

SKETCH OF A PSYCHOLOGY FOUNDED ON YOGA

The human beings of our age seem to display a keener self-consciousness, reflecting itself in the stress on will-power and efficiency in all walks of life, while the world of feelings and contemplation recedes further and further into the background.

Man seems stronger, surer of himself. But one could rightly wonder if he has not just lifted the surface of his consciousness into the realm of that strength and self-confidence. It could well be that man had pushed his way so far into *appearance* as to have all his strength and self-assurance there, and that his actual *being* was so worn and dimmed out that he gave it a wide berth even when the world of appearances confronted him with his own failure.

Psychoanalysis and analytical psychology often had a hunch of that dualism in human consciousness — « being » vs « appearing » — but the remedies they suggested were nothing else than offsprings of that discursive consciousness which should be healed off, as it is the direct result of such an inner conflict. All improvements they led to were deceptive and shortlived, as they just let trains of unusual imaginations into the consciousness, thus turning it away from its troubles for a while and leading to more serious relapses later on.

The shallowness of psychoanalysis and other methods of that ilk leads to think that psychology is in for new progress and discovery. Psychology in itself is concerned with the mysteries of the soul's life, is deeply connected with the supersensible world and deals with purely spiritual elements. Western psychology, as well as psychoanalysis, lacks that basis entirely. Materialistic methods applied to spiritual subjects do not lead anywhere. In analytical psychology the aim is a new one, but the old kind of research instrumentally bound to the brain as its contingent mediator has stayed just the same.

Whoever starts from intuitions which were familiar to Indian metaphysics and keeps clear on their basis the distinction between thought and its physical instrument, aware of the mirror-like quality of human thought as dependent on the function of the central nervous system, will know that outward appearance of things, sensible experience and the psychic life connected to them stem from the fact that « somewhere » in man's constitution his inner being is tied to the sensorial world. The brain is the seat of that exchange, the physical support refracting — and altering — the soul's light. But where the soul is bound to physical matter, waking consciousness arises, which is therefore a reflected consciousness, as through it *Maya* is born in a world perceived as being « outside ». Through the brain, man's soul strikes roots into the world. That is why the Tree of Creation (1) is represented with its roots turned upward, whereas its branches and blossoms seem to sprout downward. The mythic and metaphysical ideogram of the upturned tree, which is found in the Greek (2) and Islamic (3) traditions and in Hebrew secret doctrines (4) is also present in the Hindu mythology: the *Asvattha* Tree of the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavadgītā* (5). Its ultimate sense is that Man, as a cosmical being, has his roots in heaven, and that he is liable to forget his cosmical origin in that organ through which he comes in touch with the world of senses. His real knowledge consists in rediscovering in himself that height lying in the depths of his being.

This pictorial view of inner reality clearly points out that the depths of the soul cannot be sounded by dialectics, viz. by a reflected activity of the mind which is cut off from the very source of soul's life. Only the soul can justify itself, i.e., the soul's castle is only accessible to the soul's forces.

In other words, no scientific-laboratory-mentality can penetrate into a world which, by its own nature, eludes any formulation and escapes scientific and dialectic definitions. The smaller cannot encompass the greater: no gramophone record can seize and reproduce Wagner's music.

If a spiritual science can teach the « way », this does not implicitly mean that knowing such doctrine should by itself enable the disciple to translate it into a corresponding activity. Into the soul's sphere no one can enter by dint of mere knowledge — a thing with regard to which all human beings, irrespective of their level, are equal. That sphere does not suffer the presumption of current values, but rather exacts a scale of a different order, according to inner worthiness, clarity and impersonality.

What I said above was meant to stress how far present-day psychology is from that set of values and how desirable a thorough overhauling of psychology would be for the purpose of a new understanding of Man. But, should that come to pass, the researchers ought to start from premisses far different from the agnostic, positivistic attitude on which modern science still rests.

