

8 February 1965

## READING 3

In discussing Essence and Personality we must certainly remember the essential things the System says, but we must also be constantly taking Mr. Ouspensky's advice by learning 'to put some new meaning into these strange words'. An attempt to do this (which seemed to create interest) was made at the Monday meeting of 1st February, and here is the relevant part of that conversation. In some cases after thinking over the questions I have tried to find better answers:

Dr. R. What really *is* man's Essence? We don't know; we have a very shadowy view of it. You can think of it this way: The System says that everything actually formed in a man (his nervous system principally) is his Essence; the nervous centres – the arrangement of them, their potentiality – that is his Essence. It is left to him to use those, to fill his house with a content. That content is in his Personality – all the things going on in this house resulting from his environment, what he makes of it. He is given one talent; does he make 5 talents, 10 talents, or nothing? All *that* is in his personality, but strong tendencies reach his Essence.

We know very, very little about this endowment. Do we realise that all the experiments of the Great Laboratory of Nature which led up to a self-creative being – 'man' – are reproduced in the nervous system of each one of us and are constantly in operation? Do we understand that what the Scientists call our 'Higher Centres' (meaning only our thinking and talking apparatus) are continuously working through lower centres derived from the earlier history of Organic Life and the experiments of the Great Laboratory? In order to know man's Essence you have (in the Shankaracharya's words) to realize that 'everything is in him' – everything is in each one of us, and what we make of that is our affair.

The interesting thing to me is to learn more about what is in each one of us, to learn more about the Great Laboratory of Nature and what those experiments were for. I don't know whether other people share this interest with me? It was very much awakened in me during my visit to Africa.

Mr. Bray. Does that mean that all our Essences are basically the same?

Dr. R. On one scale we all have the same essence – 'man'. On another scale each of us has different variations and varieties within that main framework; and what has to be taken into account beside the framework is the *chemistry*. The chemistry not only differs with every species, but differs with every individual. Moreover, it is continually *changing*; it never remains absolutely the same – our endocrine glands, our hormones, and so on are changing. *They change as a result of what we do with our minds and our bodies.*

Q. Is heredity a controlling factor in Essence?

Dr. R. Heredity sets limits to certain possibilities in our bodies, but plays little or no part in our development – in Self-realization. Our early environment is much more important in that respect than what we inherit. If we were cabbages or race-horses specially bred, heredity would be of fundamental importance, but as everything to do with *human* breeding is entirely at random, it cannot have the same importance! Nevertheless, certain factors *are* inherited; we belong to a certain blood group, we may have inherited certain musical

capacities, but luckily Self-realization is entirely our own individual affair. We cannot blame our slowness on our parents!

Q. Would the predominance of (one of) our various centres, or the different balance between the centres have anything to do with Essence?

Dr. R. Yes, very much; and the relation between its different parts is all important.

Miss Moloney. In a sense we create it?

Dr. R. The Essence is given us; personality we create from our environment with the assistance of other people.

Mr. Allan. Are we to be concerned with our chemistry, or is that not under our control?

Dr. R. It is much too quick, too subtle, too illusive for us to be directly concerned with it; but if we carry out these things we have been advised (through a long Tradition) to do, our chemistry will change. Indeed, it has changed quite visibly in most of the people in this room; but, luckily, we cannot set out to do chemical experiments in ourselves or we would blow the workshop up! But if we meditate, the change in breathing, heart-beat, muscular relaxation, etc. shows beyond doubt that a change of chemistry has taken place. That change, repeated often, will change the Essence.

Mr. Caiger-Smith. When you say, 'we want to know what is in our Essence', you don't mean that theoretically; you mean by some kind of experience – using qualities which are normally asleep? Can you explain more?

Dr. R. We want in practice *two* things as Mr. Ouspensky first, and later the Shankaracharya, have so often pointed out. We need, as you say, some kind of experience. The most direct way of getting this experience is, in my view, the meditation. Here is a wonderful way of experiencing the distinction between Essence and Personality which, before the meditation, was almost entirely an abstract idea.

But then we undoubtedly need a System of Knowledge as well, and 'good company' with whom to discuss it. We need to relate our experiences to a larger whole; we need to know the place in the total scheme of things occupied by the Personality and Essence of each one of us. I think individual experience is so diverse that communication, without reference to a larger and permanent whole which we share in common, rapidly breaks down.

I believe that we need to study the contribution of the higher creatures of Organic Life – leading as we think towards 'man' – from the point of view of how they were made *internally*. This has never been done; scientists have always been led away by the peculiar external forms. But all the internal (nervous) structure had *some* meaning in relation to man. I would like you to hear again that little bit from the *New Model* which was constantly in my mind when I was looking at these strange forms in Africa:

From this point of view it is possible to suppose that what are called the animal and vegetable kingdoms are the result of complicated work done by a Great Laboratory. In looking at the vegetable and animal worlds we may think that in some immense and incomprehensible laboratory of Nature there are produced one after another a series of experiments. The result of each experiment is put into a separate glass tube, is sealed and labelled, and so enters our world. We see it and say

'fly'. Next experiment, next tube – we say 'bee'; next – 'snake', 'elephant', 'horse', and so on. All these are experiments of the Great Laboratory. Last of all comes the most difficult and complicated experiment, 'man'.

In the beginning we see no order and no aim in these experiments. And certain experiments, like noxious insects or poisonous snakes, appear to us as a malicious joke of Nature's at the expense of man.

But gradually we begin to see a system and a definite direction in the work of the Great Laboratory. We begin to understand that the Laboratory experiments *only* with man. The task of the Laboratory is to create a 'form' evolving by itself, that is, on the condition of help and support, but with its own forces. This self-evolving form is man.

