

## FIFTH LECTURE

In relation to the study of man's possible development I must establish one very important point.

There are two sides of man that must be developed, that is, there are two lines of possible development that must proceed simultaneously.

These two sides of man, or two lines of possible development, are *knowledge* and *being*.

I have already spoken many times about the necessity for the development of knowledge, and particularly self-knowledge, because one of the most characteristic features of man's present state is that *he does not know himself*.

Generally people understand the idea of different levels of knowledge, the idea of the relativity of knowledge and the necessity for quite new knowledge.

What people do not understand in most cases is the idea of *being* as quite separate from knowledge; and further, the idea of the relativity of being, the possibility of different levels of being and the necessity for the development of being, separately from the development of knowledge.

A Russian philosopher, Vladimir Solovieff, used the term "being" in his writings. He spoke about the being of a stone, the being of a plant, the being of an animal, the being of a man and the divine being.

This is better than the ordinary concept because in ordinary understanding the being of a man is not regarded as in any way different from the being of a stone, the being of a plant or the being of an animal. From the ordinary point of view a stone, a plant, an animal *are* or *exist*, exactly as a man *is* or *exists*. In reality, they exist quite differently. But Solovieff's division is not sufficient. There is no such thing as *the being of a man*. Men are too different for that. I have already explained that from the point of view of the system we are studying, the concept of man is divided into seven concepts: man No. 1, man No. 2, man No. 3, man No. 4, man No. 5, man No. 6, and man No. 7. This means seven degrees or categories of being: being No. 1, being No. 2, being No. 3 and so on. In addition to this we already know finer divisions. We know that there may be very different men No. 1, very different men No. 2, and very different men No. 3. They may live entirely under influences *A*. They may be equally affected by influences *A* and *B*. They may be more under influences *B* than *A*. They may have a magnetic centre. They may have come into contact with school influence or influence *C*. They may be on the way to becoming men No. 4. All these categories indicate different levels of being.

The idea of being, entered into the very foundation of thinking and speaking about man in religious thought, and all other divisions of man were regarded as unimportant in comparison with this. Men were divided into pagans, unbelievers or heretics on the one hand, and into true believers, righteous men, saints, prophets and so on. All these definitions referred not to differences in views and convictions, that is, *not to knowledge*, but to *being*.

In modern thought people ignore the idea of being and different levels of being. On the contrary, they believe that the more discrepancies and contradictions there are in a man's being, the more interesting and brilliant he can be. It is generally, although tacitly, and not always even tacitly, admitted that a man can be given to lying, he can be selfish, unreliable, unreasonable, perverted, and yet be a great scientist or a great philosopher or a great artist. Of course this is quite impossible. This incompatibility of different features of one's being, which is generally regarded as originality, actually means weakness. One cannot be a great thinker or a great artist with a perverted or an inconsistent mind, just as one cannot be a prizefighter or a circus athlete with consumption. The widespread acceptance of the idea that inconsistency and amorality means originality is responsible for the many scientific, artistic and religious fakes of our present time and probably of all times.

It is necessary to understand clearly what *being* means, and why it must grow and develop

side by side with knowledge, but independently of it.

If knowledge outgrows being or being outgrows knowledge, the result is always a one-sided development, and a one-sided development cannot go far. It is bound to come to some inner contradiction of a serious nature and stop there.

Some time later we may speak about the different kinds and the different results of one-sided development. Ordinarily, in life we meet with only one kind, that is, when knowledge has outgrown being. The result takes the form of a dogmatization of certain ideas and the consequent impossibility of a further development of knowledge because of the loss of understanding.

Now I shall speak about understanding.

What is understanding?

Try to ask yourself this question and you will see that you cannot answer it. You have always confused *understanding* with *knowing* or having information. But to know and to understand are two quite different things and you must learn to distinguish between them.

In order to understand a thing, you must see its connection with some bigger subject, or bigger whole, and the possible consequences of this connection. Understanding is always the understanding of a smaller problem in relation to a bigger problem.

For instance, suppose I show you an old Russian silver rouble. It was a piece of money the size of a halfcrown and corresponding to two shillings and a penny. You may look at it, study it, notice in which year it was coined, find out everything about the Tsar whose portrait is on one side, weigh it, even make a chemical analysis and determine the exact quantity of silver contained in it. You can learn what the word "rouble" means and how it came into use. You can learn all these things and probably many more, but you will not *understand it and its meaning* if you do not find out that before the last war its purchasing power corresponded in many cases to a present-day English pound, and that the present-day paper rouble in Bolshevik Russia corresponds in many cases to an English farthing or even less. If you find out this you will *understand* something about a rouble and perhaps also about some other things, because the understanding of one thing immediately leads to the understanding of many other things.