In Jung's psychology, the fundamental distinction between *introverts* and *extroverts* (6) does not reflect the individual's inner reality but rather derives from an empirical phenomenalism. Drawing the line between people living in the subject and in the object, or looking subjectively and objectively at reality within themselves would lead to admit that on the one hand a strictly subject-centered self-knowledge and on the other a knowledge exclusively of the objective world should be attainable by the subject himself. From the point of view of pure knowledge this is rather naive. Any individual so intensively experiencing his own introversion as to thoroughly possess himself as a subject would at the same time have conquered the objective world, as a subject only exists in so far as there is an object. Introversion exists only in so far as an outer world pushes a sentient subject into inner isolation, and extroversion in so far as there is a subject sturdy enough as to merge into the object without losing himself. Losing himself would mean failing to experience the object, just as the opposite type would fail to experience the subject if he could not live his introvert life to the hilt. Unaccomplished introversion and unachieved extroversion with

loss of the subject are therefore one and the same thing, two aspects of the self-same psychological situation, modes of existence of a merely discursive and dimmed-out consciousness.

In the light of Eastern metaphysics and with particular reference to the Vedānta, the subject limits himself by facing the object, an attitude brought about by *avidyā* (unawareness) which is, from an absolute point of view, a provisional condition, as it preludes to a rediscovery of the Self in the Whole. In his commentary to the *Īsopaniṣad* Sri Aurobindo writes: « Any appearance of pure subjectivity reveals the object implicit in its very subjectification. Any appearance of mere objectivity results into the subject implicit in his very objectification. » (7) In Jung's typology there is no trace of any metaphysical notion of the subject-object relation, according to which the objective character of subjective assertion is obvious in the first stage, where a further stage, the one of positing in a general way, already is dawning. This latter wills an object, namely directs the other element implicit in itself, thus at the same time asserting its becoming. But this becoming will only appear as correlated to a higher stage, where there is no striving after an object. From this stage in its immediateness both extroversion and introversion stem analytically as two inseparable and complementary moments.

Synthetically, on the other hand, it gives birth to the objective experience of the subject, i.e. the experience of the mind in those different degrees of self-expression which, among other things, take the appearance of *nature*.

Any subject who actually conquers himself has already penetrated into the essence of the world. Likewise, anybody who has an objective Goethian experience of nature and cosmos has already conquered himself as a subject. Both introversion and extroversion, upon which Jung's typology rests, concern likewise a single withering individual, unable to grasp himself as a subject or the world as an object. Far different is the individual who can experience himself and the world, beyond both extro- and introversion: this is the way of the real subject (*puruṣa*) and of the real object (*puruṣapraṁṛti*). A typological distinction would only be justified between these two possible paths, which are ultimately two graduated ways of attaining knowledge. A psychology thus describing the types according

to a phenomenology of mind could be of help to modern man. Here a bridge should be thrown between psychology and the spiritual tradition of the East.

The philosophic error underlying Jung's psychology shows how, in spite of the best intentions, any research aiming beyond the world of senses is hampered by a mind bound to a physical support (the brain), viz. to that organ which is, at the same time, the instrument of thought and the mediator of sense perceptions. Here traditional Yoga offers a key which will, on close scrutiny, turn out to be the only possible solution of the natural antithesis between the conveyance of sense perceptions and a mind tied to a mediating function. In the *Yogasūtra* (8), along the path of *samyama*, we meet the stage of *pratyāhāra*, where the faculty of disconnecting sense activity from the objects of senses ripens. Sensorial activity is actually an inner activity which the man in the street looks upon as belonging entirely to the world of senses, but essentially works *through* the senses, and binds itself illusorily to them and therefore to the outward appearance of things, inasmuch as the senses belong to the outer world, or rather are the outer world grafted into the human being. The processes of *dhāraṇā* and *dhyāna*, through which the mind is released from the sensorial stage, are perfected through *pratyāhāra*, where the mind (*citta*) can convey the inner content, or the noumenic essence of things. It should be borne in mind that in every sense perception a spiritual element is contained, striving to reach the self, but usually overcome, when sensation arises, by the subjective automatisms cropping up in it and thus keeping it from becoming, in the individual, the intuitive form of that spiritual content. That is why the world continuously awakens a one-sided echo, which is at the same time subjective and unspiritual.

