

28 February 1967

READING 5

PART 1

The remarks about loss of memory from injury (at the end of Reading 4) were put in to serve as an introduction to a general law of neurology and psychology about which it is a pity for us to remain so ignorant. This we owe to Hughlings Jackson who, in the 1880's, was applying the recent 'evolutionary' facts and theories of Herbert Spencer and Charles Darwin to the human nervous system. From an understanding of this law, based on vast experience and good 'psychological thinking', he was able to classify all departures from normality of the nervous system (both local and general) and so became the acknowledged 'father of modern neurology'. It is a pity that psychologists turned aside at the beginning of the century from pursuing the study of this law, or there could now be a proper science of psychology as well. Provided we remember that this science, like all sciences not accompanied by adequate Self-knowledge, is limited by the duality shown in our Figure 1 (Reading 1), it can serve as sound basic knowledge on which we can build.

In his Croonian Lectures to the Royal College of Physicians on 'Evolution and Dissolution of the Nervous System' in 1884, Jackson defined his use of the term 'Evolution' as follows:

Beginning with Evolution, and dealing only with the most conspicuous parts of the process, I say of it that it is an *ascending development in a particular order*. I make three statements which, although from different stand-points, are about the very same thing.

1. Evolution is a passage from the *most to the least organised*; that is to say from centres well organised at birth up to those, the highest centres, which are continually organising during life.
2. Evolution is a passage from the *most simple to the most complex*; again from the lowest to the highest centres.

[NOTE: His term 'highest centres' refers to the top room, Causal level, in better states of consciousness.]

3. Evolution is a passage from the *most automatic to the most voluntary*...

Dissolution, being the reverse of the process of evolution just spoken of, little need be said here... The statement 'to undergo dissolution' is rigidly the equivalent of the statement, 'to be reduced to a lower level of evolution'.

The principle may be illustrated in another way... Starting this time with health, the assertion is that each person's normal thought and conduct signify survivals of the fittest states of his normal... level of evolution. Now, suppose that from disease the topmost layer is rendered functionless... His illusions, hallucinations, delusions and extravagant conduct are not caused by disease (of lower centres) but are the outcome of what is left him (of what disease has spared).

In further illustration he says:

An injurious agency, such as alcohol, taken into the system, flows to all parts of it, but the highest centres, being least organised 'give out' first and most; the middle centres, being more organised resist longer; and the lowest centres being most organised,

resist longest. Did not the lowest centres of respiration and circulation resist much more than the highest do, death by alcohol would be a very common thing.

So, in today's terms: 'Don't ask a man to drink and drive'! For to drink *mechanically* definitely reduces a man (as Jackson said) 'to a lower level of evolution', in which, as we know, he becomes subject to *more* Laws, particularly those arising from the general 'Law of Accident'. The Conscious use of alcohol in the right surroundings is quite another matter, to which we shall certainly return both in practice and theory! But this law holds equally well for any drug which has an action on the nervous system. By damping down the controlling centres many of these drugs allow other functions, more interesting, to escape from slavery; which is of course why so many of the younger generation are turning to them for 'kicks'; but, unfortunately, 'descending to a lower level of evolution' in the process, because of the extreme dangers of 'addiction'.

PART 2

Now I would like you to take another look at Figure 3, so as to see more of its real significance. First, let's recall that we are taking the topmost room of the original 'three-roomed house' and again dividing it (the brain) into three 'rooms' or 'levels' in Hughlings Jackson's sense. Of the three foods which nourish us, the products of two, the food we eat and the air we breathe, are brought to the brain in the arterial blood and are not shown here. But the flow of the blood in those parts of the brain which are not used (like the flow of traffic along minor roads) is minimal. In fact, all that Jackson discovered about evolution and dissolution depends only upon changes in blood supply, so that 'higher parts' become better or less nourished in respect of food and oxygen. About the evolution of the third kind of food, *Impressions*, he knew nothing, for this requires the catalytic action of Light from the Fourth Room, of which again he could know nothing. Figure 3 (Reading 1) shows how this catalytic action enters at the 'Interval' in a vertical octave of which only three 'stations', A, D and C are shown here.

