

15 February 1965

## READING 4

## PART 1

Some questions asked at last Monday's meeting refer to important matters which need further discussion. For instance:

- Q. Do biology and physiology show the difference between essence and personality?
- A. Biology and Physiology can show *us* the difference between Essence and Personality and there is much *we* could learn; but biologists and physiologists study the physical body only, and know nothing whatever about Essence. Similarly, Psychology tries to study only Personality; and again, the psychologists know nothing whatever about Essence. We, however, can profit from the facts they discover with the help of the System and study of ourselves. The real key is to *know yourself*. Few professional physiologists, biologists or psychologists seem to me at present to want to know themselves!
- Q. Can some knowledge go straight into Essence as it were? It sometimes seems that certain things which one hears or reads go right home immediately, by-passing intellect.
- A. Mrs. Garten, don't you think that this might lead us to Plato's idea that Essence *already knows* great Truths – for when some Knowledge goes, as you say, straight to Essence, there is a strange feeling of familiarity and certainty? You remember Plato's idea in his later Dialogues – that what is ordinarily wrongly translated as the 'soul' (but which I feel we should call 'Essence') has been on a long journey and knows many great Truths, and that teaching is simply uncovering these Truths? You remember Socrates performed experiments with a slave to show this?
- Q. Is man capable of exploiting all the capabilities of Essence, or are there some only animals can exploit?
- A. This is one of those questions we want to think about.

It looks as if man had left behind a large number of possibilities which different species of animal have developed more highly than we have. That is, I believe, because man, as we see him today, is an example of only *one* line of advance – largely the cultivation of personality! It is quite possible that, in going up the Ladder, we may uncover possibilities in our Essence which have been by-passed.

Now take, for instance, the very interesting experiment of birds: Before birds, a most important part of the brain did not exist – the corpus striatum – which has to do with emotional movement, part of the expression of the emotions. Of course the birds used it in three-dimensional directional flight, in echelon formation in great movements in the air; but, nevertheless, through the long history of birds, a group of centres was evolved and incorporated in the human brain. Now, only specialists tend to use that part in ordinary life – ballet dancers, circus performers, perhaps people who are very adept at certain kinds of sport. The interesting thing is that, in the development of higher bodies, this part is used. For instance, Jalal-ud-Din Rumi must have found that he could use this part in the development of Consciousness by means of what is called after him, the Mevlevi System of Turning. I cannot watch a Mukabeleh without feeling that.

There are legacies in us of other experiments in the Great Laboratory which make no sense in ordinary life, that begin to have a meaning only when we try to realize our higher possibilities.

- Q. Could we learn about methods of communication from some of the experiments in the Great Laboratory?
- A. This of course brings us to the question of the Arts, because the Arts give emotional, poignant and long-lasting *expression* to all that to which words usually cannot rise. Now, the scientists would have it that in Nature everything is utilitarian; but really everything is just as much Art! Art and use are combined in Nature, and these various results of experiments incorporated in man's Essence can provide for his artistic expression as well as his inner, silent development. Is that not so?
- Q. Gerard Manley Hopkins compared the flight of the hawk to the mastery of Christ.
- A. And I would like to continue that thought with a quotation from the *New Sayings of Jesus* (Ed. by B.P. Grenfell & A.S. Hunt, p.108) taken from a papyrus of the second century (found at Oxyrhynchus in 1903):

1. Jesus saith, Ye ask who are those that draw us to the kingdom, if the kingdom is in Heaven? ... the fowls of the air, and all beasts that are under the earth or upon the earth, and the fishes of the sea, these are they which draw you, and the kingdom of Heaven is within you; and whoever shall know himself shall find it.

That has in it the same idea as the Shankaracharya speaking on the 'expansion of the body' – through that you feel that everything is in you, and you are in everything. That is one reason why we could get great profit from knowing more of the Great Laboratory and studying our own Essence.

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- Q. Does this refer to the apparent communication between large numbers of birds, or is it something to do with the individual?
- A. You quite rightly said 'apparent communication.' Think for a moment of migration in birds. Each species has its own foreknowledge and *sense of direction*. The Arctic Tern has perhaps the most difficult route of all. Now one thing we need to know and study is the question of *Memory in Essence*. All the way up from the lowest organisms, even viruses, through insects to the highest mammals that have not been domesticated, there is clearly some kind of collective memory present which you might call a 'species memory'. To take one example – these weaver birds that one saw so much in East Africa: They make a characteristic nest with an inner room and a vestibule – all exactly on the same pattern wherever they are. Now somebody went to the trouble of taking a pair of weaver birds and breeding them for four generations in captivity, with never a sight of a nest or of any of the materials which they would normally use for making their nests. Then, for the last pair of birds, suddenly he provided the materials necessary for nest-making. Without hesitation this fourth generation proceeded to make a nest exactly according to pattern, never having seen it done at all! There are many examples like that all the way through Nature up to the level of primates – among ants, termites, all sorts of creatures; and the young of even quite highly-developed mammals are immediately able to get their

living. They need only a certain amount of protection. The first day a wildebeest is born it will have to stand on its feet and begin to run if the herd is migrating.

