

**DISILLUSIONMENT****PART 1**

This is the last term of our year and the final term of E Group's introduction to the system of knowledge taught at Colet House by P.D. Ouspensky and Francis Roles. Having now ventured quite deeply into this curious synthesis of Eastern and Western esoteric knowledge it will pay us to understand something more of the basis of the claim that the Advaita Vedanta is the original source of the system brought by Gurdieff to the West in the early years of the last century.

No living tradition can remain static; it must be continually reformulated and kept alive by being taught, the teachers, as well as the pupils, gaining new understanding and insight by telling the same story over and over again. The times being lived in will suggest the best scenario against which the story is most effectively told, and this changing scenario, as well as the particular individuals engaged, produces and demands new meanings, new forms, and unexpectedly practical possibilities at each fresh re-telling.

At the basis of the Western system is the idea that humanity exists in a dangerous and difficult place within the scheme of creation. One early story was that after creating man—fully developed man with a nature essentially divine and fit to be the rightful Regent of the Biosphere—a 'mistake' was made further up in the chain of being that required the reassignment of humanity to be merely the conveyor of a certain necessary energy required by other beings at a higher level. Consequently a special device was fitted in the mind of man, a falsely fragmented sense of 'I', along with a set of 'buffers' which served to disconnect 'will' from 'perception', and so deny man the awareness of his true nature—subverting him to become merely a milch-cow, slave to a purpose beyond his comprehension. All the energies produced by his living existence were harvested by powers unknown to him and not for his own benefit.

But when the crisis had been averted and the need for this desperate measure removed, even then this subtle and debilitating device remained so deeply embedded within the culture of humanity that special measures were required to remove it and even so it could only be done individually and not *en masse*. Individuals remained so deeply self-deluded, unquestioningly believing they already possessed the power to exercise all the qualities of a divine nature, free will, consciousness, love, the power of creative thought etc., etc. that usually it was only when a man or a woman became so strongly and genuinely disillusioned with all that their apparent individuality seemed to compass that there arose the possibility of discovering the truth, the inherent birthright of their original nature. And this was only the beginning; super-human efforts and long suffering to gain control of the mind and the emotions were still required to complete the journey home.

This fiercely minatory rendering may have been necessary in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century—perhaps more stick than carrot was then required—but later on, as the world relaxed, the scenario could be adapted to insist and assure us that what had been represented as remote and hazardous was in very fact immanent and benevolent; the assurance that our own divine nature is always available, here and now, 'ever-ready for assimilation and help.' The system certainly demonstrates that the direct influence of the Absolute is available at every level of the creation. But though the picture now presented is much warmer, hopeful and less threatening, the same framework of essential knowledge is necessary to foster and strengthen this crucial disillusionment with our condition—the good impulse that impels us to drop everything, to turn to the stillness

and look up to the light. Without this, however much we know, our knowledge will only enslave us further. If at any level we feel that what we know sets us apart from the common run of humanity we inevitably resign ourselves to sleep only the more deeply.

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There are a multitude of different scenarios conveying the same essential knowledge but it is our predilection that we often prefer to focus on the story rather than the message it conveys. If we are not sufficiently disillusioned with ourselves we just add another favoured story to our repertoire of self-delusion. Perhaps uniquely, Advaita preserves the truly essential knowledge without embroidery, using the often deeply dualistic stories only to help seekers at particular stages of the journey—using a thorn to remove another thorn and then casting both away.

However we choose to tell the story, whatever slant is put upon it to suit the audience of the moment, the plot line remains unmistakably the same. As the Vedanta states:

“The Absolute is real. The world is illusion. Absolute and Individual are not different.”

*(Brahma satyam. Jagan mithya. Brahma Jivaiva naporah)*

Advaita insists this simple couplet is all we need to know. But how to know it? Our true nature, the Absolute, is beyond time and space, beyond all thought or knowledge and any form of words. Even consciousness itself is not the reality, only the means whereby the Absolute becomes manifest.

From a dimensionless all-embracing point, beyond any conception, the Absolute issues the creation. Some say, just for entertainment, for a joke. But all the stories insist that the world we experience is fundamentally unreal, an illusion depending like a mirage on a particular perception of time and space for its apparent reality. Advaita, like the system, describes the ‘false I’, the Jiva, as the device for creating this state of ignorance in which we live out our existence.

In the body appears a phantom, the ‘false I,’ to claim the body for itself and it is called the Jiva. This Jiva is always outward bent, taking the world to be real and itself to be the doer and experiencer of pleasures and pains, desirous of this and that, indiscriminating, not once remembering its true nature, nor enquiring “Who am I?, What is this world? Such forgetfulness of the True Self is ignorance. (*Advaita Bodha Dipaka*) and:

“To be free from bondage the wise must practise discrimination between self and non-self. By that alone will one become full of joy, recognising oneself as Being, Consciousness and Bliss.” (*Vivekachudamini*)

The western system is unique in presenting the symbol of the Enneagram which it claims is the blueprint for the whole of creation, the basic plan of the miraculous perpetual motion machine with which the Absolute creates and sustains the world. Without words, the Enneagram can demonstrate all the knowledge required in order to go beyond knowledge and in doing so resolve apparent differences between different approaches. Over the next few weeks we will try to demonstrate how this can be, and the process will also provide a recapitulation of what has been given over the last two years.

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