

October 1960

## READING 4

## ALL GROUPS

## TWENTY YEARS AFTER (Continued)

## PART I

In listening to the continuation of Mr. Ouspensky's First Psychological Lecture about the Incompleteness of our Being, we must take it *positively* as a spur to goad us into taking the way out now offered to us.

Incapacity to do is closely connected with the absence in man of several fundamental features which he also ascribes to himself.

The first is the absence of 'unity', of 'oneness' or 'individuality'.

The second is the absence of permanent ego, or 'I'.

The third is the absence of consciousness.

The fourth is the absence of will.

Man attributes these features to himself in the same way as he attributes to himself the capacity to do. He is convinced that he has individuality, that he has a permanent 'I', that he has will, and that he has consciousness.

All this is an illusion. Man has no unity, no permanent 'I', no consciousness and no will.

His is not *one*, he has not one 'I', he consists of hundreds of different 'I's, many of whom do not even know one another.

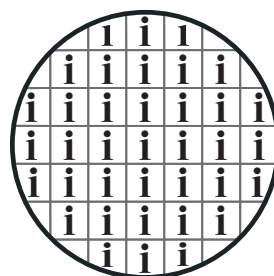
Every wish, every desire, every 'like' and every 'dislike', every opinion and every tendency, every belief and every disbelief is an 'I'. And each one of them has his own will and his own resistance to the will of other 'I's. These 'I's are divided into groups. Some of these groups are permanent and legitimate, i.e. they correspond to the divisions of man's natural being. Other groups are artificial, invented, imaginary; and they play the most important, and sometimes a most negative, part in human life. We shall come to these groups later.

Now I want to emphasise two facts.

First, I want to repeat what was said before about the absence in man of one permanent controlling 'I' different from other 'I's. All 'I's are equal; it is better to say that they are equally weak. Each of them can occasionally conquer other 'I's, each of them can become Caliph for an hour and then be replaced by another 'I'. None of them can do much good, but almost every one of them, in one hour or even less, can do so much harm that all the other 'I's will have to pay for it all their lives.

Second, although many 'I's do not know one another, they are all closely connected and interdependent, i.e. they all depend on one another without knowing which depends on which.

Here is a general picture of man:



## COMMENTARY

Only a little unprejudiced observation will show that this is true.

[*For new people.* Just sit for five minutes as suggested last week. Try only to realize 'I am here'. You will at once notice countless alternative desires, countless 'I's offering all sorts of reasons why it would be better to do something else! If you persist you will be convinced that, like Peer Gynt, 'there's nothing there after all' – nothing as yet permanent on which to rely.]

Having once realised this we don't waste time in self-analysis; we set out right away to create what is missing. We say Well, this has been my condition up to now, this *multiplicity*; let me set my sights on *Unity*. For *five minutes I can be one*, not many.

If we realise deeply our earthbound state, we will happily take wings to fly.

This quotation from a Monk of the IVth century out of the *Philokalia* gives the same idea:

A mind stripped of the former man becomes invested with that which emanates from godliness; it will then behold its real state as resembling a sapphire the colour of heaven.

This is a reference to Exodus 24, v.10, when Moses led the seventy elders up Mount Sinai:

They saw the God of Israel: and under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, and as the body of heaven in clearness.

If we see all the 'I's for what they are worth, we can leave them all behind by turning towards the heavenly state we desire to recapture. We don't stop to struggle with any of them, we lift the mind above them all.

[**For those doing the 'Meditation'.** I know of no way by which I have been brought to see the Many 'I's so well as this repetition for half-an-hour twice a day. Literally dozens of 'I's try to persuade one to postpone the half-hour, and dozens more try to take one off the repetition during it. It is a delight to realise how utterly unimportant they all are, and gently to pursue the only thing that really matters.

(Pause for illustrations of these different 'I's which people find trying to persuade them not to meditate.)