The discipline of *pratyāhāra* enables the disciple to sift out of any sense perception its spiritual counterpart and to revive within him, out of the dead and illusory world of outer impressions, its inner spiritual structure. What outwardly appears as patches and shreds of a split, multiple world, falls inwardly together into the lines of a wonderful inner temple. But this building which seems to rise within us — so much so that some Western schools of thought call it « subjective », as they stop at its first dawning upon the consciousness — belongs instead to the things

themselves and is the very content of the world.

Perceptions here are to be experienced in their utmost purity: they should be met in a state of inner silence and « voidness ». Any other report of outward or inward life must be brought to silence. In the ordinary human being this state is hard to bring about as not the « Spiritual Self », but the common « ego » is in readiness to receive perceptions, and their contents are conveyed into the sphere of the subconscious mind or the *vāsanās*, eliciting a customary response along the lines of family, race, habit and memory, so that the essence of perception gets lost. Freudianism's error lies in mistaking for contents of the consciousness mirroring the perceiving individual, what must be recognized as foreign to the real individual instead, and what grows to be, within him, the bridgehead of cosmical forces hostile to man, the *Rākṣasimāyā* (9). Working on such contents as if they were one's own is tantamount to letting the foe expand his bridgehead into the fortress of one's consciousness. As long as he entrusts himself to this dubious communion with underground powers man, as a spiritual being, lives not, as he knows not. He does not actually perceive the object, but only the way his *vāsanāvṛtti* responds to perception of the object. He stays steeped in *avidyā* as long as his knowledge of the world — and therefore his self-knowledge — is faked by the stubborn interference of « memory », i.e. of the swarm of individual habits which only want to affirm themselves and are therefore foreign to the essence of the world.

The state of *pratyāhāra* enables man to receive into himself, beside perception, the inner, essential (*tattva*) element of the perceived object. Thus everything becomes the carrier of an eternal message.

It is however obvious that both exclusion of the life of senses, as well as headlong dive into it, are wrong: one is either lost to the world or lost in the world. In both cases man does not reach any knowledge of the world and even loses the meaning of his presence in it. The *pratyāhāra* technique is of the greatest help to realize the presence of *citta* in front of the series of impressions, which is the principle of *vidyā*: the overcoming of the dualism of spirit vs matter, the synthesis between the outward and the inward poles of being has its root in this faculty of *being purely present* at sense perceptions. Going further

along this way one can discover how the ultimate sense of living consists just in *freeing*, through purified inner action, the world of senses confronting us all the time, which we are usually misled into shutting off from its actual being into a *māyā*, into stage sets, a blind change (*samsāra*), an illusory outwardness from which only our joy or our pain emerge.

How can the *pratyāhāra* technique be translated into terms of Western psychology? First of all, as said above, we ought to change our attitude towards sense perceptions. If we try to catch what happens in ourselves when we converge our attention on two different perceptions, e.g. the one of a stone and the one of a plant, we feel reactions of a different quality rise in our souls. We should mind that difference. Such echoes apparently stem from our inner world, but we cannot help feeling at the same time that they belong to the object of our attention, as well as the perceptions which have caused them. A scale of precise and easily recognizable differences ought to be gradually set up, which ought to correspond to the ones between sense impressions, and still be different, though as objective.

This discipline leads to free one's consciousness from the so-called complexes, as it marks an action independent from them, gradually uprooting that wrong attitude towards the outside world which is due to their continuous shoving themselves forward and screening the real self at every perception. As that intrusion is being done away with, the Spiritual Ego (*puruṣa*) swings slowly into action and establishes its connection with the world. As that relation reflects the actual state of things, their hidden godliness, it restores the soul into its mediatory function between time and eternity, between finite and infinite. Obviously this does not only supply the foundations of a spiritual psychology, but also postulates a moral world without raising the moral problem.

