

October 1960

## READING 3

## ALL GROUPS

## TWENTY YEARS AFTER (Continued)

## PART 1

Continuing our reading of the First Psychological Lecture:

Now, the other questions: What does *development* mean and what does *different being* mean?

The answer to these two questions must be divided into two parts.

First, by the way of development man acquires many *new* powers, faculties and properties which now he does not possess and about which he has no idea, or only a very vague and distorted idea.

Second, by the way of development man acquires many powers, faculties and properties *which he also does not possess but which he ascribes to himself*, i.e. he thinks he possesses them.

This is the most important point. By the way of evolution, as described before, i.e. a way based on effort and help, man can acquire qualities which he thinks he already possesses.

In order to understand this better and to know what are these faculties and powers which man can acquire, we must begin with man's general views about himself.

Man does not know himself. He does not realise his own possibilities and his own limitations. He does not even realise to how great an extent he does not know himself.

Man has invented many machines and he knows that any complicated machine needs years of careful study before one can use it or control it. But he does not apply this realisation to himself, although he himself is a much more complicated machine than any machine he has invented.

He has all sorts of wrong ideas about himself. First of all he does not realise that he *actually is a machine*.

What does it mean that man is a machine?

It means that he has *no independent movements*, inside or outside of himself. He is a machine which is brought into motion by external influences. All his movements, actions, words, ideas, emotions, moods and thoughts are produced by external influences. By himself he is just an automaton with a certain store of memories of previous experiences and a certain amount of reserve energy.

*Man can do nothing*. But he does not realise this and ascribes to himself the *capacity to do*.

This must be understood very clearly. *Man cannot do*. Everything that man thinks he does really *happens*. It happens exactly as 'it rains', 'it snows', 'it thaws'.

Unfortunately, in the English language there are no impersonal verbal forms which can be used in relation to human actions. So we must continue to say that man thinks, reads, writes, loves, hates, fights and so on. Actually, all this *happens*.

Man cannot move, think or speak by himself. He is a marionette pulled here and there by invisible strings. If he understands this, he can learn more about himself and possibly even change things for himself. But if he cannot realise and understand his utter mechanicalness... he can learn nothing more and things cannot change for him.

## COMMENTARY. TWENTY YEARS AFTER

**Two chief questions. Firstly:**

*'By the way of evolution man can acquire qualities which he thinks he already possesses.'*

What is meant here? There are powers we have heard of (such as telepathy, clairvoyance, prophecy) which we don't claim to possess any more than we claim to speak Russian or play the violin. Many powers like that *can* be developed in man, but in ordinary people they remain *latent*. Latent faculties are those for which nervous centres and connections exist in man but the nervous centres and connections are not in circulation, are not functional. The powers of a car without petrol and oil, a car which is not being driven, are latent. What is important is that quite ordinary faculties (which we take for granted that we possess) are also latent. We think we can speak the truth or that we can love our families and friends, just because we happen to have spoken the truth, occasionally, happen to have experienced a momentary flicker of love. Mostly, of course, we love only ourselves and live in fantasy and lies.

We have been assured (by the Maharishi to whom some of us have been listening) that with right method 'there are a lot of latent faculties which develop quite naturally – a greater apprehension, clarity of mind, peace of mind, happiness (in spite of conditions), right thinking, right decision, foresight; all these develop very naturally. ['Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added unto you.']

(Pause)

**Secondly:**

In what sense are we to understand the expression, *'Man is a machine having no independent movements, but brought into action by external influences?'*

Recently we have also heard about this at first-hand:

Doctors will tell you that the nervous system is fully developed in man. Every man born as man has the possibility of integrating life, of bringing a (higher) state of Being into the field of experience of multiplicity. All experience enters the brain as impressions (creating lines of memory and habit.) Seeing a flower, the impression of its sweet scent or its beauty enters the mind... So the process of seeing leaves an impression; that impression comes up as a desire. That desire leads to action; that action leaves an impression again. Impressions come up as a bubble of desire; desire results in action again. So this (vicious circle of) impression – desire – action continues, and as long as this continues, so long will continue the cycle of birth and death. In all religious books that's why it is said, 'Desire is the root of all bondage.'<sup>†</sup>

[Exercise for new people: Try sitting, relaxed yet alert, with eyes closed or half-closed, and with the single thought 'I am here'. Whatever the mind wanders to, just bring it gently back to this thought. At first you won't be able to do it for more than 2 minutes, but it will be restful. Later for 5 minutes – never more than 10.]

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<sup>†</sup>Talk by the Maharishi, Colet Gardens, 9 June 1960, p.23.

The Lecture continues:

Man is a machine, but a very peculiar machine. He is a machine which in right circumstances and with right treatment can know itself as a machine, and having fully realized this in general, he may find certain particular movements in himself, which do not happen by themselves but which can be developed only by special work on himself. By developing these movements he can really become a man, i.e. acquire the capacity *to do*. This is a very long process, and very few, even of those who start successfully, come to any tangible results. But if man remains a machine, he can do nothing. Everything happens to him.

