

31 October 1966

READING 3

NEW THOUGHTS ON 'THE FOURTH WAY'

PART 1

'Fourth Way School'

It was always understood since our branch of the Work started in London that we were designed to be what was called *'A School of the Fourth Way'*; and the nucleus of people who worked with Mr. Ouspensky and are still with us, were very carefully instructed (both by example and Teaching) in the principles underlying such a School and how it would differ from other Schools that could be met with. Much later a great impetus was given to us by the discovery that the Shankaracharya was instructing us in the very same thing, and that his Tradition belonged to the Fourth Way and must have had a common origin with our own.

But when we try to give some sort of picture to our friends of what we are about and where our interest lies, we find the idea of the Fourth Way very elusive and impossible to define in a few words. This week we could try to see if we have understood anything fresh about it. This would do us good also as a way of achieving that 'Expansion of Consciousness' which His Holiness has recently stressed as an essential stage in Self-realization. For the Spiritual growth of the individual and the Spiritual growth of humanity go according to the same plan and are under the same Laws, though on so different a scale of space-time.

Close analogy between one man and all men

All the people who have ever been or will be born, belong to one of the three categories corresponding to the three rooms of the house (or to combinations of them), and all the varieties of the Traditional 'Ways' are really seeking to lead people into the Fourth Room, though the way may easily be lost through ignorance. But men of the Fourth Way work directly on the Fourth Room, using for that one purpose some of the traditional methods applied to the other three rooms.

The 'Two Birds' again

Referring to last week's metaphor of the 'Two birds who live in the self-same Tree' within each individual, we can say confidently that the idea both of the Fourth Room and of the Fourth Way equally escape 'Bird A', the active bird that is always eating, singing, or quarrelling. It is equally certain that to 'Bird B', the bird who 'without eating, watches', both these ideas are *one thing*, which is entirely clear and natural, and has always been and will always be inherent in humanity as in every normal individual. Thus, for the moments (or longer) when that noisy bird stops 'singing', each of us can understand the Fourth Way, but the True idea immediately vanishes when 'Bird A' replaces that other! It is as elusive as that.

Historical Aspect

Probably also, within the framework of any of the Traditional Ways there may exist one individual (or just a few) from time to time, who is really on the Fourth Way as well. One reflects, for example, that in the long stream of Neo-Platonism, there was only one Ficino and

certainly one Plotinus, who wrote the Enneads and who reached full Enlightenment three times in his life. In our own time also there was Pope John, who, while fulfilling all that was required in the way of outward ceremonial and administration, yet was clearly living the life of the Silent Bird within – a fact that shone through his eyes and showed in his great compassion toward all the world. There surely must be more that we never hear about.

One might, then, look on the Fourth Way as a *stage* above the level of ordinary life, a certain step on the Ladder of Self-realization perhaps reached by different means, but definitely requiring the help of some who have already got there and know the differences between people, the different routes up the mountain and the way to surmount their difficulties.

Special Features of the Fourth Way

Nevertheless, there is also the meaning that the start and intermediate stages are usually also different from the other Ways; the Fourth Way is lived in life itself; it has no fixed monastic system and its forms and its teachings wear different dress at different times and in different places. The people, too, are all-rounders; they must be capable of success in ordinary life; they cannot be too ignorant, unsophisticated or naive. They are supposed to do everything from *Understanding* and mustn't be allowed to take the easy way of being told what to do and having their thinking done or their decisions made for them.

Today's opportunity

Perhaps this is enough to show how eminently suitable the Fourth Way should be for life in the more 'advanced' countries today. Who knows, perhaps all the work which has been done since our branch of the Fourth Way penetrated Europe from Moscow early in World War I, has all been designed for *this present stage* in Western Civilization, just as the System of Meditation was made ready by the Inner Circle for *now*.

In the *Listener* of October 20th, 1966, a talk was reported by John Wren-Lewis called 'Life in the old gods yet'. I found most of that talk intolerably round-about and muddled, but towards the end there was this one paragraph which could be quoted in this context:

If we could recover it (the Truth), how shall we state it? I personally find the only adequate way of doing so is to use the language of the old-style faith in a new way: to speak of faith in God-in-man replacing faith in any sort of God 'out there'. For this is essentially what the new faith is: first, an assertion that the creative power resides in us, not in nature or history; and second, that the character of this substantial reality in man is such that when individuals really follow out their inner inclinations to the full, the result is not a chaos of conflict, as moralists from Plato to Freud have always assumed, but, miraculously, love.

