

ASPECTS OF THE HIGHER EVOLUTION OF THE INDIVIDUAL

Lecture 83: How Consciousness Evolves

In the course of the coming eight weeks we shall be concerning ourselves in various ways and from various points of view with the subject of what we have come to call the Higher Evolution of Man. As we begin, we cannot but remind ourselves that this subject of the Higher Evolution is, without exception, the most important with which we could possibly concern ourselves. Nowadays we hear mooted so many questions of so many different kinds: social questions, political questions, ethical questions, questions about the pollution of the environment, questions about violence, questions about aggression; questions of all kinds. But this question to the consideration of which we are going to address ourselves in the course of the next eight weeks - this whole question of the Higher Evolution of Man - is far more important, is far more weighty, is far more vital, than any of these other questions that one might possibly consider or imagine. One might even go so far as to say that this question of the Higher Evolution is more important even than any religious question, in the ordinary sense of the term religion - that is to say, conventional religion or formal religion or established religion. Therefore, from this we conclude that, for those of us who gather here week by week during the next two months to consider this question of the Higher Evolution, the two or the three hours that we pass here - during which we consider this question, hear it talked about, perhaps discuss it ourselves - are the most important and the most significant of the whole week. Unless we really realise this, unless we really feel that we are not just coming to a meeting, that we are not just hearing a lecture or a talk, but that we are coming into contact with something which is of vital importance for ourselves - in fact, for all men and women, for the whole human race, potentially - unless we really realise this, unless it really sinks into our hearts and minds, we won't get out of these meetings a much as we should get, as much as we might otherwise have got.

Many of you know that this is not the first time that we are considering this question of the Higher Evolution. We dealt with it a year ago in this very place, in the course of a series entitled 'The Higher Evolution of Man', and on that occasion, in that series, we began by taking up for consideration the whole question of evolution, especially Lower Evolution as distinguished from Higher Evolution, and Higher Evolution as distinguished from the Lower Evolution. We learned on that occasion, at the very beginning of that course, that the concept of evolution, the concept of development, was the most fruitful concept, perhaps, in the whole range of modern Western thought. We remember that the operation of this principle, the principle of evolution, was first traced out in detail in the field of the biological sciences, and thence its application was extended very rapidly to almost every other field of knowledge. In fact, it would perhaps not be going too far to say that this principle of evolution was discovered to be at work in each and every department of life, including human life. We saw then - at least, we caught a glimpse of the great truth, difficult to realise in concrete detail though perhaps easier to appreciate in the abstract - the great truth that the whole universe, this whole system, this whole fabric of existence, is in fact, in its length and its breadth, its height and its depth, one gigantic process; one gigantic, ever-changing process; a process of becoming, a process of attaining new levels and ever new levels of existence and organisation; in other words, that the universe is an evolution.

And man, too, we saw, is included in this great process. man himself is in process of becoming. Man himself is ever attaining new levels of existence and new levels of organisation.

We went on to point out - and here we encounter something very important - that any evolving phenomenon whatsoever can be studied in two ways, from two points of view. It can be studied in terms of the past and it can be studied in terms of the future. it can be studied in terms of its origins, in terms of that out of which it has grown and developed, and it can also be studied in terms of its possible, even its probable, destination or goal. This principle, this distinction, applies to the phenomenon of man, inasmuch as he, too, is part and parcel of the general evolutionary process. We can look at man, that is to say, in two ways. We can look at him in terms of what he has developed out of, and we can look at him in terms of what he can develop into. And it is the first of these - that is to say, the whole range, the whole series of stages out of which man has developed - which constitute man's past, that constitute also the whole Lower Evolution. And the second - that is to say, what man can develop into, the whole range of possibilities open to man - this constitutes the Higher Evolution.

Now the Lower Evolution, it is obvious, is dealt with the science, especially the science of biology; and the Higher Evolution is covered by such studies as psychology, by the fine arts, and by religion

in the sense of the universal religion; in other words, covered by what one writer, J. Middleton Murry, calls the metabiological sciences. These metabiological sciences it is that cover this whole range of the Higher Evolution of Man.

