

THE TRANSFORMATION OF MAN

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The Whole Man is a multiplicity in unity, visible and invisible, knowable and unknowable. I suggest that in any interpretation this proposition is acceptable. It is valid if we regard man as a soul-less mechanism with no more than an epiphenomenal consciousness. It is also valid if we think of man in terms of body, soul and spirit or any similar model. Each one of us is a recognisable unit of humanity and each one of us is a complex whole. We are all to some degree suitable objects of scientific investigation by the methods of observation, experimentation, measurement, generalization and hypothesis formation. But we are also centres of unique experience to which the techniques of the scientific method do not apply. We all share in the certainty that what goes on in our experience is only partly revealed in our observable behaviour and that, therefore, we remain veiled from one another. We know that there are finer shades in our experience, that we cannot express in ordinary language and only indirectly in works of art. We know further that there are deeper scarcely glimpsed processes that we ourselves cannot understand let alone express to others.

The whole man cannot be less than all these things and is probably very much more. We cannot be satisfied to develop only the superficial man and ignore the deeper strata of our being, from which our truest values seem to spring.

Let us look at another dimension. Man is a social being. If he isolates himself from his human environment he loses some of his wholeness. If he fails to communicate and cooperate successfully with his fellow men he is not wholly developed. Man is also part of the earth's life. His very existence depends upon other forms of life for he cannot produce from non-living nature all the materials he needs to sustain his own life. So long as man is not in harmony with the natural environment to which he is so intimately linked he is not a whole man.

Yet another dimension; we do not know if our life has a meaning and purpose beyond ourselves. Are there ends and purposes not entertained by the ordinary human mind? If so, are they hidden in the regions of our own totality that lie beyond the reach of consciousness or are they associated with other wills and modes of being? Is there an unknown purpose behind the partly calculable, partly stochastic, processes of the visible world? If there is such a purpose and the whole man is somehow involved in it, it must follow that no account of man can be complete that fails to take this into account. At the very least, we must be open to the possibility. These questions lead us on to the biggest and hardest one of all. Who—as distinct from what—is the Whole Man? Have we an identity that embraces both what we know and what we do not know of ourselves? Is this identity associated with a single permanent decision point, will or 'I'? When I pronounce the word 'I' for whom or what do I speak?

It seems likely that we have more than one point of decision in us. The variety and inconsistency of our decisions almost exclude the commonly held view that a normal man is an undivided unity and that a division of the self occurs only in some form of schizophrenia. We have only to look at the rare moments of illumination when we and the world appear to be completely changed, to see that there are regions of our own being which we cannot subordinate to our common experience of

selfhood. In whatever direction we look, we can see that the whole man stretches beyond our mental vision.

This brief sketch is intended as an introduction to the proposition that the self-realization of the whole man must go far beyond what is commonly regarded as education. Another proposition to be entertained is that self-realization must include a far higher content of self-knowledge than is usually considered to be necessary. A third proposition is complementary to this: self-realization is a process of transformation and not merely one of growth. If our nature is at least two-fold, and if the two parts live their own life with little or no communication between them, something must be wrong. The transformation of man must at least signify the union or perhaps reunion of the two parts of his nature. If he has three parts to his nature—body, soul and spirit then all three must be integrated to reconstitute the Whole Man.

Man as a self with capacity for making free decisions about his actions, requires instruments in order to act. These instruments are his body and his mind. They include machines such as levers, pumps and heat engines; in the form of skeletal, muscular, circulatory, metabolic and nervous systems. He also has instruments of sensation and feeling, perception and thought which we group as 'mental'. In addition to these well-known instruments, he has others less well understood such as his endocrine glands and special nerve ganglia. These are electro-chemical in their operation, but quite mysterious in nature. There are other instruments that give us memory, discrimination, imagination and creative illuminations. There are yet other instruments half awakened, or perhaps still embryonic, that produce strange unaccountable experiences of communication with another world and for some few people revelations of deity.

All these instruments belong to the whole man. Even the best known and constantly used are far less effective and productive than they might be. An even more serious waste comes from our inability to secure harmonious working of all the instruments for the attainment of our purposes. Surely, the primary aim of education should be to develop the instruments and teach us how to use them more effectively; rather than to condition them to produce automatic behaviour.