Thus the ground is laid for a real experience of the world of senses, for a contemplation of the outer appearance of things which, besides not being faked on the level of perceptions, bears in itself, along with the sensations, the inner element belonging to the things and still not appearing in them. Thus even a Westerner can gain the traditionally Eastern vision of man as a creature in whose constitution the gods are at work. Self-knowledge

at this level is not tantamount to having an intellectual notion of oneself, hopelessly tied to the brain's limitations, but to probe deeply into the forces that lead man's existence in all its spheres from starry distances, flowing into each organ and giving each natural function its individual sense (10). Here a macrocosmic physiology underlies the groundwork of each human body. Brain, heart, metabolism and sex are as many supports of states of consciousness ranging from the purely human degree — corresponding to the brain as the base of ordinary waking consciousness — to superhuman ones, from attaining which the soul is usually barred by its very being tied to cerebral conveyance.

At those levels, where the *yogin* experiences higher and higher forms of consciousness and realizations, the common human being undergoes the stages of dream, dreamless sleep and lastly something like trance, the counterpart of *turīyā*. The higher ones rises in *sādhana* the deeper one can sink, by subtle ways, into the organic depths of one's body, thus coming in touch with the cosmic forces active in the several organs. Experiencing such processes means taking part in an aspect of world existence and delving deep into the mystery of universe. One realizes there that the flow of things can only find its completion in man's cognition.

The Westerner would be tempted here to force his way down into the depth, concentrating on the physical organs, fancying himself to be able to break his way open beyond the border while keeping his consciousness still hitched to the central nervous system. Such a concentration would be purely intellectual, would stay bound to the bodily forces and stop at the world of sensation, i.e. at the plane of *māyā*, and would not be entirely devoid of danger for the subject's physiological balance.

The casualness with which Westerners having come in touch with the Yoga doctrines try to put them into practice shows how far they are from realizing that something entirely different from everyday consciousness is required there. The Westerner, even if he thoroughly knows and understands yogic texts, cannot get anywhere if he does not build himself a key to those experiences with the means at his disposal, viz. starting from his usual state of consciousness.

At the stage of rationalistic consciousness the key to metaphysical knowledge is usually

lost, as no other inner experience but the one bound to the senses is possible. This refers to modern man in general, whether western or eastern. The level of rationality represents the last step of man's descent into the darkness of matter — and is therefore the first step of ascent. The experience of thought — a conquest of the West — must not be done away with, must not be transcended, (as what could transcend it if not a further act of thought?) but only transformed. Thought can well be made into thought-force, according to the lines laid down by Novalis in his « Magic Idealism » and by Srī Aurobindo, whose poem 'Paraclete Thought' carries a title fraught with meaning for a Westerner (11). The condition of rational consciousness, against which so many spiritualists have lightly risen in arms, while they cannot fight it or lead away from it without having recourse to it, has no worth in itself, but is ultimately a mental activity which can be probed deeply into and mastered from within by anybody having creative spiritual force.

Eastern, especially Indian, metaphysics can help the Westerner only insofar as he starts from a right evaluation of the forces he has to wield. When preaching against « intellect » which rationalizes everything, most Westerners are not even slightly conscious that intellect itself is supplying them the means for their crusade.

We now go back to our initial purpose of finding out whether human reason can be made to support a psychology really leading to experience the transcendent laws of the soul's life. Our task will be fulfilled if the Self can be brought in touch with those deeper energies of thought, feeling and will in front of which it usually is in a state of « ignorance » — the waking state of rational consciousness —, of dreaming or of deep sleep. Cognition, while breaking loose from its upper moorings (the head), can turn towards deeper layers of one's being. The essential knowledge which Oriental Tradition connects with the heart arises first. But it should be remarked here that it has little in common with the world of emotions and feelings with which a Westerner may superficially associate the heart. It is rather a knowledge undimmed by the screen of senses and bound to the heart as to its light-source, like a sunbeam is bound to the sun; it is the inner way said by Tibetan ascetics to have its seat in the heart: *devayāna* (12).

In short, the three spheres of thought, feeling and will must gradually be conquered if ordinary consciousness has to be transcended through the successive stages of mental release (*niḥsaṅkalpa*, *saṅkalpa*). Thought, thus freed, throws a bridge into the subconscious and fills it with a new inner quality (*vāsanānanda*).