This 'species memory' becomes lost among the primates; it is replaced by individual memory that has to be learnt. In monkeys, the higher apes, and man the baby is quite helpless; it has to have everything done for it for a very long time. It has to learn everything by experience – often painful; there is very little instinctive memory of body which is common to the human race.

Now is there anything in the memory of Essence in the human race that *is* shared wherever it is found – at whatever time, in whatever country? Very little remains of the instinctive animal memory, but is there some other kind of 'species memory' that is characteristic of humanity? I believe that there is some evidence of that. Why has there always been a longing to know the Truth, always a striving after religion, after God, law and justice, and so on? Hope is another trait that 'springs eternal in the human breast'. All these seem to be part of our human heritage. They may get quenched by life, by personality; but I believe that there *is* a 'Light which shines in every man that comes into the world', an *emotional* memory more important in man than instinctive memory. Would you accept this hypothesis?

Q. Did not the Shankaracharya say that one of the things common to man was a desire for Eternity?

A. He mentioned, if you remember, three things which human beings have always wanted regardless of time, or country, or colour: permanent 'I', permanent happiness, and permanent Consciousness, the Indian words for which are Sat, Chit, Ananda. I feel that three-fold desire is inherent in our Essence – partly instinctive perhaps, but chiefly emotional. To know ourselves we have to try to get back to that kind of Memory from which personality tends to separate us – to go back to this inborn human Memory.

Q. What part do repetition and recurrence play in this memory that you have spoken of – both kinds of memory?

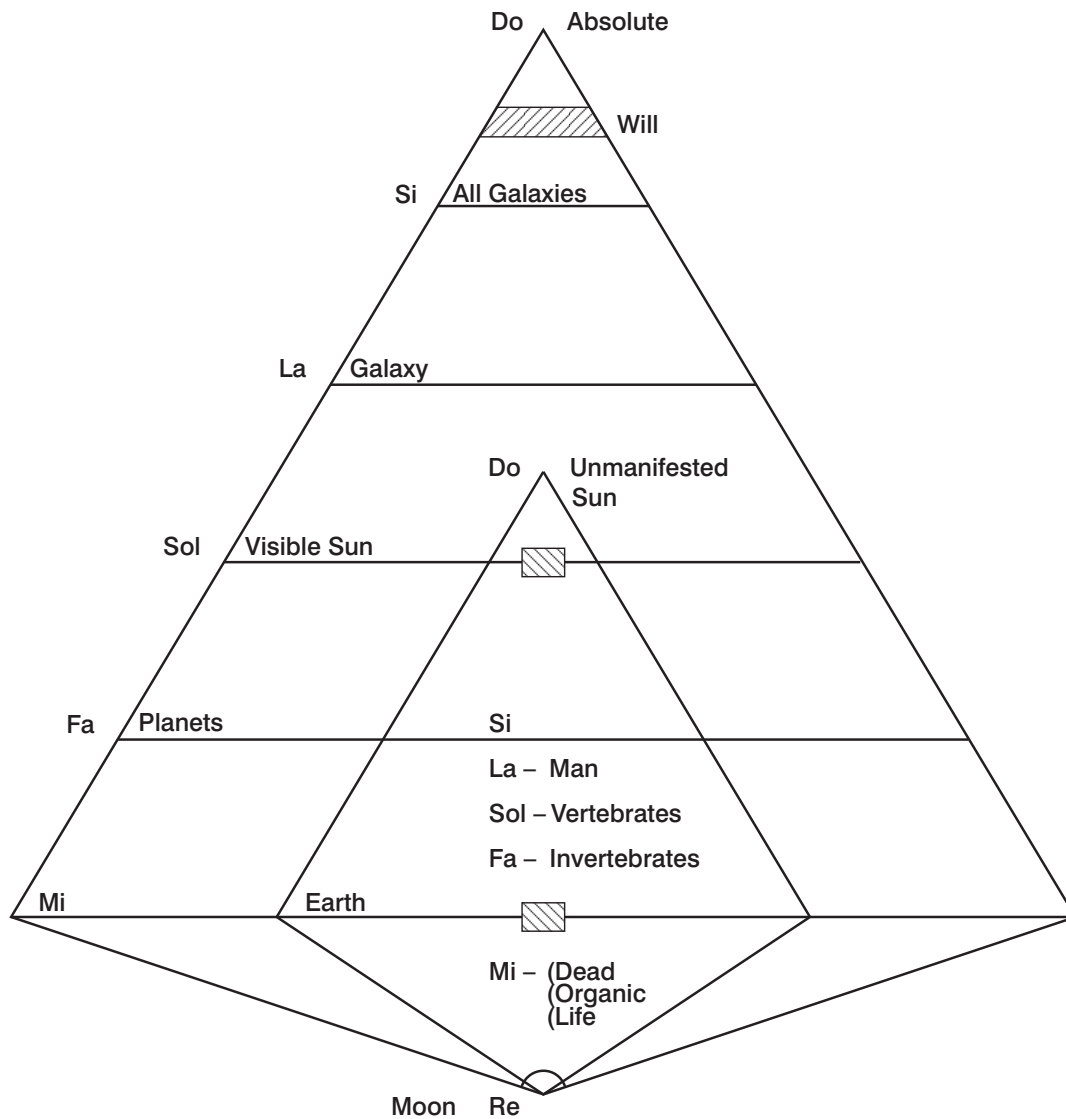
A. Repetition and recurrence are part of the structure of space-time. It is only personality that sees just one dimension of time. So really repetition and recurrence (the fifth dimension of space-time) is there to be seen in everything, and you will only understand evolution if you know a way (with the help of the enneagram) to see it all in repetition, in cycles. How can we find that way?