Often people even think that understanding means finding a name, a word, a title or a label for a new or unexpected phenomenon. This finding or inventing of words for incomprehensible things has nothing to do with understanding. On the contrary, if we could get rid of half of our words perhaps we should have a better chance of a certain understanding.

If we ask ourselves what it means to understand or not to understand a man, we must first think of an instance of not being able to speak with a man in his own language. Naturally two people having no common language will not understand one another. They must have a common language or agree on certain signs or symbols by which they will designate things. But suppose that during a conversation with a man you disagree about the meaning of certain words or signs or symbols, then you again cease to understand one another.

From this follows the principle that *you cannot understand and disagree*. In ordinary conversation we very often say: I understand him but I do not agree with him. From the point of view of the system we are studying, this is impossible. If you understand a man, you agree with him; if you disagree with him, you do not understand him.

It is difficult to accept this idea and this means that it is difficult to understand it.

As I have said, there are two sides of man which must develop in the normal course of his evolution: knowledge and being. But neither knowledge nor being can stay still or remain in the same state. If either of them does not grow bigger and stronger, it becomes smaller and weaker.

Understanding may be compared to an *arithmetical mean* between knowledge and being. It shows the necessity for a simultaneous growth of knowledge and being. The growth of only one and diminishing of another will not change the arithmetical mean.

This also explains why "to understand" means to agree. People who understand one another

must not only have an equal knowledge, they must also have an equal being. Only then is mutual understanding possible.

Another wrong idea which people have or which belongs particularly to our times, is that understanding can be different, that people *can*, that is, have the right, to understand the same thing differently.

This is quite wrong from the point of view of the system. Understanding cannot be different. There can only be one *understanding*, the rest is non-understanding, or incomplete understanding.

But at the same time people often think that they understand things differently. We can see examples of this every day. How can we find an explanation of this seeming contradiction?

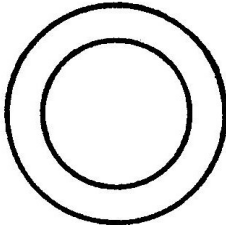
In reality, there is no contradiction. Understanding means understanding of a part in relation to the whole. But the idea of the whole can be very different in people according to their knowledge and being. This is why the system is again necessary. People learn to understand by understanding the system and everything else in relation to the system.

But speaking on an ordinary level without the idea of a school or a system, one must admit that there are as many understandings as there are many people. Everyone understands everything in his own way or according to one or another mechanical training or habit; but this is all a subjective and relative understanding. The way to objective understanding lies through school systems and the change of being.

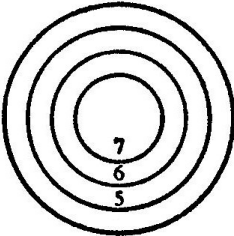
In order to explain this I must return to the division of man into seven categories.

You must realise that there is a great difference between men No. 1, 2 and 3 on one hand and men of higher categories on another hand. In reality the difference is much greater than we can imagine. It is so great that all life from this point of view is regarded as being divided into two concentric circles – the inner circle and the outer circle of humanity.

To the inner circle belong Men No. 5, 6 and 7; to the outer circle, Men No. 1, 2 and 3. Men No. 4 are on the threshold of the inner circle or between the two circles.



The inner circle is in its turn divided into three concentric circles; the innermost, to which belong men No. 7, the middle to which belong men No. 6, and the outer-inner circle to which belong men No. 5.



This division does not concern us at the moment. For us, the three inner circles form one inner circle.

The outer circle in which we live has several names, designating its different features. It is called the mechanical circle, because everything *happens* there, everything is mechanical and the people who live there are *machines*. It is also called the *circle of the confusion of tongues*, because people who live in this circle *all speak* in different languages and *never understand*

*one another*. Everyone understands everything differently.

We have come to a very interesting definition of understanding. It is something that belongs to the inner circle of humanity and does not belong to us at all.

If men in the outer circle realise that they do not understand one another, and if they feel the need of understanding, they must try to penetrate into the inner circle, because understanding between people is possible only there.

Schools of different kinds serve as gates through which people can pass into the inner circles. But this penetration into the circle higher in comparison with the one in which a man is born requires long and difficult work. The very first step in this work is the study of a new language. You may ask: What is this language we are studying.

And now I am able to answer you.

It is the language of the inner circle, the language in which people can understand one another.