At the outset the Westerner should therefore have recourse to a distinction proper to traditional psychology, namely the division of the soul's life into its three main activities, thinking, feeling and volition. Such faculties are usually mixed in a kind of jumble in everyday life. At a higher stage of evolution those three powers can be experienced in their purity as distinct from one another, something quite unknown to ordinary consciousness. Actually they are nothing less than three vehicles of inner life to each of which, according to the results of spiritual research, a determined bodily « seat » corresponds: thought to the brain, feeling (passions and emotions) to the chest from the larynx to the solar plexus, will-power (volitions and instincts) to the lower half of the body and the limbs.

One should realize that each of those « seats » has its peculiar kind of consciousness and that ordinary man is only conscious of the one connected with the head. Processes taking place elsewhere are certainly also experienced, like emotions and impulses, but indirectly, through their repercussion in the head.

In other words, our feelings and impulses are « ready-made » and we become aware of them only within our central nervous system when their waves, starting from their distant source, lap at its shores. Thought we can perceive at its very source: we may even say that we take part in its birth and are closely connected with its growth.

This latter point is highly conducive to a concrete conception of the soul's life and can show the way to an efficient control of one's feelings and impulses. We can only act upon ourselves by leaning on that activity of the mind which we perceive immediately and which, at the same time, sees us through to everything else, insofar as our normal consciousness is born with it, i.e. thought.

We can correct a wrong thought by means of another thought, whereas all emotions and impulses reaching our consciousness are *facts*, that is, they have driven so far into our consciousness already that any thought we may pit against them will not, at least for the time being, change our mood.

With this we have touched upon man's central problem: the individual's entire existence depends on the varying relations of his reason with his emotive and instinctive world. We may even say that important turning points in the history of mankind and in the life of individuals have been decided by reason's prevailing on certain moods and vice-versa.

Today's mankind needs no further evidence that if one thinks over so long about the harmfulness of a habit or the dangerousness of any given mental sliding one can hardly prevail on what has already grown into us, hardening into a recurrent mood or an instinct, or crystallizing into what modern psychology terms « a complex ».

We are therefore faced with the problem of finding out how the light and the balance of pure intellect can be brought to bear on the less conscious spheres of feelings and the depths of will-power. Reason cannot directly oppose a frame of mind or an instinct but can pave the way to a far-reaching action based on meditation or trains of thought of such nature as to be grasped by the spheres of feeling and volition. So far traditional Yoga may be translated into terms of Western psychology.

There is thus a chance for modern man, off the beaten track of any determined tradition, to get a firm hold of his own faculties, and to train himself to a higher, balanced form of inner life. That can doubtlessly be affirmed, on condition that no jumps are made and that the very source of conscious life, thought, is taken as a starting point.

The practice of clear and precise thinking does not result in the acquisition of a certain mental agility, but rather, if some conditions are observed, in the Overself gaining a greater mastery of mental processes. A further step may consist in leading it on down to the seats of other faculties through a deepening of meditation (*dhyāna*). It should be well understood that no messages with a definite content are to be sent down there, but the very spiritual force heightened through concentration on such contents, a force rising so high in supersensible potential as deep it will probe into the corresponding faculties. These will appear immersed in nature's slumber only to ordinary consciousness. Actually each of them lives at a higher stage of wakefulness (13), foreign to everyday consciousness and therefore inaccessible to any profane psychology.

Thus the individual carries in himself the « cosmic Man », as a possibility steadily nipped in the bud at the limit of sensible and rational experience.

In the course of such an experience any Westerner will run the risk of mistaking it for a descent into the realms of a lower nature, the nature of *rajas* and *tamas*, whereas that path actually brings him in touch with a realm of nature where still higher spiritual forces are at work, up to the centres of man's occult physiology, in front of which modern man, having no inkling of it, is himself steeped in the darkness of *rajas* and *tamas*. That is why thinking is usually referred to the waking state and feeling and volition respectively to the states of dreaming and deep sleep. For the ordinary human, the deeper resources of his being are wrapped in shadows growing darker and darker (14).

