

COURSE SYNTHESIS NO. 1

ESSENCE AND PERSONALITY THE TWOFOLD BIOGRAPHY OF MAN

Psychoanthropology differs from classical psychology in that it also deals with man's higher dimension, above and beyond his intellectual, emotional, and psychological functioning. It responds to the essential questions of Man: his origin, the meaning of his life, his place, and his role in the evolution of the universe.

The view of Psychoanthropology is that man does not appear on earth as a blank slate, but is born with a certain psychic and mental structure which is different according to each individual. Depending on the theory in question, this difference is attributed to heredity, chance, recurrence, or reincarnation. The study of Psychoanthropology allows us to explain this difference in a different way.

It does not propose blind faith, but that we understand for ourselves, verifying the principles in our own life and our own experience. When verification is not directly possible, we are invited to adopt what is said as a research hypothesis.

Psychoanthropology considers that man's consciousness is capable of evolving. Nature has left man at a state of unfinished evolution, but it is possible for him to evolve beyond this state of incompleteness. He is capable of developing all of his potentialities and of realising what is highest in himself.

To this end, certain practical efforts are necessary, what is called Work on oneself. Psychoanthropology does not remain at the level of merely theoretical knowledge, but also provides the practical basis for this Work.

Psychoanthropology considers that man is born with a certain structure, his profound being, which we may call his Essence. This essence evolves very little. Its development follows three stages.

During the first stage, from birth until the age of two or three, the essence grows to a limited extent. After this, as soon as the child begins to enter into a process of social relationship that is no longer confined to his mother alone, the essence ceases to develop, remaining in an infantile state, and the personality begins to be formed. This personality corresponds to everything entering the child from the outside – through his life experiences, education, studies, and conditioning. As the personality grows, it progressively covers up the essence with its successive layers. The essence thus atrophies and is no longer capable of manifesting itself at all.

Man is usually not conscious of this situation, placing his center of gravity in his personality. A person who is satisfied with his life and contents himself with existing through his personality has no reason to search for anything else.

But it can occasionally happen that man recalls the existence of an essential dimension in himself, or that he senses a nostalgia for it. He may then feel the need to search for and educate his profound being. This third stage is not automatic and depends on the individual's conscious and voluntary decision. In addition, it necessitates the encounter with a teaching given by someone who lives from his essence.

This path begins with the effort to observe our personality, which allows us to recognise its artificial aspect, to gradually remove its different layers, and to

reveal what exists beneath them, our essence. The essence then becomes man's center of gravity once again.

The first education was that of the personality. It allows man to integrate himself into his family, social, and professional life. The richer the personality, the greater the essence's capacity for development.

The second education is that of the essence and can only take place at the expense of the personality; in order for one to grow, the other must necessarily diminish. Concerning this subject, the Gospels speak of a "second birth."

The effort of self-observation permits us to notice the extent to which our perception of the external world is distorted by our personality.

Man has a twofold biography. When we ask someone to tell us the story of his life, he generally tells us a succession of external events – his studies, the major stages of his life, his profession, and so on. But in general, he does not speak about the way in which he experienced these events – his feelings, his fears, doubts, desires, etc. In every person there exist these two currents of a different nature: an external current with all the events constituting the course of his life, and an inner current formed by the way in which he experienced these events innerly. Our capacity to cultivate a right relationship to external situations is in fact the key to our happiness or unhappiness.

When we are experiencing a difficulty, our habitual reflex is to accuse other people. If things are not going well, this is because of something or someone: our boss, our spouse, the weather, a flat tire, and so on. This attitude of course leaves out the most fundamental element: ourselves. The true source of our well-being or ill-being is not to be found on the outside, but in ourselves.

It is entirely possible to experience difficult events while remaining perfectly happy. Inversely, it is possible to suffer in spite of the fact that we have "everything we need in order to be happy."

Observing the influence of the external world on our inner state is an exercise that permits us to understand the extent to which we allow our inner state to depend on external events, without our deciding in the least.

We can observe our inner state when we wake up in the morning and subsequently observe how it changes according to the pleasant or unpleasant situations we encounter over the course of the day.

Psychoanthropology considers that our level of being attracts the outer events of our life, and that it is even possible to change the course of these outer events if we begin to change the quality of our being. For example, someone who always complains, a pessimist, will have difficulty finding anyone who wants to make him happy. If, on the other hand, he starts being more likeable toward other people, if he renders them service, they will also like him more, and even go out of their way to help him.

The quality of our life depends on the quality of our being. In order to change our life, we must not try to change other people and the world, but to change ourselves, to develop a richer inner life.

Boredom, for example, is the indication of a poor inner life. In so-called civilised countries, we can find more and more people who are bored and who seek to fill up their inner emptiness with all sorts of artificial external stimulations. For example, they sit in front of a television screen and live their lives vicariously. This mode of existence leaves no room whatsoever for man's essential dimension, for his essence. And furthermore, it justifies the materialist, atheist world-view according to which man is simply born, lives, and disappears.

This teaching proposes something different: to allow man to develop his essence and in this way give a meaning to his life.