

4 February 1963

MAN, THE TRANSFORMER

SUBJECT OF FIRST MONDAY MEETING, JANUARY 1963

PART 1

We are now going to return to the central idea proposed by Mr. Ouspensky for the Society which he created in this house.

At the close of a meeting on September 13th, 1937, about the necessity for a Society and for a large house from which it could operate in London, he said:

Possibly in a week or two we may have something to read either in connection with the Society or in connection with the lectures. For instance, I began to write a small lecture on *Transformism* and *psycho-transformism*, because right understanding of these words will help very much to understand what this Work is, and to explain it to other people.

November 8th, 1937

Q. Is psycho-transformism the work of a triad?

Mr. O. Yes, it must be the work of a particular triad. But it is a complicated process. You can see that *intervals* in the ascending octave work by 2-3-1, and *notes* by 2-1-3.

July 25th, 1938

Q. Has the word 'psycho-transformism' been used in general language?

Mr. O. No, it explains our view... The word 'transformism' has been used in regard to evolution. 'Psycho-transformism' is based on other ideas, opposite to mechanical evolution. It is the one new word we have used, and we must not make it popular before we explain it, or people will steal it and give it quite different meaning.

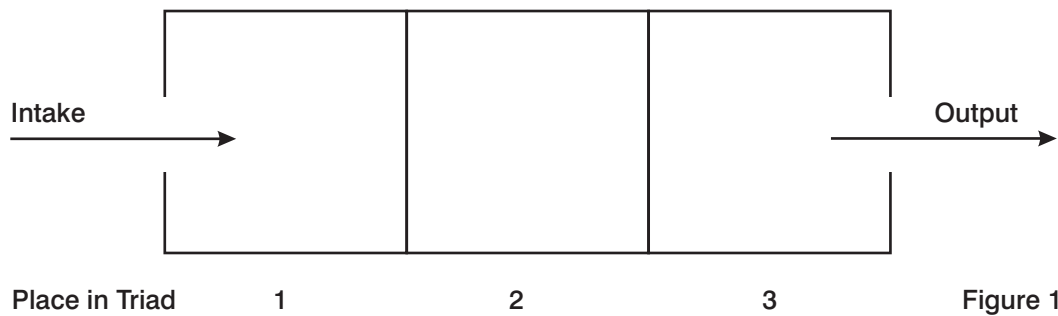
New copies of the programme (of the Society) will be ready in September.

This was just over twenty-four years ago and the whole thing has taken a good deal longer than he hoped. But now as we stand on the threshold of 1963 the idea he had in mind has assumed a new importance for us. So it is not the *word* (which could be thought cumbersome and outdated) but the *idea* we want to return to.

It had its roots in the Principle of the Conservation of Energy in physics – energy does not disappear, but one form of energy is transformed into another. Herbert Spencer took it up as a prelude to the Doctrine of Evolution in biology. Living beings transform the food they eat into different forms of energy, and are themselves transformed by their environment from one breed to another.

Our System is not so interested in the transformation of the food man eats or the air he breathes (mechanical transformation) as by the transformation of his *impressions*, which needs a conscious process and could be properly called 'psycho-transformism'. While mechanical transformation applies to all the species of organic life (man included), psycho-transformation applies to something quite different which is *entirely individual* and often against the stream.

What we want to study can be expressed in the following *diagram of man as a transformer of impressions*:



An individual lives in a particular space and time, in particular circumstances of space and climate and society and country, is mainly under certain kinds of influence, is attracted and pays attention to particular forms of impression. The result of all this experience, these tendencies and habits, gives him a certain kind of being, a certain character and personality. If you include the same process in his previous lives, his Essence will have developed individual characteristics which make him unique – a physical and psychological temperament and constitution. Resulting from all that is included in the first two places in the triad, so the third place will be inevitably conditioned and his output predetermined. This output is most obvious in his behaviour, expression, words and actions, but much of it will come out in more subtle ways – his vibrations will be affecting other people. If his sphere of influence is more extensive, his writings, broadcasts, painting, music, the roadwork and the buildings he constructs, all these can be called ‘output’, and they result from the third place in the triad.

Nothing new about this; we are on proven scientific ground, for anatomists are fond of describing any nervous system and any unit of a nervous system in this three-fold form, only the labels change, not the idea.

The three places in the triad of Intake-Output are permanent and invariable.

PART 2

Now we come to the variables – each place in the triad, we are told, can be occupied by any one of the Three Forces, making six possible combinations, six possible triads.

The scientific counterpart of Active, Passive and Neutralizing Force is only the dual function of excitation and depression (or inhibition). The third is missing (for we are Third-Force blind), but Sherrington called his first book *The Integrative Action of the Nervous System*, and we probably cannot do better than speak of the three variables as *excitation*, *integration* and *inhibition*. ‘Integration’ is a good word because it contains the double idea of *making whole* and *making new* as in Horace’s ideal, ‘Integer vitae, scelerisque purus’ (normal of life and pure of crime).