#### COMMENTARY

The way out of the vicious circle makes use of Nature's mechanism, and starts from the realisation that for some hours one has been just a machine. This sudden realisation resembles the feeling of waking up after being asleep. Impressions of stupid actions, silly talk, opportunities missed, mistakes one has been making quite involuntarily, crowd into the mind. Impressions → Desire → Action. Such impressions make one desire *to Be, to Be a Man*, not a machine, *to Be oneself*. Gradually the desire *to Be Oneself* becomes stronger than other more transitory desires. There follows in time the *resolution* to keep awake; to watch one's step; to do and say nothing harmful or unnecessary. In that way choice of action (more conscious action) gradually arises out of the realisation of one's mechanicalness. In that way 'a man may find certain particular movements in himself which do not happen by themselves but which can be developed only by special work on himself.'

The outside world of multiplicity has its eternal value, the inside world of the glory of the Kingdom of Heaven has *its* Eternal value. Both are aspects of life. One without the other is not complete. If the house has not a verandah it is not the full house. If the house has not the warmth of the living-room, if it is not centrally heated, no, it doesn't do. The life within is already centrally heated, only we have to use it, use it, use it. (The Maharishi, 22 April 1960.)

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#### PART 2. AIM. (For New Groups only)

You were asked last week to suggest what would be a sufficient inducement to ordinary people to make them want to learn how to become a different Being. Probably we shall not get the best answer until we have tried to remember how we formulated our own aim before we came to hear the System.

At one of the early meetings in Moscow (*Fragments*, Ch.6) a question was asked:

'What is the aim of this teaching?' The answer was: 'It is important that you should define *your own* aim. *The teaching by itself cannot pursue any definite aim*. It can only show the best way for men to attain whatever aims they may have. The question of aim is very important. Until a man has defined his aim for himself he will not be able even to begin to do anything. How is it possible *to do* anything without having an aim? ... Think of how you formulated your own aim before you came here.'

Various answers were given. One said: 'I formulated my own aim quite clearly years ago. I said to myself that I want to know the future... For what is the good of beginning any kind of work when one doesn't know whether one will have time to finish it or not.'

'I should like to be convinced that I shall go on existing after the death of the physical body,' said one of the company, 'or if this depends on me, I should like to work in order to exist after death.'

'I don't care whether I know the future or not, or whether I am certain or not certain of life after death,' said another, 'if I remain what I am now. What I feel most strongly is that I am not master of myself, and if I were to formulate my aim, I should say that I want to be *master of myself*.'

'I should like to understand the teaching of Christ, and to be a Christian in the true sense of the term,' said a fourth.

'I should like to be able to *help people*,' said another; and 'I should like to know how to stop wars,' said yet another.

'Well, that's enough,' they were told, 'we have now sufficient material to go on. The best formulation is the wish to be one's own master; without this nothing else is possible, and without this nothing else will have any value.'

'But let us begin with the first answer, the first aim... It sounds paradoxical, but we have every right to say that we know our future. It will be exactly the same as our past has been. Nothing can change of itself. Only accidents cannot be foreseen. But knowing the future is worthwhile only when a man can be his own master (otherwise he would only live in dread without being able to alter anything).'

'There was a question about the future life – about how to create it, how to avoid final death, how not to die. If a man is changing every minute, if there is nothing in him that can withstand external influences, it means that there is nothing in him that can withstand death. But if he becomes independent of external influences, if there appears in him something that can live *by itself*, this something may not die. In ordinary circumstances we die every moment; external influences change and we change with them... If a man develops in himself a permanent 'I' (or ego) that can survive a change in external conditions, then this 'I' can survive even the death of the physical body. The whole secret is that one cannot work for a future life without working for this one. In working for this life one works for immortality; in attaining the one, a man attains the other. A man may strive *to be*, simply for the sake of his own life's interests. Through this alone he may become immortal.'

'Another question was: "how to become a Christian". First we must understand that a Christian is not a man who calls himself a Christian or whom others call a Christian. A Christian is one who lives in accordance with Christ's principles. (How can a man live in accordance with Christ's principles if he is changing all the time?) In order *to be* Christians, we must first learn *to be*; (and then a second step is necessary) we must be able *to do*: we cannot *do*; with us everything happens. Christ says: "Love your enemies", but how can we love our enemies when we cannot constantly even love our friends?'

'And then again somebody said he wanted to help people. In order to help people one must first learn to help oneself.'

'There was a question about war. *How to stop war?* War is the result of the slavery in which men live. Strictly speaking men are not to blame for war. War is due to bigger influences. But in men there is no resistance whatever against these influences, because men are slaves. If men could *be*, and could *do*, they would be able to resist these influences and refrain from killing one another...'

‘Those who dislike wars have been trying to stop them since the beginning of history; and yet wars are not decreasing, they are increasing, and wars cannot be stopped by conferences. All the theories about universal peace are simply laziness and hypocrisy. Men do not want to examine themselves, to go to work on themselves; but only think of how they can make other people do what they want.’

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(Now during the week try to formulate your own chief aims. You may not be specially interested in the aims these people mentioned. Let us have your own!)

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