This vertical octave corresponds to what is known as the 'non-specific alerting system' about which so much was discovered during the 1950's. Though parallel to them, this alerting system is quite independent of all the specific functions like seeing, hearing, thinking, speaking, feeling and so on. It is also independent of all the differences between individuals, which essentially depend upon the prevalent centres receiving impressions. But this alerting system in its first two stages is shared in common among all the higher mammalian species. The up-and-down process of waking up during the day and going to sleep at night repeats in miniature Jackson's Law and is part of the 24 hour pattern of all organic life on the earth; but only these first two levels of consciousness can be studied by the current methods of experimental science. Only the shortest action of the catalyst (only just enough light for living in the body) being available, the ordinary daytime state of consciousness is called by us 'waking sleep' or 'sleep with dreams'. So the deeper and more 'organised' kinds of Memory manifest themselves to the daytime consciousness in the form of dreams and must be studied by observing 'dreams in the waking state' – never at night which is meant for deep and 'dreamless' sleep.

...And still later I realised that we have dreams continuously, *both in sleep and in a waking state*. We never cease to have dreams, though we are not aware of this.

As the result of the above I came to the conclusion that dreams can be observed while awake. It is not at all necessary to be asleep in order to observe dreams. Dreams never stop. We do not notice them in a waking state, amidst the continuous flow of visual, auditory and other sensations, for the same reason for which we do not see stars in the light of the sun. But just as we can see the stars from the bottom of a deep well, so we can see the dreams which go on in us if, even for a short time, we isolate ourselves whether accidentally or intentionally, from the inflow of external impressions. It is not easy to explain how this is to be done. Concentration upon one idea cannot produce this isolation. An arrest of the current of usual thoughts and mental images is necessary. It is necessary to achieve for a short period 'consciousness without thought'. When this consciousness comes, dream images begin slowly to emerge through the usual sensations, and with astonishment you suddenly see yourself surrounded by a strange world of shadows, moods, conversations, sounds, pictures. And you understand then that this world is always in you, that it never disappears.

(*New Model*, p.295)

PART 3

So now we are in a much better position. All kinds of Memory other than 'head memory' are to be studied objectively by becoming centred (for longer and longer) in the great central headquarters at D, when illuminated by the flow of 'Divine' energy. But this requires extra time: 'contemplation' *without thought*, after a successful half-hour's meditation. One hopes that those of us who are not quite so tied to the wheel of activity, may by this means put the energy gained in meditation to more profitable use.

The ideal situation was explained to us on our last visit to India in this way:

The Shankaracharya sits here in this room (in this Ashram), but he is sitting in all the rooms of the whole building at one and the same time because he is the Master. We can all be like this; it is crucial to the whole question of Consciousness. It is Consciousness which gives one the understanding of the unity of the whole building. The man who is saturated in Sattva can live in this room, but can go at Will into the room in which he is active, or into the bedroom for sleep whenever he needs to. The man who is permeated by Rajas alternates between the room of activity and the bedroom only; he does not experience this room though he may have ideas about it. There are many who live only in the bedroom and never come out – they are the owls who prefer the dark and fear the light. They are dominated by Tamas. (23 October 1965)

[NOTE: The last part of this is a paraphrase to avoid confusion of terminology.]

So this is a new idea about 'rooms' in relation to the Three Gunas, and degrees of consciousness, which has nothing to do with the centres and functions and different types which we have hitherto discussed, and which must not be confused with other uses to which the diagram of the three-storeyed house has been put.

But it *does* correspond to Jackson's definition of Evolution and Dissolution of the nervous system once we pass, by experience, beyond duality. We shall, I hope, gradually become familiar with this point of view by combined operations on all fronts! I try to express it on Mondays and in the papers. On Friday evening Mr. Crampton put it to the 'Turners' in the light of Mevlana's

teaching. Mr. Allan and I can speak from this angle at Meditation meetings; and Mr. Allan at meetings to your friends who wish to hear about Meditation; on Wednesday evenings we give it to a class in relation to the 'Movements'. Gradually we may know more about Memory from the practice of this 'contemplation'. It is a most important part of the role of the 'Witness'.

* * *