

FCR 1976-82

The System: Part 1

Introduction

Reading sequentially Dr Roles's papers which involve the System, it becomes apparent that there is a marked change of direction, but one that is difficult to pin down; there is less detail to be sure, but there is a more subtle change of level, of quality. Before launching into the teaching itself, it seems important to try to understand the reasons for this change and the implications for us today. After all, it has sometimes been stated that Dr Roles did not want to continue using all or some parts of the System; or that once the contact with HH had been established, we had found the original teaching and the old imperfect version should be discarded; or that Dr Roles kept the System teaching going to satisfy the 'old guard' of Ouspensky followers; or that he regarded it as part of the 'prison' from which we had escaped; or that he kept the System teaching because of a debt to Ouspensky, something to do with recurrence.

Dr Roles sometimes commented on the direction he was taking; here are some quotations in chronological order:

[speaking of neurophysiology] Some of you will be content with the practice of Meditation accompanied by readings from inspired sources . . . and practical work in a group. Others will demand more precise knowledge; but I must warn them that all theories invented before the 1960's are now out of date. . . . So if we want to use Ouspensky's System with its greater precision, we must take an entirely new look at it. [78/3]

But with the added precision of O's teaching of the System, we have been able to understand much more of the Shankaracharya's language than we would otherwise have done. But not knowing this system, our interpreters were quite unable to get at its real meaning which we are only now beginning to appreciate. [78/37]

Our discussion groups are already doing so well, particularly the newest, that they can now help us to reconstruct certain parts of the Western system which P.D. Ouspensky taught in his Psychological Lectures during the 1930's. It was just before his death that he used the word "reconstruct" rather than follow slavishly much that was already out of date. [79/15]

In the meanwhile we feel that part of our job here in Mr. Ouspensky's house is to go on trying to do what he spent his last weeks preparing us to do—namely to reconstruct the System in Western form, not using his formulations only or the state of knowledge thirty years back which he knew; but incorporating the knowledge and the language that was to come. So the attempts in these papers of the last two or three weeks and the one today have been to try to see if the discoveries—scientific discoveries—which he didn't know and would have liked to have known; if a new understanding of the System he was given by Gurdjieff; and if the teachings of the Shankaracharya—whether if all these came together, a new System would arise. The one thing which brings them together for me are the various forms of the Enneagram which I have used over the years. Everyone has the right to use the Symbol in the way they want to,

provided they can have it agree with everything and not be right for one thing and wrong for another. And this Universal Symbol can be used in many different ways which one, by the way, was never taught to do. It's up to each individual to find his own way. [79/23]

What I would recommend is that anything to do with escaping from prison, with being rescued from the well of ignorance, you use the Shankaracharya's simple meditation and comment. If you want to study the universe and know a lot, then you use the Western system. [79/36]

[The] system as we originally had it and as it was given to Mr. Ouspensky in 1915 in pre-revolutionary Russia taught us very accurately all about the prison in which we live – the stones and the bricks and the bars, the routine habits of the warders and the character of the governor – and various things which would be needed in order to escape. But it didn't teach us how to escape. [80/36]

. . . we want to take some of the special Knowledge from the psychological system that Mr. Ouspensky taught in the 1930's because some ideas mustn't be lost – they're too valuable and too much needed today . . .

Our Western system taught us a lot about the prison and all about the walls and the stones and so on but it never showed us how to escape. So to escape from prison we need the guidance of a great man, an already liberated man, and we have to understand the language he uses. But Mr. Ouspensky always felt that our work based on this house was Western, was European, dated from, if you like, the Greek philosophers – Plato, the neo-Platonist to whom "The Cloud of Unknowing" for instance, belongs in the 14th century. That line he wanted developed. And that, we can see now how to do a bit. [81/2]

Both Systems, the one adapted for the West which we learned from P.D.O. and also the much more complete and durable non-dualistic system of the Shankaracharya's . . . [81/12]

Yes, well India is India and Mr. Ouspensky started this Society for the British working in Britain and for Britain. Britain was his second home and that's what he started this Society for, to certainly learn all we could about techniques like Meditation and have the guidance of Realized men and all this but to find an expression in the West, using Western language. [82/16]

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The teaching

What parts of the System did Dr Roles use in those last years? There are hundreds of papers that refer to the System teaching or to Ouspensky. There are major expositions of 'Cosmoses' in 1978 and 1982, of the Ray of Creation in 1976-7, and several expositions of the 3 storey house, centres, the Law of Three, Octaves. There are comparisons of the Advaita teaching and the System, particularly on Conscience and Identification, and (as we have already seen) on Self-remembering. Only one or two main components of the System such as the Diagram of All-Living do not taught

But above all, Dr Roles was particularly insistent about the use of the Enneagram, or as he later called it the 'Universal Symbol', and we will turn to this next week. Meanwhile the following statements give some idea of the importance he attached to it:

