the point of view of his possible development, we shall understand that the first definition of psychology should be that it is the study of man's evolution.

Quite naturally, the most important question in theories of the second kind is whether the evolution of man is a general phenomenon or an exceptional one; i.e. what evolution means in relation to man, what laws govern it, which circumstances and conditions are favourable to it and which are unfavourable.

Here, we will study only those psychological teachings which refer to the evolution of man; and among them only those which regard the evolution of man as an exceptional phenomenon dependent on certain very rare conditions, both inner and outer.

The fundamental idea in teachings of this kind is that man as we know him is not a completed being, that nature develops him only up to a certain point and then leaves him either to develop further by his own efforts and devices, or to live and die such as he was born.

According to these theories, the evolution of man means the development of certain inner qualities and powers in him which usually remain undeveloped and cannot develop by themselves.

Experience and observation show that this development is possible only in certain definite conditions, which efforts of the right kind on the part of man himself, and with sufficient help from those who began similar work before and have already attained a certain degree of development or at least a certain knowledge.

Without efforts, evolution is impossible; without help it is also impossible.

In the way of development, man must become a different being, but all men cannot develop and become different beings. So, in relation to the mass of humanity, evolution is an exception.

These theories of the development of man, taken together, make a certain system which we will study here.

COMMENTARY. TWENTY YEARS AFTER

The distinction is made between those psychological schools which study man as they find him; and those which study him from the point of view of what he may become, i.e. from the point of view of his Evolution.

We must ask ourselves two kinds of question:

1. Does not all that goes under the name of psychology today, especially academic psychology at the Universities, belong to the first category – those schools which study man as they find him? Can we point to any published work today under the heading Psychology, which studies a man as an incomplete being and from the point of view of ‘what he may become’?
2. In what sense is the word ‘Evolution’ here used? I daresay that a biologist reading the quotation from Mr. Ouspensky’s lecture would take it as referring to the slow changes that man (like other species of organic life) has undergone and is presumably now undergoing and he would be puzzled to know why it is said that ‘in relation to the mass of humanity, evolution (in that sense) is an exception.’ The recent Reith Lectures are a good example of this point of view.

How would we answer him?

(Discussion of both these kinds of question.)

The System tells us that the word ‘Evolution’ covers six quite different kinds of process. On every scale in the Universe there are six possible kinds of combination of the Three Forces (six triads as they are called), and it is a very valuable task for those with the necessary knowledge of, and interest in, the biological sciences to work these out. A short paper is available for those who want to study it seriously.

Now we can say that the word ‘Evolution’ in the quotation under consideration refers only to *one* of these six processes; that is, the word is used in a very special sense. The clue to this special meaning is given by Mr. Ouspensky in his book *A New Model of the Universe* Second Edition (p.25):

Strictly speaking, all *transforming* processes can be called evolutionary. The development of a chicken from an egg, of an oak from an acorn, of wheat from a grain, of a butterfly from egg, caterpillar and chrysalis; all these are examples of yet another kind of evolutionary process actually existing in the world. The idea of evolution (in the sense of transformation) in ordinary thought differs from the idea of evolution in esoteric thought in this respect... that esoteric thought recognises the possibility of transformation of man into superman, which is the highest meaning of the word ‘evolution’.

If we substitute the word ‘Transformation’ for ‘Evolution’ (a practice indeed which Mr. Ouspensky himself adopted later) parts of the Psychological Lecture will now read:

According to these theories, the transformation of man means the development of certain inner qualities and powers in him which usually remain undeveloped and cannot develop by themselves... Without efforts transformation is impossible; without help it is also impossible. In the way of development man must become a different being, but all men cannot become different beings. So, in relation to the mass of humanity, transformation is an exception.

Is not this passage now quite easy to understand and is not its truth proved by the rare appearance of Superman in the history of humanity?

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PART 2

Continuing the First Lecture:

Many questions naturally arise from the preceding statements:

Which qualities and powers can be developed in man and how can this be done?

What does it mean that man can become a *different being*?

Why can only *a few* men develop and become different beings?

Why all this injustice?

Why cannot all men develop and become different beings?

I shall try to answer these questions, and I shall begin with the last: Why cannot all men develop and become different beings?

The answer is very simple.

Because they do not want it.

The fact is that in order to become a different being man must want it *very much* and for a very long time. *The evolution of man depends on his own will.* If man does not want it, or even if he does not want it strongly enough, he will never develop. So there is no injustice. Why should man have what he does not want? If people were forced to become different beings when they are satisfied to be what they are, then this would be injustice.

Another very important side of this question is that, in order to 'want' in the right way, man must know not only what he wants but what he may get and how he can get it. Vague desire based chiefly on dissatisfaction with external conditions will not create a sufficient impulse.

COMMENTARY

This raises questions which are very much in our minds just now. We have a large organisation in London with branches in many countries in the world. We feel that we now have the material, the facilities and the experience to give the System to many more people. How should we approach them, how can we make them want it?

In particular we now have a method which many more people might be able to learn (to their considerable advantage) whether or not they would later want to go on to the System. Yet when we approach our friends we are continually coming up against this undoubted fact that *they do not want it.*

'Why on earth should I want to meditate?' they say; or 'Who are you to give me advice?' Moreover, a surprising number of people who were never religious before now claim that such a method would be against their religion! And anyway no-one has any time.

Part of the answer lies in the words 'different being' – if you and I had a different being perhaps we might have more success in interesting our friends. But this is not the whole answer; for an Indian Master who clearly has 'a different being' is having no more success than we are! And (if we go to the highest conceivable level) no one could doubt that to the people of Judaea Christ must have clearly demonstrated the difference of His Being – yet very few became his disciples and He himself was persecuted and crucified. The same pattern occurs all through history and each age must find its own answer.

Part of the problem also lies in the unfortunate use of the word 'Meditation' which is given a sense contrary to the familiar one, so that people at once say they know all about 'meditation' already, and refer you to a host of books on the subject which have nothing, in fact, to do with this method.

I would like you therefore this week to think over these questions:

'What would be a sufficient incentive to offer people to induce them to try this method to change their Being – 'Happiness'? 'Enlightenment'? 'Peace of mind'? 'Greater efficiency and energy'?

'What would be a better word than 'Meditation' to use in introducing the subject?'

It is useful to all of us to consider such questions, so please bring your answers next week.

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