The right approach to them can be made by taking the counterparts, the opposite numbers of those powers, foreshadowing them in the world still accessible to waking consciousness, as a starting point. Evoking imaginatively and contemplating those aspects of natural life whose substance is essentially and subtly in tune with man's deeper seats of power will on one hand appeal to the sense-consciousness and head-thinking, but on the other extract from those images a quality not reducible to it and leading on to other degrees of consciousness.

Thus e.g. the attunement to man's middle region, rhythmically ruled by the ebb and flow of breathing, the circulation of blood, the throbbing of the heart, is induced by a quiet contemplation of those natural phenomena where rhythm finds a powerful and obvious expression, like the succession of day and night, the alternation of seasons, the round dance of celestial bodies and cosmical change.

But to throw a bridge to the innermost and mightiest citadel, the one of will-power — where instinctive life flows and where the most creative energies, like steadfastness and courage are, so to say, stored up — one should evoke and contemplate calmly and intensely such natural processes as stem from the creative and formative energies: reproduction and growth, wind, hurricane and lightning.

Those contemplations, by opening the innermost recesses of nature to a real experience, are in general conducive to a greater inner balance and can, if transformed into

actual meditations, lend the basis to gradually establishing a harmonic relation between the sphere of conscious thought and the ones of feeling and volition. A right practice of the discipline can then lead in time to the realization of the highly desirable human aim of finding in oneself the strength to carry out any resolve once it has been found right and decided upon, thanks to the growing concord between volition and right thinking.

The contemplation and imaginative evocation of certain natural processes, if carried on correctly enables the human being to overcome the inner split on account of which some forces of consciousness seem to be cut asunder from its deeper layers by the cerebral screen. As an isolator, the brain records accurately the life of senses and has insofar a positive function, on which modern science in its most positive aspect rests. But its onesided relation with reality through sense perception cuts off consciousness from the inner treasures of the soul's life.

The kernel of modern man's essential problems lies just in that split. In the sketch drawn above I have tried to point out how some teachings of Indian metaphysics can lead us to a fruitful communion with the very core of our being without forfeiting that clarity of consciousness which is the brain's most positive function.

Nowadays balance is something man must conquer for himself by means of his own good will. But the forces he can dispose of to this aim are present in the world and in himself. He should use them, relying on Yoga to show him how the sight of nature and the cosmos unfolding before his eyes are ever at his disposal to let healing, morally creative energies swing into action within him.

Massimo Scaligero

(1) M. Eliade: *Trattato di storia delle religioni* (Italian edition) p. 283.

(2) U. Holmberg: *Der Baum des Lebens*, p. 54.

(3) A. J. Wensneck: *Tree and Bird as Cosmological Symbols in Western Asia*, p. 33.

(4) *Zohar*, Beha Alotheke, V. 223.

(5) *Katha - Upanishad* (VI, 1); *Bhagavad Gītā* (XV, 1-3).

(6) C. G. Jung: *Tipi psicologici* (Rome).

(7) Sri Aurobindo: *Isha Upanishad*.

(8) *Yoga Sūtra* (II, 54).

(9) Cfr. Sri Aurobindo: *Lights on Yoga*, p. 60.

(10) M. Eliade: *Cosmical Homology*, p. 201.

(11) Sri Aurobindo: *Lettres* (French Edition Adyar, Paris) Vol. II, p. 100.

(12) A. David Neel: *Les enseignements secrets dans les Sectes Bouddhistes Tibétaines*, p. 138.

(13) *Māṇḍūkya Upanishad*, III, 31.

(14) J. Evola: *Lo Yoga della Potenza*, p. 295.

QUEST

An Indian bi-monthly
of arts and ideas

Editor: NISSIM EZERIEL



Provocative articles on literature, politics, philosophy and art. Poems and short stories. Substantial book reviews section. Notes on drama, cinema and the dance

"The Editing and production show a high degree of judgment and technical excellence,,
THOUGHT



Single issue 164 Liras
Annual Subscription
984 liras (6 issues)

Payable directly by Postal Order or cheque to:

QUEST,
Army & Navy Bldg.,
148, Mahatma Gandh Road,
Bombay 1.
INDIA