Figure 2. The Three Variables

Positive Force	+	Exciting function
Negative Force	–	Depressing function
Neutralizing Force	=	Integrating function

All through the organism, physiologists cite innumerable examples of exciting and depressive processes, but the third element is in many cases hidden, though it is always there. One day

science will discover the Three Humours, three primary forces or chemical substances from which all these smaller reactions spring – and there will be the Three Gunas.

This is how the idea of the Three Gunas was first brought to our notice. In April, 1936 Mr. Ouspensky started one of his meetings as follows:

About questions on three forces and triads, you must understand where the idea of triads came from. It came from old Indian philosophy – the teaching on Gunas. Guna is a force. Three gunas are three forces. It is said in that teaching that there are seven combinations of Gunas – one incomprehensible and six comprehensible to our mind. But they are comprehensible only if they are explained well and are taken in connection with other things...

At that time we were advised to go and look in libraries and particularly in bookshops near the British Museum, for any descriptions of the Three Gunas. We found masses of stuff, but something evidently was wrong in the written descriptions. Frequently at meetings Mr. Ouspensky would refer to them – e.g. on January 17th, 1938, he said:

First, do you remember how the idea of triads starts? It is said that every action, every manifestation is the result of the conjunction of three forces: positive, negative and neutralizing. This is the first idea that was explained in the System, and at the time when we first spoke of it in St. Petersburg, when we first learned it, I realised that this idea is the same as the idea of triads in Indian philosophy. In Sankhya philosophy you find the idea of three Gunas and it is explained there that they are three forces and their combination produces all the phenomena in the world. In Sankhya philosophy it is put like that: three Gunas have seven combinations, one combination incomprehensible for our mind and six combinations comprehensible for our mind. This is the principle, this is the idea. And if we connect this possibility of seven combinations with the Ray of Creation, we will get something out of it. But of this we will speak later. First we must begin with the general idea, and you must understand how you can start to study it. You can start to study it from two sides, and the first of these is from the point of view of human actions, because although we don't understand it, there is the same, or even a bigger, difference between human actions, as between different objects. You know that this ashtray is different from a pineapple, you will not mix them. But we don't understand that one action and another action are as different as two different objects. And this is what we must understand in relation to our actions, and we must try to find categories of actions...

Although some of us had private talks about the way Indian philosophy had robbed the original idea of Gunas of much of its force, it was not till the New York meetings in 1941 that Mr. Ouspensky formulated his objections out loud:

June 11th, 1941

In the Sankhya philosophy (as in the Gita) the Gunas remain permanent, but in this System they do not remain permanent.

and August 11th, 1943

Q. On what is the Law of Three based in the System? How did it come into the System?

Mr. O. The best explanation of the Law of Three is in Indian philosophy, in the teaching of the three Gunas. These correspond to the three forces. Where they are wrong is that they say active force is always active, whereas it changes.

This is very important just now. All that has been said this evening is leading up to the new and very practical description of the Three Gunas we now have from the Shankaracharya. His Tradition is different from the Sankhya philosophy which he does not use: in his Tradition which is passed on by direct word of mouth, the idea of the Three Gunas is kept fluid, as in ours; but *we* must be very careful all the time to keep it like that! For in his talks with me, he referred the Three Gunas only to one objective, namely Self-realization for me and for you. That was not the time to discuss six triads on all scales; he was talking of Three Gunas only in relation to Self-realization and we must not *generalize*, we must not turn it into philosophy again.

That is why this diagram is chosen. His talks on the Gunas divide themselves naturally into three: 1) Talks on the Gunas in the *environment* – intake; 2) talks on the Gunas in *man's own nature*, accounting for the differences between individuals, the varying effects of the meditation and of the different mantras and of different Laws and methods, integration or the stages on the Ladder; 3) talks on three Gunas in man's output – in his behaviour, words and actions.

During the last three years we have learnt certain new and valuable lessons and I don't want ever to revert to old mistakes. These lessons can be summarized:

1. Not one of the six triads is wrong in itself; wrong consequences come because the particular triad is inappropriate to the circumstances – like a word said at the wrong moment or to the wrong person.

One of several sayings of the Shankaracharya on this subject may be quoted: (11th October)

All the actions in the world *can* be related to the *good* actions and indeed should be. They could all be made by the Realized Man to lead in the end towards consciousness. The actions of the ordinary man have no significance, but the actions of a fully conscious man even though they should seem outwardly to be wrong are designed to lead towards goodness; so action is not wrong if done by a conscious man.

Q. So it depends who does the action? For instance, Christ could curse the barren fig-tree.

A. Curse can only be given by a 'powerful' man. He does so in order to make an end of the wrong and to bring greater consciousness to the people around... If a fully conscious man curses, he gives also a boon.

Q. What you say agrees with what our System says: There can be no conscious evil.

A. Consciousness can relate all types of action to goodness.

2. Our principal task is to work on the *second compartment* – on integration of one's own nature. If one does that successfully one will both seek and find the right intake of impressions, and also the behaviour and actions will follow quite naturally. You cannot start with the *end* – with the actions, as nearly everyone in the world seems to believe. The third place in the triad is predetermined by the first two.

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