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## PART 2

The idea of the 'Great Laboratory' was Mr. Ouspensky's own, developed first in a public lecture given in Moscow and later incorporated in *A New Model of the Universe*. It would be useful now to recall how the System treats the same subject, and we can put up the Ray of Creation in the form to which we have lately become accustomed. (Figure, overleaf)

We consider first the Main Octave of our branch of Creation. We recall that this is only one out of many ways of describing creation, each description illustrating one aspect of the Truth. It would be impossible to find any *one* picture which would show the whole Truth, and we must be very careful *never to discuss two different pictures together*; just as Physicists must keep Quantum Theory separate from Wave Theory.



What is the purpose of this particular picture? It teaches us about the Principles of Scale and Relativity, for it shows Creation from the point of view of our Earth, and the relative importance to this Planet of different levels in the Universe. Of all the island universes of which Astronomy can now observe a countless number, we take only our own Galaxy, the Milky Way; of the innumerable stars of the Milky Way, we take only our Sun; and of all the units of our Solar System, we take only our Planetary System and our Earth with its single satellite, the Moon. Our minds can only contain a certain amount of knowledge, and so we have to know all about our own house, less about the other houses in our street, less still about other streets and boroughs, very little about other cities, counties, countries, and continents. When these principles are forgotten, much confusion and distortion results.

Next we realise that, far from Man on Earth being the centre of the Universe as the ancients believed, our Earth occupies a very lowly position and the whole of mankind is not even mentioned in the big diagram. On that scale even explosions of hydrogen bombs would make no difference! To see the place of Mankind in the Great Laboratory of the Biosphere, we must consider a still smaller branch of the Tree, and describe the Creation of Organic Life on Earth as a subordinate Octave of the second order.

There are two specially important things to think of:

1. That just as we know that all life on the surface of the Earth starts from and depends on radiation from the visible Sun's orb so, according to the System, all Psychological and Spiritual life is dependent on the unmanifested and invisible life of the Sun.
2. That both in the great Ray of Creation and in the small octave there is a two-way flow of energy *both upwards and downwards*, and that the thin film of the Biosphere must play a role in each of them. So 'intervals' and 'shocks' will be different according to which process you are considering.

Many questions must come to your minds as you look at the diagram.

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[Please develop the conversation according to the questions. Though the classical description can be a guide to us we want, after all these years, to have new thoughts and new lines of enquiry.]

### SUMMARY

First, the great Octave of our Ray of Creation goes from the Absolute through the Galaxies, through our Milky Way, our Sun and the Planets, our Earth and its satellite. There are of course other Rays through other galaxies and solar systems, but we concentrate only on this one. Now there is always confusion of scale in all philosophical and religious discussions when some personal 'God' is confused with the Lord of Creation – the Absolute (Brahma). Here you see that the whole of mankind doesn't exist at all on the scale of the Ray of Creation, which is therefore quite impersonal. In order to see the place of Man, we have to take the small subsidiary or lateral octave – the Do being sounded in some place of the Universe unmanifested; and the Shock of the creation of Organic Life is provided somewhere on the level of the Visible Sun, being filtered through the Planets (taken as a whole) like different coloured lights; then the animal kingdom in three stages. It's only a suggestion that, in this descending Octave, the lower interval is filled by Plants between animal life and Mother Earth; and then Organic Life gradually dies and sinks into the Earth's crust. The 'Life Principle' is said in the System to go to the Moon. All that is familiar to you.

But what I want to call your attention to is the possibility of an *upward* movement. In the embryonic life of each one of us, the egg from which we were born starts, as it were, like the seed of a plant. Each human embryo goes through the chief stages of evolution which the Great Laboratory has incorporated in man. It doesn't go through every experiment in the Great Laboratory, but only those which are most important in the development of Man. It begins as a worm – segmental; it goes through transitory stages, amphioxus, fish, amphibia, then mammals; but all the time it is a human embryo from the beginning. So instead of studying only the fossil record which cannot show the part of the brain which interests us, we can learn a great deal from human embryology; and there is an upward octave by which Nature brings us to Manhood and we have to complete the rest ourselves. The Unmanifested Sun would correspond to the Atman, and the Atman stands in relation to the Absolute. The one is the same as the other like the light of the sun in a glass of water – different glasses of water, different men, but the same light.

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