

16 June 1979

## READING 5

### PART 1. HOW TO USE A SYMBOL

The other day I quoted at a small meeting some significant remarks from Mr. Ouspensky's writings which I mistakenly thought came from *Tertium Organum*. Actually they come on pp. 218 & 219 of the third edition of *A New Model of the Universe* where he himself was quoting (in Chapter 5, on the Tarot) from a book by Oswald Wirth. This is the relevant passage:

By their very nature the symbols must remain elastic, vague and ambiguous, like the sayings of an oracle. Their role is to unveil mysteries, leaving the mind all its freedom... They can illuminate the mind inwardly, but they are not created for expounding what are called scientific truths and cannot serve as a theme for rhetorical arguments. Occult ('True') knowledge cannot be (fully) transmitted either orally or in writing. It can only be acquired by deep meditation. It is necessary to penetrate deep into oneself in order to discover it. And those who seek it outside themselves are on the wrong path. It is in that sense that the words used by Socrates 'Know thyself' must be understood.

And from the same book on the following page:

It follows from this that every word is a lie. The inner side of thought, its fundamental spirit, eludes us. This is the Deity, which continually reveals itself and which nevertheless allows itself to be seen only in its reflections.

*(Le Symbolisme Hermétique, 1910)*

That is why each person has to find his own interpretation; and why I myself was never taught how to use this universal symbol either by Mr. Ouspensky or the Shankaracharya; I had to learn by submitting something I found from it, and they would say 'Right' or 'Wrong' or 'That' is *one* way, but not the only way' – no more. So that's how it must be for us in future; we have proved that attempts to 'explain it' have only led to confusion.

### PART 2

So let us keep to things we *can* observe for ourselves and discuss, such as the discovery of certain latent functions and improvement in our efficiency in various fields, through the practice of Attention. We have not got enough observations yet about the difference between the *inner* ('instinctive') functions and the *external* sensations and movements controlled by the 'moving centre' – a quite separate department of the mind.

In Reading 4 we gave you Mr. Ouspensky's description of the three parts of the 'moving centre' from his *Psychological Lectures* of nearly fifty years ago. Here is what he said about the 'instinctive mind or centre':

The work of the instinctive centre<sup>†</sup> is very well hidden from us. We really know, i.e. feel and can observe, only its sensory and emotional part.

The mechanical part includes in itself those habitual sensations which very often we do not notice at all, but which serve as a background to inner sensations; also *instinctive*

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<sup>†</sup>Note: Observe that its kind of sensation is quite different from that of the moving centre – being much more vague and difficult to locate. The difference was researched by Head and Rivers in London between the wars when they divided sensations into 'Protopathic' and 'Epicritic'.]

*movements* in the correct meaning of the expression i.e. all inner movements (which do not have to be learnt) like the rhythm of breathing, the circulation of the blood and the movement of food in the organism.

The 'higher part' (though it cannot be called either 'intellectual' or 'voluntary') is very big and very important. In the state of self-consciousness or approaching it, one can come into contact with this part (called by one physiologist 'The Wisdom of the Body') and learn a great deal from it concerning the functioning of the machine (both the right and the wrong functioning in illness) and its possibilities. This is the mind behind all the inner work of the organism, a mind quite different and separate from the intellectual mind.

**Comment.** I had some experience of this when about the same time I obtained from the Medical Research Council, supplies of the drug 'mescaline' – the active principle of the Mexican cactus *peyotl*. At a certain stage one would become conscious of something much more like a farmyard than a drawing room with the noises and splashing and cries of the different creatures in the organic life within each of us! This all belongs to the 'autonomic' department.

But I don't expect you to observe or discuss that – just observe for yourselves the difference between outer sensations and movements and inner feelings – *the change of mood* before and after a meal, the inner aches and pains and pleasant feelings.

So most of the observations you can discuss will still probably be of the different levels of the moving centre – sensory motor mechanisms which are much more easily observed.

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