Last year, we went on to subdivide both the Lower and the Higher Evolution, but we are not concerned with that at the moment. In this series of talks, as we shall see presently, we shall be adopting, as the basic foundation of the series, a slightly different principle of classification.

The Lower Evolution and the Higher Evolution are, in a sense, continuous. One grows out of, develops out of, the other. At the same time, despite that continuity, there are differences, even very important differences. The most important of these differences is that the Lower Evolution is collective, whereas the Higher Evolution is individual. In the Lower Evolution, it is the whole species, at least, that goes forward, the whole group of lives, the whole group of organisms. But in the Higher Evolution, it is the individual, going it on his own - going it, even, in isolation. It is for this reason that, in the matter of the Higher Evolution, the development of self-consciousness, the development of awareness, of mindfulness, is so important, because it is this which is the growing point, as we may call it, of the Higher Evolution. Among lower forms of life, forms lower down in the evolutionary scale than man - among vegetables, among animals of the same species - one cannot outstrip another. One may be bigger than another, stronger than another, but there is no essential difference between these bigger and stronger specimens and the other members of the species. In other words, there is no difference of kind. But in the case of man, we find something different. In the case of man we find that one man, an individual man, can outstrip other men, even all other men - at least all other men of a particular time and place. Man, as it were, is able to become different in kind from other men, from the mass of men, from the generality of men. A man can become what we call a New Man; what in the Buddhist tradition is called a Buddha, an Enlightened or an Illumined One. And by a New Man, by a Buddha, we mean not just the old man re-issued in a slightly improved edition. We mean what may be described as an altogether new species of man, not to say an altogether new species of being; in a way a fresh biological, or rather metabiological, mutation. And what we normally call religion is, or at least should be, concerned, above all else, with the production of this New Man.

Having distinguished last year between the Lower Evolution on one hand and the Higher Evolution on the other, we went on to study different aspects of the Higher Evolution. We studied the Axial Age - that great creative, crucial period of human history in the course of which the Higher Evolution began or at least got properly under way; that period in the course of which the New Man started to emerge in different parts of the world, started to emerge in ancient India, in China, in Greece, in Palestine, in Persia. Again, we studied the New Man as artist or as artistic genius, and we tried to understand the place of art in the spiritual life, i.e. in the whole process of the Higher Evolution. We also studied the difference between ethnic religion, on the one hand, and universal religion, on the other; between, that is to say, group or tribal religion on the one hand and the religion of the individual on the other; and we saw that the former, that is to say, ethnic religion, belonged mainly to the Lower Evolution, whereas universal religion, the religion of the individual, belonged mainly to the Higher Evolution.

We then went on to deal with Buddhism itself as the Path of the Higher Evolution: not just as a religion in the ordinary, conventional term, but as the whole evolutionary process became as it were self-conscious in man, and consciously trying to develop and even leap forward in the evolutionary scale. We also dealt with the point of no return and with the cosmic significance of the Bodhisattva ideal. Finally, we related the subject of the Higher Evolution to modern Western thought to a limited extent, and dealt with Buddhism, Nietzsche, and the Superman.

In other words, we tried to realise, to understand, to fully comprehend the idea of the Higher Evolution in ever wider and wider contexts. We tried to understand, to realise the idea of the Higher Evolution in the context of world history, the development of the whole human race, human civilisation; in the context of art, the fine arts; in the context, again, of comparative religion, of the spiritual life and so on. In this way, in the course of just eight weeks, eight lectures, we covered an enormous amount of ground and we saw things, or tried to see them, in a very wide perspective indeed; and I know that some people who attended those lectures, especially attended the whole series, felt at times rather overwhelmed by the amount of material available, and by the colossal magnitude of the vistas disclosed.

