

25 May 1964

READING 3

PART 1

In Reading 1 (27th April) you were given a statement from *Recent Advances in Neurology* which contains one of those generally accepted, but quite wrong ideas that are impeding progress in Psychology. Your observations and remarks about where the mistake lies were very helpful. On thinking them over one could perhaps reword the statement thus:

When we speak of consciousness we say we are conscious *of* something, which we call the *content* of consciousness. But Consciousness itself (like light) has *no content*, it simply reveals what it shines on. Ordinarily it shines only on separate details, constantly changing functions of mind – like sensations, feelings and moods, memories and recognitions, ideas and thoughts, images and actions. Consequently it appears to give a very transient and flickering light. Moreover, certain abnormal contents of mind cannot exist in the light of sustained Consciousness – disordered sensations, disordered perceptions, such as illusions and hallucinations; disordered memories, and disordered ideational states, such as delusions. ... In the last resort pure Consciousness may reveal only the fully integrated Self, the Unity in Diversity.

Do you agree with this rewording?

(Discussion)

This week, perhaps, you would like to consider another authoritative statement which, according to our System, is totally wrong. To be scientifically respectable nowadays you have to quote and agree with Sir Charles Sherrington. This is what he says about ‘the self’ in his foreword to the 1947 edition of his classic *Integrative Action of the Nervous System*:

The ‘self’ of each of us goes far to epitomise the integration we are now to look at. We can retain the scheme of spatial nervous arrangement we used before, this time, however, not mutilating the central organ, but keeping the animal – the human animal if you will – intact. The receptors at the starting-points of the nerve-thread we find now to be, by conspiracy with a psyche in the central organ, sense-organs. The full panel of the ‘five senses’ is in session, and by further collaboration with the psyche, a world of subject and object for the individual is in being. The individual has attained a psychical existence. Phases and moods of mental life accrue. Each waking day is a stage dominated for good or ill, in comedy, farce or tragedy, by a *dramatis persona*, the ‘self’. And so it will be until the curtain drops. This self is a unity. The continuity of its presence in time, sometimes hardly broken by sleep, its inalienable ‘interiority’ in (sensual) space, its consistency of view-point, the privacy of its experience, combine to give it status as a unique existence. Although multiple aspects characterise it, it has self-cohesion. It regards itself as one, others treat it as one. It is addressed as one, by a name to which it answers. The Law and the State schedule it as one. It and they identify it with a body which is considered by it and them to belong to it integrally. In short, unchallenged and unargued conviction assumes it to be one. The logic of grammar endorses this by a pronoun in the singular. All its diversity is merged in oneness...’ (p. xvii)

How would you counter this forceful argument and on what evidence?

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PART 2: THE ART OF CREATION

O Joy of Creation,
To Be!
O rapture, to fly
And be free!

(Bret Harte)

Everyone at some time wants to create something, something original, something of their own. But, though most of us give up the struggle early on, we all have innate in us some special aptitude of Self-expression; something each one of us could do, and a way to do it which is entirely our own. To find it and use it, gives to 'Self-realization' its full meaning. The man who, given a talent makes ten talents out of it, is described as a 'good and faithful servant'. In learning the Art of Creation, one can further the main aim, Self-Creation.

This art of Creation is a blend of three triads, three combinations of three forces. The end-product, the active part of creation, C-O-N, goes by a special triad beginning and continuing with Active force, needing effort throughout. Just in a practical way it is well described by Arthur Koestler (*Listener*, May 14, 1964):

When I was asked to deliver these talks, I first decided on the general theme, then sketched out a rough list of the particular subjects to be treated, then worked out each of these sub-headings in more detail; and the choice and manipulation of individual phrases and words came at the end. It is a process like the arborisation of a tree, trunk into branches, branches into twigs...

In fact, it is the triad of the Ray of Creation. But you can't *start* the Art of Creation that way. How often have we tried to do something like that and found that nothing happens. For it is the third of the train of three triads that are needed.

There are paintings which are the culmination of a painter's whole life-work; into one of them has gone all the skill he has acquired; all the knowledge. And they have had to be done at high speed, for that is the essence of this triad. Velasquez' final triumph 'Las Meninas', with a room to itself in the Prado, is one of those paintings. Another is Watteau's 'L'Enseigne de Gersaint' in the Louvre, also described by Kenneth Clark (*Looking at Pictures*, p.75). A canvas over ten feet long and painted direct from life (unlike all his others), it was the work of eight days, and because he was dying of tuberculosis he could work only in the mornings. Soon after painting it he 'relapsed into a state of languor' and died in the following summer at only 37 years. But through painting it he broke out of the prison of make-believe he had himself built up.

We know very well that we can't begin with that triad; we have to have a long apprenticeship. Well then, how do we begin? What apprenticeship?

The *active side* of creation of course needs constant training, effort and experience in whatever field belongs to one by nature and interest. The writer or speaker has constantly to write and plan his writing (as in the example given); the painter has to train his vision and practise its expression every day; the pianist must put in hours of practice exercises; they are thus canalising the powers of the machine in a particular direction, so that when the impulse to create arrives they can work with great speed, accuracy and feeling.

But the apprenticeship also has a *passive side*. We have first of all to dip into the Treasury, to learn over the years to alert the creative faculty, to switch on the Power. The triad is 'going to the Source of Creation': O-C-N. Gradually we learn to connect the Power with the Light. But there is still a gap between 'improved illumination' and the 'power to create'. This gap has to be closed by a 'shock'; a particular impulse perhaps for a particular situation. This shock is given by the triad N-O-C which converts the impulse into creative power.

Two triads, then, represent the Passive and Active parts of the creative process, both of which have to be worked on over a long time; and the third – a kind of catalyst (over which we have no direct control), enables the impulse to cross the gap. The passive side of creation is the daily meditation – 'going to the Source of Creation' and leaving everything else behind one. We have the Shankaracharya's authority that meditation of this kind is essential to all acts of creation, including the creation of the Universe itself. But these two – the Active and the Passive – will not meet without the catalyst, which is in itself neither active nor passive; it is an instantaneous process very specific to a particular occasion. If we know what catalyst is needed, we can artfully contrive to have some of it present and ready for the moment. It is the triad beginning with Nitrogen – the triad N-O-C.

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