How stupid we all are: listen to the Maharishi:

To live on the earth as masters and not the slaves of creation, that is the purpose. Just a few minutes of Meditation morning and evening. Do not even think that today I didn't get time. A great loss. Didn't get time to get the great life, no time to enjoy the full values of life, and you have all time to waste in the darkness of life! No. First thing. This should be given priority, not when everything else is done so that Meditation comes last and begin drowsing and just drown in ignorance. No, it should be a vital aspect of everyday routine, the most vital aspect... Whatever you are ordinarily experiencing may be enough for the world career, but *this* is just the start of the Eternal Life.]

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## PART 2

The continuation of the quotation from Mr. Ouspensky points out the futility of the usual attempts to change one feature at a time, in contrast with the wisdom of leaving all the 'I's behind:

In regard to this diagram (Part 1) and to the interrelation of different 'I's in man, it is very important to understand what follows.

Suppose that two 'I's belonging to different manifestations of a man are connected and he does not know it. Suppose that he does not like one of these 'I's and finds it weak or dangerous. He decides to struggle against it. It may happen that he conquers it, i.e. destroys or weakens it. But by doing this he may, without realizing it, have done something that he did not intend to do and did not even suspect that he was doing. The 'I' that he wanted to destroy was connected with several other 'I's; and in destroying or weakening this 'I' he has, at the same time, destroyed these other 'I's which were connected with the first one – 'I's which, by themselves, could have been quite useful.

This refers in particular to habits and to the struggles with those habits which one considers wrong in oneself. A man can sometimes conquer wrong habits but always at the expense of some useful features which are, seemingly, quite unconnected with these habits. In this way a man becomes even more of a slave and even more of a machine than he was before. Therefore, it is much better if a man does not try to do anything, i.e. if he does not try to change and improve himself until he knows himself sufficiently well and knows exactly in what order and in which way things can be changed.

It must be understood that, at every moment in his life, man is a very *well-balanced machine*. 'Balanced' does not mean harmonised or harmonious. There is nothing in the world less harmonious than a man. 'Balanced' means balanced in the sense that if there is one thing in him of which he knows, there is also another, connected with the first, of which, in most cases, he does not know. And the difficulty is that by interfering with one thing he interferes with the other.

Many strange incidents of human life are based on man's unawareness of this balance and his upsetting of it.

Suppose, for instance, that a man notices that he is absent-minded, always forgetting things and so on. He decides to struggle against it and after some time he succeeds; but in a quite unexpected way he becomes miserly and suspicious and finds himself always suspecting people of evil intentions towards him. Or suppose that he finds that he is weak and sentimental about people, always thinking about their sufferings, their helplessness and so on. He begins to struggle with this and develops in himself the desire for domination over people and a complete disregard for their feelings; or suicidal tendencies; or a total loss of all moral values.

(Pause for examples of ordinary methods and empty resolutions to get rid of some undesirable feature.)

## COMMENTARY

This shows the futility of ordinary slap-happy methods and resolutions. One 'I' resolves something one morning, but this 'I' quickly disappears, and most of the other 'I's didn't hear about it and in any case want quite different things. Besides, such resolutions are rather like 'giving up sugar in Lent for religious reasons' – they don't get near the heart of the matter.

But even supposing that we were able to persist for the long period necessary to overcome some habit, Mr. Ouspensky points out that such a 'conquest' is quite likely to have unforeseen or undesirable effects. So let me repeat: We don't *struggle* with anything. We simply try to Be, to *be One*, for as long and as often as possible. In that way we preserve the balance of the machine, but we add something, we add a man to direct the machine. In the simile of Wilder Penfield, the neurosurgeon, there would be a telephone operator as well as a switchboard!

(Pause for discussion. Conclude by reading again the quotation from the  
*Philokalia* in complete form as follows):

A mind stripped of the former man becomes invested with that which emanates from godliness; it will then behold its real state as resembling a sapphire the colour of heaven, being called in the Scriptures (Exodus 24, v.10) the seat of God, according to the experience of the elders of Sinai.

Mind cannot find the seat of God unless it is able to rise above all material and carnal (that is 'mechanical') thoughts; it cannot rise above such thoughts without giving up desires which bind it to sensations and the propagation of thoughts. Such passions can be overcome through uprightness and ordinary thoughts by (spiritual) meditation; but even that will be put away at the coming of the light, which during prayer, reveals the seat of God.

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