This year, in this series of talks, we are going to follow what we may describe as an opposite procedure. We are going to study, this year, aspects of the Higher Evolution of the individual. What does this mean? We are still concerned, of course, with the Higher Evolution, but we are concerned with it in a different way. We are going to study it not so much in general but in particular. We are going to study the spiritual development of the individual human being, and in particular we shall be concerning ourselves with some of the problems - sometimes, some of the very difficult problems - encountered in the course of that development by the individual. In other words, if last year we looked at the subject of the Higher Evolution through a telescope, to see it as big as possible, this year we are going to look at it through a microscope; and under the microscope we shall be putting, in effect, ourselves.

We are about to study the Higher Evolution of man; study the development of the individual man, man by himself, man alone, not man as member of the group, member of the herd, member of the crowd; the individual man, man by himself, standing alone. But the question arises: in what does that development consist? Even the question arises: what is man? Unless we have at least some clear idea of the nature of man, it will be impossible for us to understand in what it is that this Higher Evolution or development consists.

To put it as simply, not to say crudely, as possible in terms of popular thought and popular expression, a man consists of two well-known parts. There is his body, his physical body, and there is his mind or his consciousness. His body belongs to, or rather is a product of, is derived from, the Lower Evolution. He has inherited this physical body, so fearfully and wonderfully made, from a long series of animal ancestors, extending back into dim and very distant ages. His mind, too, belongs to the Lower Evolution. Some of you may be a bit surprised by this; you may have been expecting me to say, "But the mind belongs, of course, to the Higher Evolution." But not a bit of it. The mind of man belongs, too, to the Lower Evolution. Sometimes man is defined as a rational animal. This, I believe, is Aristotle's definition. But we now know that some, at least, of the higher animals are able to reason; so ordinary rational consciousness, man as a rational being, belongs still to the Lower Evolution. But potentially at least the mind of man belongs to the Higher Evolution. The human body has remained unchanged for hundreds of thousands of years. It seems to have reached, so far as we can tell, the pinnacle, the limit, of its development. But the mind, on the other hand, is capable of almost infinite development.

Man, therefore, we may say, is mind rather than body. If his future lies anywhere, it lies in his mind. And the Higher Evolution of man, we may therefore say, consists essentially in the continued development of his mind or his consciousness. This brings us - perhaps not too soon - to our principal subject for tonight, which is: 'How Consciousness Evolves'. That is to say, we come to the question of the successive stages of development through which consciousness passes in its upward ascent.

But first, there is another question that arises, which is: what is consciousness? Unfortunately, one has to confess at once that no real answer to this question is possible. Any answer would be a merely verbal one. Any answer would be merely tautological. One of the sources to which I referred described consciousness as 'A character belonging to certain processes or events in the living organism which must be regarded as unique and therefore as indefinable in terms of anything else' - you can't define the unique; it is like trying to define the indefinable - 'but which can perhaps be best described as a view of these processes or events as it were from the inside.' The individual is as it were inside what is happening; that is as near as we can get, not to a definition - it is not a definition - but a description of consciousness. Consciousness, therefore, whatever it is, is synonymous with awareness, whatever that may be.

Now the Higher Evolution of man, of the individual, consists in the evolution of his consciousness or awareness. This evolution consists in its passing through successively higher stages - levels - of development. But as we have just seen, consciousness itself is unique and therefore indefinable. How, therefore, we ask, are its successive stages to be differentiated? If all the stages are consciousness, all, then, are equally unique and indefinable; so how is one unique and indefinable thing to be distinguished from another?

The difficulty is really more apparent than real. Consciousness, as we have seen, has been described as 'a view'; as a view of 'certain processes or events in the living organism'. Analogically speaking, therefore, consciousness or awareness is a sort of seeing. We look and we see. Use this

idea, use this term 'looking', 'seeing', analogically and that is what consciousness, that is what awareness, is.

Now where there is a view, there is obviously something viewed. Seeing means that there is something which is seen. So we may say that the different stages of development through which consciousness or awareness passes can be distinguished on the basis of their respective objects. In this way, broadly speaking, there are four degrees or four levels of consciousness, or four stages through which consciousness passes in the course of the whole process of its development. To these four stages we have given certain terms. The terms are more or less provisional; other terms could conceivably be given. The four stages are: first of all, simple consciousness; secondly, self-consciousness; thirdly, transcendental consciousness; and fourthly and lastly, absolute consciousness, which can also be called, perhaps, universal consciousness. The first three could perhaps also be called, alternatively: sense consciousness, corresponding to simple consciousness; subjective consciousness, corresponding to self-consciousness; and objective consciousness, corresponding to transcendental consciousness.

