

HEAD & HEART continued

This is the last paper of the term and we need to round things off. There is a story that deals with most of the ideas we have discussed this term – *The Blind Man and the Cripple* from the *Arabian Nights*. Here is Dr Roles' exposition from a Large Monday Meeting on 26 January 1981 [81/1]:

Anybody in education will know what a narrow picture the word "psychology" is giving today, small and narrow. It takes into account only a small superficial intellectual part of the human endowment. Any psychology that Mr Ouspensky envisaged, or the Shankaracharya, means much more than that. So in this first paper for this year, I have based it on a story of which we have heard a truncated version, but of which there are fuller versions occurring in the Middle East since the time of about 800 A.D. some of which were included in Richard Burton's "Thousand and One Nights", that is "Arabian Nights' Stories". Amongst these stories (there are about twenty volumes of them and we happen to have a limited edition which was privately printed) there is a bunch of stories told by a Prime Minister to his Prince in answer to questions. One of the questions was: "What is the relation between the body (which moves around but can't see anything on its own, has no long vision), and the soul (which can't move without the body) in relation to reward or retribution?" And the answer given is that it is the same relation as is shown in the following story of the "Blind Man and the Cripple and the Overseer of the Garden". I'll give you a short account – some people object to the flowery language Burton uses¹, but you shouldn't be put off by things like that! I'll try and tell it to you just shortly.

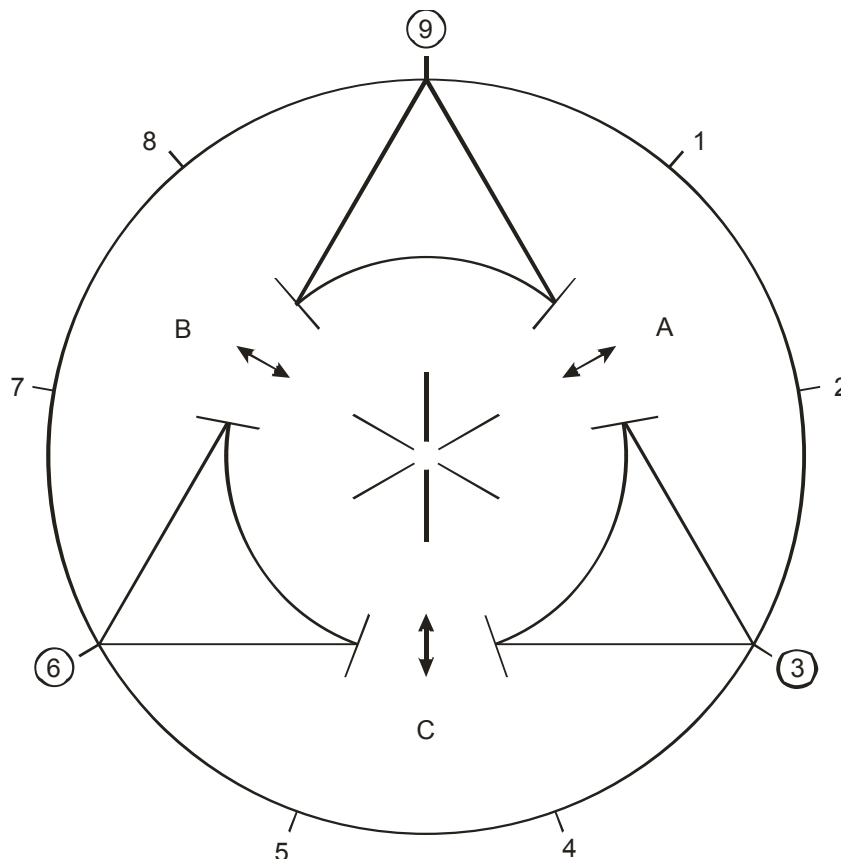
There were two beggars who were great friends and always asked alms together – one was a cripple and one was blind. One day a wealthy landowner took pity on them and invited them in to one of his gardens and gave them a few samples of the fruit from his orchard, and said, "You may have a little of these things but do no harm to the garden"; and went away. As the fruit became ripe the cripple said, "There is the lovely scent of this ripe fruit and I can't get near it, I can't move, so you'll have to find it for me and bring some back." And the blind man said, "Now you mention it, it is the most glorious smell and I simply can't go on without getting some of it. I wouldn't have noticed it but for you."