Every instrument has its own mode of operation and form of memory. Most of the instruments can, by simple procedures such as repetition, shock and the arousing of desire, be conditioned to produce predetermined patterns of behaviour. Most education is dominated by the assumption that its aim is to produce and fix desirable patterns of behaviour. The development and the coordination of the instruments are treated as secondary consequences of learning to produce desirable behaviour. Knowledge and skills are regarded as primary objectives and the perfecting of our instruments is usually neglected.

It is seldom noticed that such educational procedures fail to place the instruments under the control of the self or 'I'. In consequence, men and women grow up with largely automatic behaviour patterns which they are seldom able to alter in later life. Their capacity for learning falls away quite early and they remain substantially undeveloped for the rest of their lives. The acceptance of this situation as normal is part of what I have called the psychostatic view of man's nature. The word psychostatic is used to express the hypothesis that man can be conditioned, but not transformed. It holds that the development which takes place once his bodily and mental instruments reach maturity is solely the effect of environmental influences- in other words, that his psyche remains static.

It rejects the belief that man is capable of transformation in the sense of becoming a different kind of being.

The contrary view is that of the psychokinetic hypothesis, according to which man is capable of transforming into an integrated being whose knowable and unknowable natures have become one indivisible whole. Such a man can control his instruments in the way that a skilled mechanic can control a machine.

We shall, in this conference, be considering various implications of the psychokinetic view of man's nature. I propose to consider it as a means of setting a model of human nature that enables various educational systems to be compared, not in terms of behaviour alone, but of what they do for the man himself.

We can ask the question: if transformation is of the man himself, is it essential—that is, implicit in the meaning of the word—that the man himself should have a hand in bringing it about. If so, we have a convenient distinction between transformation and development. The former must be intentional and conscious—resulting, in part at least, from the purposeful action of the man himself. Development is no more than the accidental result of environmental influence upon a pattern already present, for example, the genetic code.

Let us consider some of the implications of the psychokinetic or transformationist view of man.

- (1) There is a goal or purpose in every human life. This is the potential for a specific transformation.
- (2) Man should look upon his instruments as means for achieving his goal and learn how to make the best use of them.
- (3) He should pay more attention to what he is and what he can become than to what he knows.
- (4) Man should regard his own will, that is the capacity for making decisions as primary and the stream of consciousness or mental happenings as secondary.
- (5) Man cannot be satisfied with the dichotomy of conscious and unconscious states. He must strive to reunite the visible and invisible parts of his being.
- (6) Man's experience is locked into that of his environment, particularly the human environment. He cannot realize his potential except as a social being.

It follows from the last proposition that we cannot evaluate man's potential except in the context of his environment. When the latter is static, no serious error results from substituting principles and rules that express the demand of the environment for the immediate reality. When, however, the environment is changing rapidly, as in the present state of the world, principles of value and rules of behaviour may prove inadequate. This is certainly the case in our modern society. We prepare men and women according to preconceived social and moral principles appropriate to an environment that may no longer exist when they come to it. One serious consequence of this is that great numbers of men and women are misfits who cannot achieve a satisfactory relation to society.

The other propositions lead to somewhat similar conclusions. We education in terms of knowledge and skills, neglecting the true human potential and the will that strives to realize it. In this way, we deprive people of their natural power of response and adaptation. We tend to fix their behaviour in patterns which may be totally inappropriate to the real purpose of existence—the realization of their inherent potential which is what I mean by transformation.

Let us test these ideas by one or two concrete instances:

Millions of workers in highly industrialized countries are dissatisfied with their way of life to the point of revolt. They have been conditioned to associate their grievances with industrial relationships, pay, hours of work and other functional elements. In reality, they are disturbed by the lack of opportunity to make their own decisions, to use their instruments to the best advantage—in plain terms they are bored by the repetitive, unimaginative character of their daily work. The problem, which on the face of it appears to be economic with an element of social conflict, is in reality the consequence of an acute disharmony between their actual and their potential modes of life. So long as they had to work and struggle to maintain themselves and their families their life had a purpose and their activity could have a psychokinetic character. Once the bodily needs are assured work requires a motive. Artificial motives have been introduced in the form of environmentally stimulated appetites: but these operate only in the superficial man.

“The hungry sheep look up and are not fed
but swoln with wind and the rank mist they draw
rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread.”