First of all, very briefly, simple consciousness. Simple consciousness is synonymous with perception in the narrower psychological sense of the term. It consists, that is to say, in awareness of sensations experienced through the sense organs as a result of contact with the external world. This is what simple consciousness is. This form of consciousness - awareness of sensations experienced through the sense organs as a result of contact with the external world - we of course share with the animals.

Secondly, self-consciousness. Here one does not merely perceive. One does not even merely conceive. one perceives that one perceives; one is aware that one is aware. One not only experiences sensations, feelings, emotions, thoughts and volitions, and so on, but is also conscious of oneself as experiencing them. one is, as it were, not immersed in them, identified with them; one has them, one experiences them, but one is able as it were to stand aside and experience oneself as experiencing them, see oneself as seeing them, be aware of oneself as aware of them, conscious of oneself as being conscious of them. This form of consciousness, this reflexive consciousness, consciousness as it were bending back or folding over on itself - this is distinctively human; this, so far as we know, no animal possesses. it is in self-consciousness, therefore, that our humanity distinctively resides.

Thirdly, transcendental consciousness. This goes further still. This, we may say, is awareness of the higher spiritual reality which embraces both oneself and the whole of conditioned existence, that is to say the whole mundane evolutionary process. This transcendental consciousness transcends the whole distinction between subject and object, but though it transcends the distinction between subject and object it is perceived, it is experienced at this stage as an object. It is, we may say, as though a sort of crack appeared down along the line dividing subject and object, the line where subject and object meet and mutually discriminate each other, and through this crack - which may even become as it were a hole, a relatively large aperture - through this crack shines the light of absolute or universal consciousness. This light, we may say - a narrow beam at first - is the flash of insight in the light of which we see the Transcendental, and the light by which we see the Transcendental is also the light by which or in which, if you like, the Transcendental sees us. In other words, at this stage the light or awareness or consciousness with which we see the Transcendental is identical with the awareness or consciousness with which the Transcendental sees us. In other words, at this stage awareness is to some extent dissociated from, to some extent no longer identified with, the self as distinguished from the object, the non-self; the self and its subjective conditionings, its psychological conditionings. it is for this reason that self-consciousness can also be spoken of as objective consciousness.

Fourthly and lastly, absolute consciousness or universal consciousness. Here subject and object entirely disappear. The crack widens, becomes an aperture, and the aperture just goes on expanding, as it were, to infinity. So consciousness becomes one with its object, and its object is infinite; so here there is nothing to be said.

These are the main stages through which consciousness passes: simple consciousness, self-consciousness, transcendental consciousness, absolute or universal consciousness. These stages represent how consciousness evolves. We have given, of course, a very broad, a very simple outline. We have distinguished, or tried to distinguish, only the main, the principal, stages, and

there are, of course, all sorts of intermediate stages; but for the sake of clarity we have confined ourselves just to these four outstanding stages.

Simple consciousness belongs, of course, to the Lower Evolution. That is obvious. Self-consciousness represents the culmination of the Lower Evolution and the inauguration of the Higher Evolution. It stands as a sort of watershed between the two: this side, the Lower Evolution; that side, the Higher Evolution. It is for this reason that self-consciousness, the second of our four great stages, is of great, indeed crucial, importance. Transcendental consciousness and absolute consciousness both belong to the Higher Evolution.