Just at that moment, the overseer of the garden, (who is not the Owner, but knows his wishes) appeared and asked them what they were arguing about and they explained the situation and he said, "Stop thinking like that. You were asked by the Owner not to lay waste his garden or spoil it or steal his property. Stop thinking how you're going to get around." But they pressed him so hard that, being a weak man this overseer, he let out the secret which was that the blind man should take the lame man on his shoulders and the lame man would direct him to a given tree. And then he went away – a fatal thing to do – he went away! It wasn't long – knowing this trick – before they had laid waste the garden, trampled it all down, stolen the fruit, and stripped the trees; and the Owner suddenly came back, and when he saw what they were up to, he cursed them

¹ The Richard Burton translation is reproduced on p4.

and flung them out of the garden, saying, "I knew perfectly well what you were up to. I've watched it going on, but I told you not to and so you have to be punished."

Now this isn't just another "Garden of Eden" story. On the physical level it looks that way. But really it is a psychological story. It's about how the human structure is put together – it can be explained in many ways but one way is in connection with our Symbol (Enneagram on screen).



As before, 'A' is the outward part, the sensory–motor and spinal mechanism performing external movements in space but with very, very short-sighted vision as to what it is moving round about, what the consequences of its actions will be. That would correspond to what in the story is the blind man – the body. 'B' is the emotional inner core of man's nature which can be in contact with the Owner but which is unable to move without the assistance of the body. So 'B' is what the story is calling the "soul" – the cripple and 'A' is the body – the blind man. Either working alone without direction gets us into all the troubles we make. According to our system and according to the Shankaracharya's system the overseer ('C' – the base of the triangle) which the Shankaracharya calls the Buddhi, the discriminating mind, the Reason, has to stand in the middle and decide what is right according to the Owner's will; and must be there all the time. He mustn't go away, let out secrets and leave the place to destruction. He is our chief hope, bringing both the blind and the lame under the Owner's sway. Taken psychologically, it does show what a big scope psychology has always had, much bigger than what is allowed to be discussed today. Is that clear? I doubt it! (laughter) Are there any questions you can ask now?

Tony Anholt [an actor]: Is the cripple inevitably a cripple or can he learn to walk?

Dr R: Oh yes! This story represents these characters when they are working separately on their own, without guidance and without discipline or advice. Certainly the cripple, the emotional centre, ordinarily works very badly because of the negativeness – the negative emotions we have: fear and all the rest of it. If it is freed from rage and fear and negative emotion it can be godlike because it will come then under direct sway of the Owner who will then enlarge his whole influence so that He will feel like your 'own Self lives in the hearts of all'. The future of human evolution is exactly along the line you suggest! But neither the cripple nor the blind can develop on their own. The glorious moments of unity an actor must feel come when the overseer is right there and strong and doing his proper job; and we have all had experience of periods of this, haven't we? Moments, or hours, or even days when we are united (inner and outer, upper and lower) everything together as one. The actor has to be aware of the outside world, the audience; and he also has to be true to himself; and he also has to know through the overseer what is in keeping with the role he is playing. Something like that – you know more about it than I do.

...

For this overseer to work, one has to be giving up all the time, from both sides. The lame man must be giving up all sorts of superstitions and selfish desires and so on; and the blind man must avoid being terribly active in his blindness and going round trampling on everything, particularly trampling on the lame man!

At another meeting (10 February 1981) Dr Roles talked about the relation with the Owner, the Divine Self:

H.W: Is the Overseer our contact with the Divine Self?

Dr. R.: Not our only contact, no. We have Conscience which is wholly emotional, our emotional contact; and Consciousness which is the mind, the reason. It was put in some special instruction when I asked the Shankaracharya, "How could I get on?" He said, "Learn to practice universal service. Be everybody's servant with the physical side. With the emotional side recall frequently the marvellous nature of the Divine Self, always remembering His never-failing benevolence. With the intellect, with the reason, realise that this Being knows everything and shows Himself in all that you perceive." So the Overseer is standing in for that intellect or reason. You have to cultivate in you by the purity of emotion something which will stand in for and follow on the conscience. You suddenly get a feeling – and the conscience is the quickest route, the emotion. But while we still have negative emotions and identification and everything which spoils our emotional life, we don't have that. So we clear out our emotion as far as we can, by not grumbling and complaining or criticising first of all; and then gradually not feeling any of this dirty emotion. Dirt that spoils our emotion. And while we are doing that, we need something to be going on with and the Overseer is our chauffeur. He drives our car, and as long as he is keeping watch we don't make too bad mistakes. But the Overseer can only point the way towards this emotional Light which is really like one's Beloved. You can see the signpost and the address and everything, but you have to go in to the Beloved One yourself. Nobody else can do it for you.