You must realise that standing, so to speak, outside the inner circle we can know only the rudiments of this language. But even these rudiments will help us to understand one another better than we could ever understand without them.

The three inner circles have each a language of their own. We are studying the language of the outer of the inner circles. People in the outer-inner circle study the language of the middle circle, and people in the middle circle study the language of the innermost circle.

If you ask me how all this can be proved I will answer that it can be proved only by further study of oneself and further observation. If we find that with the study of the system we can understand ourselves and other people, or for instance, certain books, or certain ideas *better* than we could understand them before, and particularly if we find definite facts which show that this new understanding develops, that will be, if not proof, at least a sign of the possibility of proof.

We must remember that our understanding, exactly as our consciousness, is not always on the same level. It is always moving up and down. That means that at one moment we understand more, and at another moment we understand less. If we notice these differences of understanding in ourselves, we shall be able to realise that there is a possibility first, of keeping to those higher levels of understanding and second, of surpassing them.

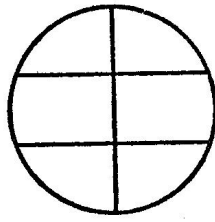
But theoretical study is not sufficient. You must work on your being and on the change of your being.

If you formulate your aim from the point of view that you wish to understand other people, you must remember one very important school principle: you can understand other people only as much as you understand yourself and *only on the level of your own being*.

This means that you can judge other people's knowledge, but you cannot judge their being. You can see in them only as much as you have in yourself. But people always make the mistake of thinking that they can judge other people's being. In reality, if they wish to meet and *understand* people of higher development than themselves they must work with the aim of changing their being.

Now we must return to the study of centers and to the study of attention and self-remembering, *because these are the only ways to understanding*.

Besides the division into two parts, positive and negative which, as we saw, is not the same in different centres, each of the four centres is divided into three parts. These three parts correspond to the definition of centres themselves. The first part is "mechanical" including moving and instinctive principles, or one of them predominating; the second is "emotional" and the third is "intellectual." The following diagram shows the position of parts in the intellectual centre. The centre is divided into positive and negative parts, each of these two parts is divided into three parts. Thus the intellectual centre actually consists of six parts.



Each of these six parts is in its turn sub-divided into three parts: mechanical, emotional and intellectual. But about this sub-division we shall speak much later with the exception of one part, that is, the mechanical part of the intellectual centre, about which we shall speak presently.

The division of a centre into three parts is very simple. A mechanical part works almost automatically; *it does not require any attention*. But because of this it cannot adapt itself to a change of circumstances, it cannot “think,” and it continues to work in the way it started when circumstances have completely changed.

In the intellectual centre, the mechanical part includes in itself all the work of registration of impressions, memories and associations. This is all that it should do normally, that is, when other parts do their work. It should never *reply* to questions addressed to the whole centre, it should never try to solve its problems, and it should never decide anything. Unfortunately, in actual fact, it is always ready to decide and it always replies to questions of all sorts in a very narrow and limited way, in ready-made phrases, in slang expressions, in party slogans. All these, and many other elements of our usual reactions, are the work of the mechanical part of the intellectual centre.

This part has its own name. It is called a “formatory apparatus” or sometimes “formatory centre.” Many people, particularly people No. 1, that is, the great majority of mankind, live all their lives with the formatory apparatus only, never touching other parts of their intellectual centre. For all the immediate needs of life, for receiving *A* influences and responding to them, and for distorting or rejecting influences *C*, the formatory apparatus is quite sufficient.

It is always possible to recognise “formatory thinking.” For instance, formatory centre can count only up to two. It always divides everything into two: “bolshevism and fascism,” “workers and bourgeois,” “proletarians and capitalists” and so on. We owe most modern catchwords to formatory thinking, and not only catchwords but all modern popular theories. Perhaps it is possible to say that at all times all popular theories are formatory.

The emotional part of the intellectual centre consists chiefly of what is called an *intellectual emotion*, that is, desire to know, desire to understand, satisfaction of knowing, dissatisfaction of not knowing, pleasure of discovery and so on, although again all these can manifest themselves on very different levels.

The work of the emotional part requires full attention, but in this *part of the centre attention does not require any effort*. It is attracted and held by the subject itself, very often through identification, which usually is called “interest,” or “enthusiasm,” or “passion,” or “devotion.”

The intellectual part of the intellectual centre includes in itself a capacity for creation, construction, invention and discovery. It cannot work without attention, but *the attention in this part of the centre must be controlled and kept there by will and effort*.