We are bewildered and amazed that civilized nations with a high tradition of culture can become involved in atrocious actions, wantonly destroying life and treating their fellow men as worthless animals. Our amazement is due to our obsession with behaviour patterns and our disregard of the underlying will and self-hood. If the will has not been trained to make free judgments and, on the contrary, has been conditioned to respond passively to environmental influences it is not at all surprising that in an environment of bestiality, men will behave as beasts.

As a third example, let us consider what is called the permissive society. People conditioned to interpret all that they observe in behavioural terms, see sex and violence crudely displayed and set their observations against models of behaviour derived from social norms and moral rules that developed a century or many centuries earlier. They make judgments accordingly. If they reject traditional norms, they accept or even welcome freedom of expression and action. If they hold on to tradition, they are outraged. In neither case, do they take account of the invisible man whose natural impulses include sex and violence: but who has the capacity for transforming them into love and creativity. The behaviour imposed from without, leaves the whole man unchanged. Only a transformation that breaks through the barrier between the inner and outer can produce a truly human being who will make a right use of all his instruments including those which serve the impulses of sex and destructiveness. In the last few years behavioural science has been hailed as the means by which human nature can be controlled or even changed for the better. Behavioural science is exclusively concerned with the functional instruments and the means of conditioning or deconditioning their responses. All that cannot be reduced to overt behaviour is treated as inner behaviour or attitude. This simplification does not work and behavioural science again and again betrays its inadequacy by its failure to produce permanent changes. When changes of attitude are apparently achieved; it invariably turns out that these are linked to specific environmental conditions. Change the environment and, unless irreversible damage has been done to the psyche, the original attitude reappears.

Examples can be taken from any field of human experience and it is always found that only those processes that involve the decision-making power of the individual concerned can result in permanent change. Contrary to what is commonly supposed, decision-making in man is not a functional operation like seeing or hearing, thinking or feeling. It is an act made by the will that is seated in the unconditioned region of man's nature.

Inevitably in this brief introduction I have made unsupported statements and adduced illustrations that may appear arbitrarily selected to suit my theme. My intention has not been only to convince you that true education must apply to the whole man; but also to suggest that this is an area insufficiently explored. The present crisis not only in education but in all departments of human life, may take on a different aspect if it is examined in the light of the psychokinetic hypothesis.

Development, education and transformation are three words that can be applied to the process whereby man discovers his own potential. The first is natural and automatic. The second is artificial and largely the effect of environmental influence. The third is mainly self-directed with the environment providing conditions rather than causes. Again development ends fairly early in life. Education is arbitrarily arrested soon afterwards. Transformation is continuous and progressive.

Transformation is not necessarily spiritual or religious. Nor are religious and spiritual activities necessarily transformist. The test of transformation is not the label that is applied; but the outcome of the process. Its fruits are inner freedom, peace of mind, the emergence of a single integrated will and the reunion of the visible and invisible aspects of man's nature.

One question remains, upon which perhaps this conference will throw some light. Will people at this stage of man's history accept the challenge of transformation in sufficient numbers to make a difference to the future. We are in an age when conditioning is the dominant factor in human behaviour. Seldom if ever have people been so widely and effectively submitted to the conditioning process of the mass media. I need not elaborate for whether human engineering is admired or deplored, it is everywhere accepted as inevitable. If we not only deplore the production of human automata, but wish to do something effective to counteract it, we cannot turn from one conditioning process to another. It is not even enough to use deconditioning methods such as are applied in sensitivity training. Deconditioning does not make a person immune from a subsequent conditioning action; and indeed, it is not meant to. If we want people capable—even under stress—of forming their own independent judgments and using their instruments instead of being used by them, then the entire process of transformation must be set in motion.

Here we come to a subject in which our Institute has been actively engaged for all the twenty-five years of its existence. As you know we have explored many lines of research to discover ways of enabling men and women to realize their natural potential for judgment and creativity. We have at least convinced ourselves that it is possible. Convincing others is not so easy, for the very reason that transformation is not primarily behavioural. Behaviour controlled by the environment and behaviour controlled from within are both behaviour. They are not readily distinguishable except in times of stress. One justification for insisting upon the importance of the psychokinetic view of human nature is that we have entered a period of intense stress throughout the world. The stresses are likely to increase in intensity and the attendant risks of uncontrolled behaviour will be correspondingly greater. It may not be too much to say that human survival depends upon increasing the number of people who have been transformed from automatic to self-directed, free men and women.