

23 February 1981

READING 4

(for 2 weeks)

Two main themes aroused interest at last Monday's senior meeting:

PART 1. THE THREE LEVELS

First, the equal importance (within its own sphere) of each of the three levels, Causal, Subtle and Physical for all embodied human beings. The story of the blind man, the cripple and the Overseer shows that by themselves physical bodies merely serve the purposes of nature and eventually dust returns to dust. But the Causal ('Soul') has no means of manifestation without the material, and what is the use of a cause without any effects? Also physical effects can only follow some immaterial cause if there is a vehicle or medium to connect them, so an idea has to be given a form by thought and action which has been learnt and practised. And that is done by knowledge and mind (subtle level). But at different times and places and among different kinds of people one of the three (action, knowledge or worship) gains exaggerated importance at the expense of the others; to be 'modern' now something has to be physically seen or recorded before it is 'believed'; in the past the body had to be sacrificed for the good of the Soul, etc., etc.

Val Price (at the Robin Amis group in Bath) had picked up the expression and asked what it meant. 'In all forms of worship, you must cease to think of your body and separate your mind from your personality.' But anybody who has tried it for long enough knows that this only produces *disunity* not unity. Fortunately our guide the Shankaracharya stresses the need for consistency of heart, head and hand with such expressions as 'Say what you feel and do what you say'.

My own experience of forty years of medical practice agrees with Dr. Cox's remarks last Monday:

Dr. M. C. I don't think I've ever met anybody who knows anything about their body at first-hand. Most patients, in fact most people, have never actually met their body; they've met a sort of image of it, but it's not a very good image, and the actual body is fairly mysterious even to doctors, and I wish I could meet someone who *did* know the body.

But if the guidelines of human physiology and its interaction with personal psychology could only be given in general education (as they ought to be) there would be no need to wait till misuse makes it ill and we have to try to learn from a doctor. For in the third state of consciousness or near to it one becomes connected with the instinctive department of mind and can learn much at first-hand about the way the body needs to work. I should like our self-study to include a course of such instruction in non-technical language. Seen that way, the body is alive and not just a machine.

S. This body is like a big town, the habitation of many. It contains a whole world of living creatures inside. They all possess life and desire to live. Some appear harmful and some useful. They are constantly being kept in a state of dynamic equilibrium, and this equilibrium keeps the body fit. Any disturbance of equilibrium causes disease; then compensating forces of nature arise which tend to get it right. Similarly, when the balance in the creation is upset, then the forces of Param-Atman come into play to restore it.

Nature is constantly striving for perfection, never attaining it. Man also, as part of Nature. One who is ill, tries to get well; one who is weak, tries to get strong; one who is poor, tries to get rich; and so on. Thus, in every situation, there is dissatisfaction, and there are corresponding efforts to overcome it and to improve things.

Summary. People who have recently joined us tend to think in absolutes (either blind or all-seeing, either crippled or well-able to move around); and they want to have all the answers at once. But liberation from the personal viewpoint and habits of movement has to be very gradual for most people. That search has been going on out of sight since the 14th century, when translations of the Neo-Platonist writings on the continent first became available here outside the monasteries. The unknown author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* begins his book. 'I find four degrees of Christian men's living: and they be these, common, special, unified and perfect. Three of these may be begun and ended in this life; and the fourth by grace be began here, but it shall ever last without end in the bliss of Heaven.' And this verse by John Amner (1613) stresses the lost feeling a person has unless he receives the sort of help we are getting:

A stranger here, as all my fathers were
That went before, I wander to and fro:
From earth to heaven is my pilgrimage,
A tedious way for flesh and blood to go.
O Thou, that art the way, pity the blind,
And teach me how I may Thy kingdom find.

So, patiently, make any small efforts you can to practise from day to day what you hear, and in the fullness of time those good seeds you sow in the Causal 'flower bed' will come up.

PART 2. FOUR ORDERS OF LAWS

Arising out of the better understanding of three levels of materiality, comes the need to find a *language* in which to express what we discover about the inner nature of mankind.

(From meeting on 16.2.81)

It has sometimes been said by people at recent meetings that the quiet hemisphere doesn't have any language of its own. That's not true! It has several languages far less stereotyped than the one which only uses words; and one of its chief means of communication has always been stories, fairy-tales, myths and parables. But recent generations seem to have lost the art of understanding such stories – reading their psychological meaning and applying it to ourselves. We are apt to take them literally and ask for the address of the garden of Eden and just where does the serpent bite – and does it bite below the belt or higher up? Of course we want precise information and language, but that isn't the way to get it.

M.W.F. in a letter read last Monday saw all this clearly and mentioned an opera by Monteverdi based on one already famous story. He had just acquired the records and libretto of *The Return of Ulysses to his own Country* and he said that in the past he felt that this was a story which showed more than any other how a hero or 'man of destiny' comes under different laws

from ordinary mortals. Ulysses, the wily or wise, sees the Gods (who personify important human characteristics) as the source of guidance; particularly he regards Athene as his tutelary deity, talks to her and remembers her at critical moments, and his son Telemachus sees her in his dreams. Penelope his wife faithfully awaits him, outwitting the 'suits' who are bad men, serving only their own ends and speaking disrespectfully of the Gods, though they fear them... This guidance from above prompts him to get his crew to tie him to a mast so that he couldn't react to the ravishing song of the sirens, to save himself and his companions from the wiles of Circe and finally to win back his home. All this has a psychological meaning for us.

This reminded us that our Western system described *Four Orders of Laws* which can dominate the life of man. First, the *Law of Cause and Effect*, which includes everything that results from a man's own action (which the Shankaracharya extends to include the past lives of any individual and any future life in store for him). Second, the *Law of Accident* or Chance which refers chiefly to large numbers of people where many lines of cause and effect intercept, and it is past the wit of man to determine exactly when and where they will meet. Seen from a god-like eminence, however, there could be no such thing as chance. However, to the onlooker it may seem unfair that: boats sink with all hands; there are train and air crashes, frontier battles, revolutions and wars where no one would claim that all the victims deserve the same fate. The Atman, says H.H., is the 'responsible being' governing the first type of law; but the Param-Atman has a wider sphere which looks to us like Chance.

So the Law of Accident is that which applies to the physical bodies of common, undisciplined mankind, and were referred to as 'planetary influences'. But to people on the ladder of Self-realization who are performing special work for the Param-Atman, special guidance becomes possible and like Ulysses and other heroes and historical figures receive guidance and know what to do. As a body of people (but not as individual personalities) we come under this order of Laws which is called *Fate or Destiny*. That is why a story like the Odyssey is so instructive.

And finally there is the *Law of Will* which applies to fully realized or Conscious people; for Consciousness and Will are two sides of one and the same thing. But until one reaches that eminence one must consent to come under the Will of another – a fully Realized or Liberated man.

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