

3 February 1969

READING 2

PART 1. THE COGNITION OF BEING

The new way of looking at the idea of Being (referred to in last week's paper) is this:

Real 'I', the True Self, *always is*. That is the only True and Permanent Being that we have. But our being appears to go up and down according to how much we experience, know, or remember this Real 'I', the Source of True Knowledge.

When we completely forget it, we behave like machines driven by external influences and without a mind to 'programme' and 'service' them. We are *not* those turning thoughts, those conflicting desires, those restless movements, those irresponsible actions, those ever-changing 'I's. That is all mechanics, not psychology. All of us, however, know moments when we begin to *know that we are*, to have a sudden sense of our own existence. 'How strange!' we feel; 'I'm here now, I'm myself again.' Those moments, of course, happen when something has made our minds still and quiet, when the clouds have blown away.

Any point on the earth's surface (except near the Poles) has a dark period every 24 hours and is also deprived of sunlight by the weather, though we know perfectly well that the sun is always shining.

When we get separated from the Self we suffer from a 'deficiency disease' if we forget that such apparent separation is inevitable and only temporary.

This was the main theme of Professor Maslow's first book, in which he wrote:

My original question was, 'What makes people neurotic?' My answer... was, in brief, that neurosis seemed at its core, and in its beginning, to be a deficiency disease; that it was born out of being deprived of certain satisfactions which I called needs in the same sense that water and amino-acids and calcium are needs, namely that their absence produces illness...

(Towards a Psychology of Being, p.17)

and their restoration cures it. He goes on to describe two kinds of cognition (knowing), one based on deficiency ('D-cognition') and the other based on experiences of Being ('B-cognition').

Out of our own experience we can relate all this to Self-knowing and Self-remembering with its three characteristics, Consciousness, Truth and Happiness – basic human needs like water and amino-acids and calcium.

The following quotations from the Shankaracharya help to show that we all know and are trying to express the same thing:

In each individual and within each subtle body (our psychology), the knowledge of all names and forms with their possibilities is present in seed form. Unlike the Absolute, the individual is not aware of these, so he does not know that he knows. When he grows in his being, or is able to clear away his cloud of ignorance, then he knows what he has. An individual – an artist – becomes a medium of inspiration and expression, both.

(Record, 15 September 1968)

Q. Are there different stages in Being?

S. There are stages or steps which are marked on the ladder of Understanding to define how far one has gone through, but in case of Being it is only a question of enlightenment which at first is more or less momentary. It takes one right into the other world. In the field of Being it is rather difficult to define steps as one can in the case of Knowledge.

For example, you may live in London to work, and have a cottage in the country for weekends to get away from the tense atmosphere and enjoy peace and rest. The Spiritual world is like the cottage – one can go to the cottage by cycle, motor-car or train. People have different kinds of Being; some go quicker than others!

(Record, 8 September 1964)

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PART 2. 'SELF-UNDERSTANDING'

Since Being is difficult to measure or talk about, it remains for us rather a theoretical idea. Understanding, however, is a very practical measure. If, in spite of the fact that our knowledge has not changed, we find we understand certain books or people or situations better or worse from time to time – then this must be due to changes in our Being.

Now the most important of all that one has to understand, is one's Self; not only that Ultimate Observer which alone is 'I am', but also one's life and its true function and our relations with people close to us. One can understand other people in proportion to how much one understands one's Self.

In those dark days round the beginning of World War 2, when we first moved into Colet House, Mr. Ouspensky was speaking like this at some of his meetings, though we didn't really understand his meaning. Here are three quotations from his meeting reports in chronological order:

1. Q. Am I lying when I say that I understand other Systems (like Buddhism or the Upanishads) better since I heard about this System?

O. I am very interested to hear that... They wrote things one after the other without emphasising that one thing is more important than another. But Self-understanding certainly helps to understand many things.

(*A Further Record*, February 1935)

2. Q. Is it possible to Self-remember while you are doing other things?

O. Yes, it is possible. It is necessary to create a certain energy or point (using it in ordinary sense) and that can be created only at a moment of serious emotional stress. All the work before that is only preparation of the method. But if you find yourself in a moment of very strong emotional stress, and if you try to remember yourSelf then, it will remain afterwards, and then you will be able to remember yourSelf.

So only with very intense emotion is it possible to create this foundation for Self-remembering; and that cannot be done if you do not prepare yourself for it. These emotional moments come from time to time, but we don't use them because we don't know how to use them.

Q. What is the preparation you are speaking about?

O. Self-study, Self-observation, Self-understanding. You can change nothing yet nor

make something different.' [That was 30 years ago!] But many things already *begin to happen* differently. It doesn't mean that you have changed anything – they begin to happen differently.

(*A Further Record*, August 1939)

3. Q. How can we use the Law of Seven?

O. We can only use things in relation to ourselves, not for outside things. We cannot begin from a definition of forces. *We must understand ourselves.* It is in one of the first [Psychological] lectures: Man is a machine, but a machine that knows it is a machine is already something different.

Q. What makes one's reactions so difficult to change?

O. If you calculate the amount of energy you give to ordinary things, and how much to Self-remembering, you will understand.

(*A Further Record*, April 5th 1940)

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To finish with a quotation from the same book by Maslow:

The person at the peak is God-like not only in senses that I have touched upon already, but in certain other ways as well, particularly in the complete, loving, uncondemning, compassionate and perhaps amused, acceptance of the world and of the person.

(*ibid*, p.87)

This is the direction in which 'Self-understanding' by each of us can be accumulated from experience.

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