

30 June 1969

READING 8

Some groups, who last week used the three tales as they were intended to be used, have asked for more, and those are provided; but, though they are amusing, they won't have a lasting effect unless one applies them to oneself and finds one's own relevant examples.

PART 1

The most general desire among us is to know about and be able to operate the switches which will unite in our service the three divisions of our nervous system by controlling those chemical antagonisms we experience all the time. The best way to achieve this is undoubtedly to understand and carry out what we are told to do by a fully Enlightened Man. This is because those instructions come from Consciousness, which belongs to the Fourth Room and is above and apart from all the contents of the world which can be studied by the physical sciences. They can only be experienced through Self-knowledge achieved by actually *being Conscious*.

Provided we are devoting ourselves constantly to this practice, it won't hurt us to know a little more about the contents of the *Third Room* – the activities of mind, in the thinking or intellectual sphere. For it is a group of chemical transmitters operating in this Third Room which has been exciting the interest of neurophysiologists all over the world since their discovery only five years ago. Already extravagant claims are being made about them, and we must keep reminding ourselves of the warning of Sir Henry Dale (whose work so greatly advanced our knowledge of chemical transmitters thirty years ago): 'I am not unaware,' he said in 1948, 'of the perils to which a sprightly imagination may expose its owner when given the freedom of such clinical borderlands.' Although there is already a massive technical literature on this subject, it is necessary to examine the evidence in the original papers; this is tough going, but no doubt we shall be able to give you a clear resume by next October.

In the meantime the following passage describes prophetically the direction in which these new researches are taking us:

The probability seems to be that the Great Sympathetic, as far as it presides over the mere existence and vegetative life of the organism, is the most primitive, and corresponds most closely to the ganglia and undifferentiated nerve fibres which preside over very lowly organisms like the hydra; that later on, and with the evolution of motor capacities in the animal world, the spinal reflex system comes into prominence side by side with the Sympathetic; and that, later again, the brain,[†] as an outgrowth of the spinal system, marks – in man and the higher animals – the *evolution of distinct processes of Thought*, apart from or only loosely connected with movement and feeling.

(*The Art of Creation*, Edward Carpenter. Allen & Unwin, 1927, p.117)

Note: It is this stage – 'the evolution of distinct processes of thought' – that appears to depend upon these newly discovered chemical transmitters, the best known of which is 'serotonin' (technically '5-HT'). Lately I have thought I could place this new link in its key position in our 'Food Diagram'. We must remember however that thought is a servant of Consciousness and not an end in itself, as Carpenter goes on to remind us:

[†]He means the frontal lobes.

At every period in this world-process there is sensibility or consciousness of some kind; ... but at each period the new developments... tend to overlay or drown the earlier ones, which thus pass into the region of subconsciousness.

Thus the second stage, going especially with the evolution of the brain,[†] has in the case of Man largely drowned or disguised his earlier sensibilities and intuitions. Is it feasible to suppose that the third stage will correspond with a recovery of those more diffused and general sensibilities, and a much closer intimacy and alliance between the three great Nerve systems, which will make the undue preponderance of any one of them impossible, and consciousness a simultaneous act of them all, pervasive throughout the body?

The story called the 'Thief' (3) of these which follow, illustrates this last sentence and shows how the intellect can be used as the servant of an Enlightened Man in any emergency.

PART 2

How would an impartial and more enlightened observer regard the intellectual centre in the top room with one or other Guna predominating?

1. Rajas: Be Quiet

An old teacher was about to die and his successor Ga-San was sitting by his bedside. A temple had burned down and Ga-San was busy rebuilding it. The old man asked him, 'What are you going to do when you get the temple rebuilt?'

'Get you to speak to us there when your illness is over.'

'Suppose I don't live till then?'

'Then we will get someone else!'

'Suppose you cannot find anyone?'

Ga-San said firmly, 'Don't ask silly questions. Be quiet and rest.'

Talking increases Rajas – in fact you cannot talk without Rajas; we don't realise how much precious Sattva we waste by unremitting talk.

Learning to be silent

The pupils of a school used to study meditation; four of them who were intimate friends agreed to observe seven days of silence.

On the first day all were silent and their meditation went well; but after dark when the oil lamps were growing dim, one of them exclaimed to the servant, 'Fix those lamps.'

The second pupil said, 'We are not supposed to speak at all.' The third said, 'You two are stupid. Why did you talk?' 'I am the only one who has not talked!' concluded the fourth.'

We must stop our own 'I's' talking like this when we are trying to meditate.

2. Tamas: The Stone Mind

Ho-Gen, a Zen teacher, lived alone in a small temple in the country. One day four travelling monks appeared and asked if they might make a fire in his yard to warm themselves.

While they were building the fire, Ho-Gen heard them arguing about subjectivity and objectivity. Picking up a rock he joined them and said, 'There is a big stone. Do you consider it to be inside or outside your mind?'

[†] *ibid*

One of the monks replied, 'From the Buddhist viewpoint everything is an objectification of mind, so I would say that the stone is inside my mind.'

'Your head must be very heavy,' observed Ho-Gen, 'if you are carrying around a rock like that in your mind!'

3. When an awakened Man has sufficient *Sattva*, his mind can direct him according to the situation:

The Thief

One evening as Shichiri was reciting Sutras, a thief entered with a knife demanding 'Your money or your life.'

Shichiri told him, 'Don't disturb me. You can find the money in that drawer,' and went on with his recitation. When the thief had got hold of the money, the owner said, 'Don't take it all; I need some to pay taxes tomorrow.'

The intruder gathered up most of the money and was on his way when Shichiri said, 'You should say 'thank you' when you receive a gift.' The man thanked him and made off.

A few days afterwards the fellow was caught and confessed, among other thefts, the one against Shichiri. When called as a witness the latter said, 'As far as I am concerned this man was no thief; I gave him the money and he thanked me for it.'

After he had finished his prison term, the man went to Shichiri and became his disciple.

Or, if a shorter illustration is needed:

The Emperor

The Emperor, studying Zen under Gu-Do, inquired:

'In Zen this very mind is Buddha. Is this correct?'

Gu-Do answered, 'If I say, Yes, you will think that you understand when you do not. If I say, No, I would be contradicting a fact which many understand quite well.'

The more enlightened mind sees and avoids the mechanical duality of 'Yes' and 'No'.

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