This is the chief criterion in studying parts of centres. If we take them from the point of view of *attention* we shall know at once in which part of centres we are. Without attention or with attention wandering, we are in the mechanical part; with the attention attracted by the subject of observation or reflection and kept there, we are in the emotional part; with the attention controlled and held on the subject by will, we are in the intellectual part.

At the same time, the same method shows how to make the intellectual parts of centres work. By observing attention and trying to control it, we compel ourselves to work in the

intellectual parts of centres, because the same principle refers to all centres equally, although it may not be easy for us to distinguish intellectual parts in other centres, as for instance the intellectual part of the instinctive centre, which works without any attention that we can perceive or control.

Let us take the emotional centre. I will not speak at present about negative emotions. We will take only the division of the centre into three parts: mechanical, emotional and intellectual.

The *mechanical* part consists of the cheapest kind of ready-made humour and a rough sense of the comical, love of excitement, love of spectacular shows, love of pageantry, sentimentality, love of being in a crowd and part of a crowd; attraction to crowd emotions of all kinds and complete disappearance in lower half-animal emotions: cruelty, selfishness, cowardice, envy, jealousy, and so on.

The *emotional* part may be very different in different people. It may include in itself a sense of humour or a sense of the comical as well as religious emotion, aesthetic emotion, moral emotion and, in this case, it may lead to the awakening of *conscience*. But with identification it may be something quite different, it may be very ironical, sarcastic, derisive, cruel, obstinate, wicked and jealous – only in a less primitive way than the mechanical part.

The *intellectual* part of the emotional centre (with the help of the intellectual parts of the moving and instinctive centres) includes in itself the power of artistic creation. In those cases where the intellectual parts of the moving and instinctive centres which are necessary for the manifestation of the creative faculty are not sufficiently educated or do not correspond to it in their development, it may manifest itself in dreams. This explains the beautiful and artistic dreams of otherwise quite unartistic people.

The intellectual part of the emotional centre is also the chief seat of the magnetic centre. I mean that if magnetic centre exists only in the intellectual centre or in the emotional part of the emotional centre, it cannot be strong enough to be effective and is always liable to make mistakes or fail. But the intellectual part of the emotional centre, when it is fully developed and works with its full power, is a way to higher centres.

In the moving centre, the mechanical part is automatic. All automatic movements which in ordinary language are called “instinctive” belong to it, as well as imitation and the capacity for imitation which plays such a big part in life.

The emotional part of the moving centre is connected chiefly with the pleasure of movement. Love of sport and of games should *normally* belong to this part of the moving centre, but when identification and other emotions become mixed with it, it is very rarely there, and in most cases the love of sport is in the moving part of either the intellectual or the emotional centre.

The intellectual part of the moving centre is a very important and a very interesting instrument. Everyone who has ever done *well* any kind of physical work, whatever it may have been, knows that every kind of work needs many *inventions*. One has to *invent* one's own small methods for everything one does. These inventions are the work of the intellectual part of the moving centre, and many other inventions of man also need the work of the intellectual part of the moving centre. The power of imitating *at will* the voice, intonations and gestures of other people, *such as actors possess*, also belongs to the intellectual part of moving centre; but in higher or better degrees it is mixed with the work of the intellectual part of the emotional centre.

The work of the instinctive centre is very well hidden from us. We really know, that is, feel and can observe, only the sensory and emotional part.

The mechanical part includes in itself habitual sensations which very often we do not notice at all, but which serve as a background to other sensations; also *instinctive movements* in the correct meaning of the expression, that is, all inner movements such as the circulation of the

blood, the movement of food in the organism and inner and outer reflexes.

The intellectual part is very big and very important. In the state of self-consciousness or approaching it, one can come into contact with the intellectual part of the instinctive centre and learn a great deal from it concerning the functioning of the machine and its possibilities. The intellectual part of the instinctive centre is the mind behind all the work of the organism, a mind quite different from the intellectual mind.

The study of parts of centres and their special functions requires a certain degree of self-remembering. Without remembering oneself one cannot observe for a sufficiently long time or sufficiently clearly to feel and understand the difference of functions belonging to different parts of different centres.

The study of attention shows the parts of centres better than anything, but the study of attention again requires a certain degree of self-remembering.

Very soon you will realise that all your work upon yourself is connected with self-remembering and that it cannot proceed successfully without this. And self-remembering is *partial awakening*, or the beginning of awakening. Naturally – and this must be very clear – *no work can be done in sleep*.

The above is the text of the fifth lecture of six printed in the book *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution* by P. D. Ouspensky.