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[Pause and discussion. Would some of you like to recall other characteristics and Principles of the Fourth Way?]

PART 2

Questions about 'Religion'

Our System gives us a wonderfully clear way of thinking about almost any debatable subject or concept, and this we have recently rather neglected. Just as all men in the world are born No.1, No.2 or No.3 or some mixture of these, so all human concepts in the Outer Circle (such as Art, Philosophy, Science or Religion) are so divided. We have also recently discovered that there is Meditation No.1, No.2 and No.3; but also that it is possible for each and all of us to reach higher categories of Meditation – No.4, No.5 and so on – from time to time.

[Pause to remind yourself of this classification.]

We have lately been hearing of (and in my case seeing with my own eyes) higher categories of *Religion* – not just the everyday 'religions' of Nos. 1, 2, and 3. These latter, of course, create their own 'Gods' who don't agree at all – a God of Rome loves incense, panoply and ritual which the Gods of Calvin and Luther can't stand at any price! Some 'Gods', too, maintain that 'the End justifies the Means', but there has been much strife because others won't have it.

Higher categories of Religion

What, (we often ask), is the Religion of Man No.4, No.5 or higher – the Religion of the Inner Circle of Humanity in fact? When we put that question to the Shankaracharya, he said that his own religion was called 'Sanatan', the Religion of Real 'I' (the Atman), and that within every external form of true Religion each had its own 'Sanatan'. This, he said, is quite as evident, to the Understanding, in Christianity as in Mohammedanism or Hinduism or Buddhism or any other. It is good to remember his words: 'God creates man, but man creates Englishmen or Indian, Christian or Moslem or Hindu. The religion in which one was brought up is the religion which one should keep to; why change that? – it usually doesn't do any good.'

Changing one's 'religion'

Several times also I heard people ask Mr. Ouspensky if they should change over to, 'say, the Russian Orthodox Church or the Greek Orthodox?' He would reply with the equivalent of a shrug of the shoulders and say afterwards: 'Explain to them that the only important thing is Self-remembering.' This matches exactly the Shankaracharya's advice – that what one needs to do (if one is religious at heart) is to use the meditation, or other discipline, to *find within one's own religion the Universal inner Religion of Real 'I'*. That is equivalent to finding the Fourth Room, or the Inner Circle of Humanity, or the Religion of No.4, No.5, No.6 and even No.7, or the Fourth Way. It is all really one and the same thing.

'One God, World without end'

And in this Universal religion of Real 'I', experience of which begins also on a level above life itself, the God within is always the same – made of the same substance as the Creator of the Universe. There is no disagreement as there is between the 'Gods' of man's creation; there is no conflict between the local customs of different times and places. Who can say there is any difference *in direction* between the Teaching about the Atman, the Lord's Prayer given by Christ or the inner meaning of His parables, and the voice of Sheikh Effendi in Istanbul?

There is much evidence, too, that at the higher level Art, Science and Religion are all one together; apparent contrasts are only at the level of Man 1, 2, 3 and perhaps 4. So this way of thinking is another help in the direction of Unity and of expansion from the separate to the Universal 'I'.

SUMMARY

Let me repeat to you once more so that you can carry it away with you in memory, the following story from the Shankaracharya as far as I understand it:

In olden days in Kashmir there was a temple to Sharada, the Goddess of Wisdom. To this temple there were four doors, and three of those were always open.

[These were Traditional Ways of attaining wisdom, known everywhere and open to any who could choose one particular door to the exclusion of the others.]

But the Fourth door, which had written above it 'Way of Liberation' was always kept closed. One day the first Shankara on a visit to the temple walked straight through the Fourth door. 'How,' asked the priests of the temple, 'could he go through that closed door?' But the Goddess said, 'Ah, he is the Enlightened one.'

Those three 'open' doors are easy to find, for almost anyone meeting with their adherents can be 'converted' and enjoy certain privileges, but only (in the past) on condition that they rejected all others as heresies. But the Fourth door is difficult to get through, for it can be passed only after liberation from identification and with separate 'singing' of that oblivious bird.

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