

## A TEACHING FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

### The paths

One of the declared aims of the Study Society is to evolve a teaching which is appropriate for the new century. It is a principle of the Fourth Way that 'truths' are of their time and their expression has to change with the times. As a start towards finding a new approach, the several teachings of the Society and the several paths were presented in a Sunday meeting last term, based on a series of papers written by Jenny Beal<sup>1</sup>.

It might be relevant to look over our shoulders at this point at the past history of our teachings, the System and Advaita in particular. In the case of the System, it came from Gurdjieff, it was assembled into the System as we know it by Ouspensky, it was embellished by him, and it was restated by Dr Roles. All the stages are documented, but we do not know where Gurdjieff got it from. There is good evidence for an origin in India, but clearly since then much western cultural influence. In the case of the teaching from the Shankaracharya, it is a version of Advaita perhaps reflecting his own devotional approach, perhaps emphasising this approach as a complement to Dr Roles's intellectual stance. Many of us have read the Upanishads and other works which are said to belong to the Advaita tradition, but there has been no systematic attempt in the Society to study Advaita as a whole and to determine the place therein of HH's teaching. A backwards glance in this case might well fall on Sankara.

One of the topics of the Sunday meeting concerned the different paths, physical, devotional and intellectual. We had an attempt at this nearly two years ago, an ambitious attempt (seven papers!) in which we tried also to embrace concepts from the Christian mystics, the apophatic (negative) and cataphatic (positive) paths. It has to be said this got nowhere and in the end we settled for what we knew already, which is that we need both knowledge and devotion (and that is accepted by HH).

But according to HH there really are two different paths and we should stick to our own path. To understand this, we must try to leave aside any preconceived ideas and any reference to anything outside what HH said on the subject. We just want to understand what he meant. He tried to explain it at least nine times; the following quotations have been chosen for their clarity (a full list is available on request).

We start with a reminder about what is self-realisation, the goal of the paths:

Q. What is self-realisation?

H.H. "I am"; I am out of everything. These are the two poles between which creation revolves. To realise this, that the creation is in myself and still I am out of it, is the sole purpose of self-realization. To become only the observer, and allow everything to happen as it has to happen. One has to realise "I am" before "everything is". To-day I am this in this puny form and have existed long before its creation, and also will live on when it is destroyed. To this vastness through eternity is the journey of self-realization. After having a form and a body people limit the self to the body and the world around without getting a glimpse of vastness of eternity. Once you realise the greatness of what is not before you, then you find right value of what lies before you. To find this proper value is the work of self-realization. [*Record 14.10.65*]

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<sup>1</sup> These papers, recordings and transcripts can be found in the Archive section of the Study Society website, but paper copies can be provided on request.

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This first question and answer about the two paths resulted from the teaching on the Ladder of Knowledge:

Q. The seven stages of self-realization seem to describe the way of Being through knowledge. Is there also a description of the way of Love?

H.H. Knowledge comes through Buddhi, for only Buddhi can discriminate and give decisions. That is why on the Way of Knowledge we have definite levels. Out of the seven levels the first five come under proper light and the levels can be seen; beyond them the experiences become more inward and not discernible from outside and not possible to discuss and explain. This way the disciple takes in knowledge and develops being and releases barriers around Self and thus comes closer to self-realisation.

The Way of Love is different to the Way of Knowledge. Love is based on the emotional centre and is a sort of stream in which the disciple surrenders himself to the mercy of the stream. On this way he or she takes in nothing but gives up everything and in doing so merges into the stream and unites in Love with the lover (object of love). Being a way of love, knowledge is rather secondary and unimportant. It is a field of experience beyond Buddhi. That is why there are no stepping stones or steps of the ladder to be seen and marked. Anyone who would venture to mark them would not have direct experience so it will only be guesswork and will be based on knowledge and devoid of love. One should not and could not establish the levels on this way. [*Record 16.10.65*]

Keeping to one way:

H.H. These are two different "ways", the way of devotion and the way of knowledge. Although the ultimate destination is the same, it is very difficult to tread both ways simultaneously. One way should be completed according to the predominance of the elements in the individual, to which he will naturally respond. If the individual is intellectual then he will certainly take the way of knowledge; if he is emotional then he will go on the way of devotion. Having gone through the discipline of the way and reached the destination, it sometimes, or most of the time, seems necessary that the other way should also be comprehended. This enquiry always remains there, because the other way has not been fulfilled not experienced. It is not going to add anything extra if one takes to the other way, but it certainly helps to pass on the knowledge at the lower level. . . . One has to discount all these factors and try to go the way by which one is designed to reach the ultimate end, [*Record 24.9.75*]

Who is bhakti and who is jnani?

Q. . . . one was wondering if there were any signs or indications by which one can tell whether a person is intellectual or emotional?

H.H. Those who are critics, that is critical in their approach, are intellectual. They need the Jnana, intellectual teaching. Those who are emotional belong to Bhakti. Those who are sort of indifferent, not particularly intelligent or emotional – active (karma) – need to do something in order to get along the spiritual path. In our country they have to do worship, go to the temple and that sort of thing. But those who feel intensely, they come under

emotion, Bhakti, while those whose approach is critical, their approach is Jnana, reason.  
[Record 10.1.78]

On three occasions HH told the story of the two artists to illustrate the difference between bhakti and jnani:

Now, the one who sketched is a Bhakti, and the one who polished is a Jnana. In other words Jnana reflects the Ultimate - Param-Atman, while Bhakti creates the Param-Atman.

. . .

A Jnani considers that there is nothing except God. The approach of Bhakti is that everything is God. [Record 10.1.78]

Finally:

There are two divisions or aspects of Sadhana, practice; one aspect is that 'I am everything' - that is Bhakti; and the other is that 'everything else is in me' - that is Jnana; 'affection for everyone' is Bhakti, and 'there is nothing else except Atman' is Jnana. [Record 21.12.79]

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These statements seem to imply that the jnani searches within himself or herself to find the Param-Atman and likewise in the outside world looks beneath the surface. The bhakti mainly looks outward and accepts everything as part of the Param-Atman and surrenders to it.

HH was against the idea of attempting to balance the intellectual and emotional sides of a person's nature:

R. Aren't these differences much more pronounced at the beginning when people come from the general public, but as they become confident and progress in the school, do they not in time find a balanced combination of mind and heart?

H.H. The equilibrium of the two ways of the heart and mind is possible and it does happen, but it happens naturally and cannot be brought about. If any effort is made to bring about the combination or equilibrium, it will upset the nature of the disciple. So this should never be attempted. The combination would only happen when they have reached the stage where the discipline has become a part of their nature. Unless the discipline became natural it would not be possible. Nothing should be forced. [12.10.65]

In the end, so HH assures us, the arrival point is the same. Self-realisation or glimpses of it seem to entail the realisation of the identity of the inner and the outer, so from whichever direction it is approached the result is the same, as in a Moebius strip.

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