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The Blind Man and the Cripple

From Volume IX of *The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night*, trans. Richard Burton, 1885



A blind man and a Cripple were travelling companions and used to beg alms in company. One day they sought admission into the garden of someone of the benevolent, and a kind-hearted wight, hearing their talk, took compassion on them and carried them into his garden, where he left them after plucking for them some of its produce and went away, bidding them do no waste nor damage therein. When the fruits became ripe, the Cripple said to the Blind man, "Harkye, I see ripe fruits and long for them, but I cannot rise to eat thereof; so go thou arise, for thou art sound of either leg, and fetch us somewhat that we may eat." Replied the Blind, "Fie upon thee! I had no thought of them, but now that thou callest them to my mind, I long to eat of them and I am impotent unto this, being unable to see them; so how shall we do to get at them?" At this moment, behold, up came the Overseer of the garden, who was a man of understanding, and the Cripple said to him, "Harkye, O Overseer! I long for somewhat of those fruits, but we are as thou seest: I am a cripple and my mate here is stone-blind; so what shall we do?" Replied the Overseer "Woe to you! Have ye forgotten that the master of the garden stipulated with you that ye should do nothing whereby waste or damage befall it; so take warning and abstain from this." But they answered, "Needs must we get our portion of these fruits that we may eat thereof; so tell us some

device whereby we shall contrive this." When the Overseer saw that they were not to be turned from their purpose, he said, "This, then, is my device, O Cripple, let the Blind bear thee on his back and take thee under the tree whose fruit pleaseth thee, so thou mayst pluck what thou canst reach thereof." Accordingly the Blind man took on his back the Cripple who guided him till he brought him under a tree, and he fell to plucking from it what he would and tearing at its boughs till he had despoiled it, after which they went roundabout and throughout the garden and wasted it with their hands and feet; nor did they cease from this fashion, till they had stripped all the trees of the garth. Then they returned to their place and presently up came the master of the garden, who, seeing it in this plight, was wroth with sore wrath and coming up to them said, "Woe to you! What fashion is this? Did I not stipulate with you that ye should do no damage in the garden?" Quoth they, "Thou knowest that we are powerless to come at any of the fruit, for that one of us is a cripple and cannot rise and the other is blind and cannot see that which is before him; so what is our offense?" But the master answered, "Think ye I know not how ye wrought and how ye have gone about to do waste in my garden? I know, as if I had been with thee, O Blind, that thou tookest the Cripple pick-a-back, and he showed thee the way till thou borest him to the trees." Then he punished them with grievous punishment and thrust them out of the garden. "Now the Blind is the similitude of the body which seeth not save by the spirit, and the Cripple that of the soul, for that it hath no power of motion but by the body; the garden is the works, for which the creature is rewarded or punished, and the Overseer is the reason which biddeth to good and forbiddeth from evil. Thus the body and the soul are partners in reward and retribution." Q "Which of the learned men is most worthy of praise, according to thee?"--"He who is learned in the knowledge of Allah and whose knowledge profiteth him." Q "And who is this?"--"Whoso is intent upon seeking to please his Lord and avoid His wrath." Q "And which of them is the most excellent?"--"He who is most learned in the knowledge of Allah." Q "And which is the most experienced of them?"--"Whoso in doing according to his knowledge is most constant." Q "And which is the purest hearted of them?"-- "He who is most assiduous in preparing for death and praising the Lord and least of them in hope, and indeed he who penetrateth his soul with the awful ways of death is as one who looketh into a clear mirror, for that he knoweth the truth, and the mirror still increaseth in clearness and brilliance." Q "What are the goodliest of treasures?"--"The treasures of heaven." Q "Which is the goodliest of the treasures of Heaven?"--"The praise of Allah and His magnification." Q "Which is the most excellent of the treasures of earth?"--"The practice of kindness."--And Shahrazad perceived the dawn of day and ceased saying her permitted say.

Blind Man & Cripple, sketch by Richard Guyatt