

UNITY**PART 1**

At the beginning of this new year we are faced with an interesting if challenging situation, which is that we are starting a new E Group meeting in London for those who want to learn the Fourth Way system. This is of course good news, but the new group will need separate material and our resources are already stretched; and furthermore there is a rightful demand from newer members of the Pewsey Group to be given a proper grounding in our teachings. We must also keep up the pressure on ourselves by constantly revisiting and revising the material we use, with an ever stronger emphasis on practical work.

Our suggested solution to this is to change to a new format of paper for C and Pewsey Groups (from next week on). Papers would start with the usual kind of material in a 'general' section, though shorter than previously. Then there will be a 'teaching section' which will carry much the same material as we give to E Group. In this way newer members will get a step by step approach to the System and we hope older members will contribute to a discussion of how best to teach it. Finally, to make sure we keep an eye on practice there will be a third section with a 'task for the week'. Quite how this will work out remains to be seen!

We need a general theme to start the term, and perhaps we could adopt the idea of 'Unity'. Last term we started with the theme of 'Transcendence', showing how things appear in a different guise depending on the degree of consciousness or the level from which influences derive: we discussed the steps of the ladder of self-realisation, influences A, B & C, the four levels of thought, and what is an objective view of the world. We went on to look at the major steps involved in reaching a higher state of consciousness, the two conscious shocks.

The term ended with an account of a real experience by one of us, of a moment of higher consciousness:

When one looks at the world from a 180 degree different perspective, by looking at the space enveloping the objects rather than the objects, one gets a taste of this ever-present background awareness. It is this pure awareness that the neo-Advaita people talk about. One feels that every thing is contained in this loving and caring environment, is as it should be, and the drama is unfolding within this pure awareness. Is this what Ouspensky called the Unmanifest Sun? It is the backdrop against which the drama on every scale unfolds in time. It penetrates and enfolds every level in the whole of creation, down to the smallest particle and absolute zero.

There is a lot to notice here. The 'background consciousness' refers to something indefinable that is always there and that in quiet moments becomes apparent: it is behind everything we experience, in the same way that everything we see with our eyes is illuminated by light. In the description of the experience, this background consciousness is seen also as what lies between the objects, connects them and runs through them. The sense of separation, of self from world, of object from object dissolves; there is unity.

Seeing things in this way is *different in kind* from the view from normal consciousness. At the same time there is a familiarity about it, like being once again in the presence of someone one loves but from whom one has been separated.

One can't make such experiences happen, but one can make it more likely that they will happen, and that is perhaps what we should concentrate on this term. It's partly a matter of understanding our own psychology, as Dr Roles wrote in 1981:

Some of us believe now that the meditation, when it was given to the West some twenty years ago, was meant to restart a science of psychology for the free world which would include all compartments of the human mind and not just be a psychology representing a small part seen by the outward looking mind, which is what it is today. It has taken all this twenty years, but just lately there are signs that there is a bigger demand for this among the general public and that the biologists also recognise the need for such a system of psychology which will include all sides of man's nature. You see, technology has confused the issue so much that it is being forgotten that *psychology depends entirely on conscious experience*; if it's not an experience felt by oneself, then it is not psychology. For instance, "if someone hasn't seen the redness of a poppy or heard the sound of a tolling bell, they could never have it explained to them that anywhere in this universe such strange things existed. No 'scientific' description alone could ever do it". That's how the mathematician Dunn stated it in the nineteen-thirties and I've never known it effectively contradicted. So psychology must be a study of conscious experience, and this is being replaced by the study of tracings and records by technological means, an *instrumental substitute* for human psychology.

Several of us have been trying to frame such a basic "Psychology of Conscious experience" in simple form that will include current scientific knowledge, for example of the twin halves of the brain. For one is gradually coming to realise that the whole of the development of unity on the part of a human being depends on the bringing together of these two sides of our nature. After all, the word 'Yoga' means *union* and it is union between "the inner and the outer" and between all the other conflicting dualities, which is the basis of this ancient system based on mantra meditation— the non-dual Advaita system—of which our meditation is a modernised form.

One avenue to follow is whether the inward-looking and the outward-looking parts of the mind are the same thing or are two different parts. Observation is key here, but there is an interesting-looking new book on the two hemispheres of the brain, *The Master and his Emissary* by Iain McGilchrist, which is recommended reading for the term.

Practice

We might start by looking at the opposite of unity. Choose some important object, person or any factor, maybe a problem in your life and note if your attitude towards it or them changes from day to day, and why.

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