Now we have, locked up in our treasury, a universal symbol – the 'Enneagram' based on a circle divided into nine equal parts – which is ideal for this purpose. Since we were left on our own by the death of our first instructor P.D. Ouspensky this has been the basis of all our teachings; and anybody who is to carry on when our Society passes under new management will have to know how to use the symbol in this way . . . This symbol is ultimately the only way to get over all difficulties of language and communication in order to unite the central core of our Western system, with the Shankaracharya's system of Advaita (non-dualism) and the inner content of all true religions, philosophies and sciences it is the key also to the best in art. The aim was beautifully expressed by the Christian Messiah (as an embodiment of the supreme Consciousness of the Universe): (St.Mathew, XI, vv. 28–30): 'Come unto me, all that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.' [77/2]

In the past, I submitted to him diagrams from our way of using the Universal Symbol (basically a circle of 9 points). His comment then was: "This is one very good way, but it not the only way." Though he himself never has to use diagrams in teaching, yet everything he says is based on the same Symbol, of which the various interpretations have been legion. [79/35]

Well whoever takes over will have to understand about our symbols of the triangle and the circle and all that develops from it in order to be able to do what Mr. Ouspensky said we had to be able to do, to be able to answer all questions. [82/16]

Exercise

We have to arrive at something of a consensus about the teaching of the System. It would be particularly helpful if anyone can throw some light on two long quotations appended here, so please read these during the week.

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Appendix

Dr Roles gave a fairly detailed account of the Ray of Creation at a Large Meeting on 23 March 1980, starting with the words: 'On all sides one is being pressed to try and rediscover the special language which we were taught and which arose sixty years ago.' But a month later there was the following comment:

All through this holiday I've been trying to come to myself in order to receive more light on a problem which has been at the centre of our affairs for the last twenty years in this House, since the coming of the Meditation. The problem really is: should we try and resuscitate the old system taught to Mr. Ouspensky, for a few of us are still around who heard it at first hand from him? Should we try to use all or part of it and what? This problem has been at the back of our minds all this twenty years and I suddenly got an answer which satisfied me so I'll try to put it shortly . . . The upshot of it was that the system as we originally had it and as it was given to Mr. Ouspensky in 1915 in pre-revolutionary Russia taught us very accurately all about the prison in which we live – the stones and the bricks and the bars, the routine habits of the warders and the character of the governor – and various things which would be needed in order to escape. But it didn't teach us how to escape. And nobody that I know ever did escape through the system alone – only Mr. Ouspensky that after much suffering and only in the last fortnight of his life! And it brought with it a lot of tragedies; so it cannot be in the original form in which it was given and which has now been published in its entirety in various books unselected and will make it impossible for anybody to teach that system in its original form again.

. . .

One of the chief objects Mr. Ouspensky had, if not *the* chief object, in founding this Society in this house was *the preservation of True Knowledge*. It was more important to him than interesting people or disseminating ideas – the preservation of what is true and what will remain true for ever. This True Knowledge consists of ways of escaping from prison, and not just of the study of the prison. You can either learn how to break out of prison, which is a dangerous proceeding and liable to land one up in a worse situation than before; or you *can earn a remission of sentence by good conduct and have one's life sentence reduced to five, ten years*. And that is the way we choose and the way the Shankaracharya recommends. By 'good conduct' he means consistency of thought, word and deed, and remembering that one is not the doer but that Param-Atman – the "big hand" – is arranging everything. So this resolves the conflict; because if we use what we remember of the system to escape from prison, that's fine, and indeed it's a tremendous help used in that way. If we're going to use it just to study the prison, I'm not on! And when you get to my age with only a short time before one departs from the scene, you will feel the same thing because the one thing you can take with you through physical death is the love of Truth and Consciousness. You cannot take all the other luggage, the burden of knowledge of whatever kind. And in fact other systems and our own, merely change the outside of the prison, merely change the location of the prison, and the kind of prison you're in – you might be moving from Wormwood Scrubs to Portland Bill – but it doesn't get you out of prison. And there are dozens and dozens of such partial prisons around today and nobody wants them any more!

[80/16]

The following comment on forming a new approach to psychology accords with recent experience in teaching the System to new people, but what does it mean?

Mr. Ouspensky, at his death, foresaw that after a generation perhaps there would be a need for some systematic psychology quite different from the psychology existing in his time. You've only got to read through the Psychological Lectures he gave in the 1930's, put together in the climate of what he was taught in revolutionary Russia, very pessimistic! to realise that it wouldn't do today; and accompanying that is the difference that in those days his teacher denied the existence of the Self . . . that is, of the God within each person. Whereas the Shankaracharya affirms that everybody, good or bad, has within him a Divine Self. It's a question of ignorance in most cases – simply not *knowing* its existence and therefore not knowing what life is all about. But we want to take some of the special Knowledge from the psychological system that Mr. Ouspensky taught in the 1930's because some ideas mustn't be lost – they're too valuable and too much needed today. So the question arises how shall we begin to form such a system – we never thought it would take thirty years – but it has. There are two things to be realised in trying to establish *what psychology is*. One is that psychology must be based on individual *conscious experience*. It is too often forgotten that in spite of all the instrumental technology, if a person has never seen the redness of a poppy or heard the sound of a tolling bell, there would be never any way by which it could be explained to them verbally that such extraordinary things exist in the universe. That was how the mathematical Dunn expressed it back in the 30's. So psychology *must* be based on the individual's conscious experience – otherwise it is an instrumental substitute and isn't psychology at all. That's one thing. The other thing is that there are many many new discoveries – very important ones [81/2]