All other forms are either preliminary experiments for working out material to feed more complicated forms, or experiments for working out definite properties or parts of the machine; or unsuccessful experiments, or the refuse of production, or used material.

The result of all this complicated work is the first humanity – *Adam and Eve*. But the Laboratory began to work long before the appearance of man.

(from *A New Model of the Universe*, Esotericism & Modern Thought, p.50)

Now this is the overwhelming impression I got – that Nature had long ceased experimenting in that way; that having achieved the objective comparatively recently (possibly since the last glacial period) of producing a self-evolving being (for better or worse), she ceased to produce new experimental forms in that direction. She had finished her discoveries in relation to solving problems of locomotion, nutrition, the relation between different new senses and actions, and so on; so that most of the strange beasts that we keep in our Zoos and National Parks are really finished, outworn experiments. But the interesting part is that what Nature discovered through their production was *incorporated in man*. This has been proved beyond doubt. If we want to know ourselves, we have to know what has been incorporated in each one of us from the plan of Nature. When we come most recently to the Primates and to the very fragmentary strange types which have been discovered which can be called 'ape-man' or 'man-ape', we don't know whether they are in direct line or discards. In any case, we can look at them this way as Jacquetta Hawkes (in *Man on Earth*) did in one of her moments of brightness:

Looking back through the Cenozoic era and watching the emergence of the human form, it can be likened to watching an imperfect portrait painter working on subject after subject, each approaching a little more closely to a true likeness of the sitter.

This is only a rough beginning of an idea in my mind which I don't feel has been put at all clearly to you, but it is capable of a very great deal of filling in so as to understand Essence – man's Essence.

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A few photographs were then shown on the epidiascope of animals (giraffe, rhinoceros, lion, buffalo) taken at close range in their natural surroundings. The questions were raised: 'What were these bygone experiments of the Great

Laboratory designed for?’ and ‘Were any of the results of these discoveries later incorporated in the brain of man?’

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Mrs. Comper. About cats?

Dr. R. Very important about cats!

Mrs. C. Mr. Ouspensky used to be so fond of cats. They have a special sense, because we have got one cat which invariably comes, or tries to get into the room where the meditation is being done.

Dr. R. Cats (and dogs too) enjoy human company and like to be where we are. Maybe they even like us better when we aren't rushing about!

Mrs. C. Is it a wave they get?

Dr. R. If we were saints like St. Jerome (with his lion) that might be true – but we must not flatter ourselves!

There are these different lines of experiment of the Great Laboratory for development of different faculties, some of which will later be incorporated in man and some discarded. The cat tribe could be experiments in the development of what His Holiness calls the ‘Subtle Body’, and we call the Second or Natural Body. Higher up the Ladder this might be useful to us. But this part of the brain is particularly asleep in ordinary over-civilised man. It was not that Mr. Ouspensky was sentimentally ‘fond of cats’, but he saw in them a symbol of a stage in Self-realization. He admired their self-sufficiency and independence; their precision and grace of movement, and their capacity to become invisible.

Prof. King. Is man capable of exploiting all the capabilities of Essence, or are there some only animals can exploit?

Dr. R. That is a very interesting point. As we are, we appear to have left behind us a number of potentialities which different species of animal have developed more highly than we have. Birds were experiments in the development, perhaps, of the corpus striatum, particularly in the conquest of a new medium – flight in the air. But those mechanisms can be developed in men and women for they also underlie emotional expression of movement as in ballet dancing, and some of them are exploited by circus performers. In most of us, however, they are latent, covered over by new mechanisms which birds do not possess. Nevertheless, it is impossible for me to be present at the Mevlevi Dervish Turning without feeling strongly that Mevlana adapted this contribution made by the birds for use in human development.

What we have retained from the Great Laboratory has been proved in history to be sufficient for full realization of Self-Consciousness and Cosmic Consciousness. That has been proved – man has the potentials for development, for Realization. So that in each of us all the endowment in Essence is there – in the human nervous system; it is there to be used, for realizing all possibilities. Other accessory things have been left behind in the course of the development of man. Whether in another cycle these things will come up and be developed – whether on some other planet in some other Solar System they are being developed – we don't know; all we can say is that we have all the endowment necessary for full Self-Consciousness and Cosmic Consciousness in each of us.

Mr. Allan. Would you say that a Fully Realized Man developed certain additional physical attributes?

Dr. R. There is of course a full account of old traditional ideas on this subject summarised in Mr. Ouspensky's chapter on 'Sex and Evolution' in *A New Model of the Universe*, but I don't want to hark back to that now. It must be obvious that anatomy, structure and form are already laid down completely by the end of embryonic life, and in this life no big change in structure can possibly take place. The change in this life has to be through development of the connections between various unconnected parts by putting them to use. First, increased integration and changes in function; a man has to live a different life and learn to do different things. This inevitably produces the second change which has to take place in this life – a chemical change. Through change of function a change in the endocrine glands takes place. This, if deep enough, can result in change in the fertilised ovum if the Fully-Realized Man is born again. As Mr. Ouspensky pointed out, you have to take literally the reference in the Gospels to 'becoming as little children'.

The phrase 'additional physical attributes' used by Mr. Allan is shown outwardly in the Fully-Realized Man chiefly in 1) the expression of the emotions (light in his eyes, facial expression, tone of voice, bodily habits) and 2) in his quality of movement – the orderly, graceful and attentive movement and the absence of unnecessary movements. It is these things that make him physically different in the eyes of all observers.

Remembering that mankind must be essentially thought of not as complete but in a state of transition, can we try to find out what experiments in Organic Life were used, are being used, and will be used in the creation of man on his path to full Self-Consciousness; and what practical importance such knowledge could have in relation to our own individual aim?

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