Now it is known that the individual, in the course of his development throughout life, recapitulates the development of the whole race. This applies to man as well as to other forms of life; applies not only to his body but also to his mind, up to a point. During the nine months that we spend in the womb, we pass through all the stages of organic development, organic evolution. The child in the womb recapitulates hundreds of millions of years of biological evolution. Then, at the time of birth, we find the child possessed of simple consciousness. In other words, at the time of birth the child is an animal with merely animal needs. After birth the child proceeds quite rapidly to develop self-consciousness; proceeds, that is to say, to develop from an animal into something more like a human being. During this period, the child recapitulates a few more million years of evolution. This period - of passing from animal to human, from simple perception or simple consciousness to self-consciousness - takes about three years, and in the course of this three-year period the child develops reason, memory and language. In other words, the three-year old child, at the end of this three-year period, has reached a point corresponding to the point reached by primitive man or the point reached by contemporary savages. He has developed simple consciousness, which he has brought with him, plus at least rudimentary - very rudimentary - self-consciousness. So, in the womb, during nine months, we recapitulate so long a period - hundreds of millions of years. During the first three years of life, during which we pass from simple consciousness to self-consciousness, from animal to human state, again we recapitulate so much; we progress, in a sense, so much: a few more millions of years. But here the question arises: what about the remaining threescore years and seven? What further progress do we make during that period? During that period, we may say, in comparison with the extent to which the individual has developed before, we develop hardly at all. It is as though the rate were slowing down the whole time. Proportionately, we develop much more during the nine months of intrauterine existence than during the first three years of existence outside the womb, after birth. After that, there is practically no development at all in comparison with the staggering development that has gone before.

From the age of three onwards, we acquire knowledge, maybe a great deal of knowledge; we acquire various skills - we learn to read, we learn to write, we learn to paint, we learn to drive a motor car. In other words, we recapitulate, in a sketchy kind of way, the history of civilisation. But consciousness itself, consciousness remains relatively unchanged. Perhaps self-consciousness develops just a very little during those threescore years and seven, but it is still in a very rudimentary state indeed. Therefore we may say that, in terms of consciousness, man remains throughout life more or less where he was at the age of three. If you try to represent on a graph which was anything smaller, say, than this room the amount of progress achieved by man during this life relatively to his progress up to the age of three, the graph would not be big enough for you to be able to record that relative progress.

So here he is, or rather, here we are: a simple consciousness plus a rudimentary self-consciousness. Why is this? Why do we stop, as it were? Why don't we go any further? Why do we get stuck? The reason is to be sought in the distinction we have made between the Lower Evolution and the Higher Evolution. The Lower Evolution, we saw, was collective: the whole species advanced as if it were one man. But the Higher Evolution is an individual achievement, is one by one, each one on his own or her own. From this we conclude, therefore, that the Higher Evolution cannot be recapitulated in the way that the Lower Evolution can be. In other words, you can inherit simple consciousness, but you cannot inherit self-consciousness from your parents, much less still can you be born endowed with transcendental consciousness. You might have parents endowed with transcendental consciousness, if you are so lucky, but you have to start again from the beginning.

So we say that the Lower Evolution carries a man so far - carries him up to the point of rudimentary self-consciousness and then what does it do? It just leaves him there. After that, his progress depends on his own individual conscious effort, and if he makes no such effort, well, no

progress; he remains just where he was, a simple consciousness plus a very rudimentary self-consciousness. We can take here an analogy from an earlier stage of evolution, the stage when life was leaving the sea in which it had been engendered and was beginning to invade the dry land. We all know this story, this rather romantic and enthralling story. The tide as it were throws up fishlike creatures upon the shore, and then the tide retreats. It leaves these fishlike creatures stranded there. After that, they have to make their own way. They have to develop legs, they have to learn to crawl on the dry land, on the solid earth. The sea does nothing more for them. It throws them up and it leaves them there to develop on their own. In the same way, we can say, the life wave has carried us up to the shores of self-consciousness, up to the shores of the Higher Evolution, and it has left us there. It cannot do anything more for us. From now on, we must fend for ourselves. If we want to develop further, it depends upon us. We cannot rely any more on the general evolutionary forward or upward surge. From now onwards, it all depends upon us individually.

From all this, several things become clear. Having reached his present stage of evolution, a stage where he finds himself endowed with simple consciousness plus rudimentary self-consciousness, a choice confronts man; confronts him not collectively but individually. In other words, the choice confronts you and me. He - we - can either stop where we now are, that is to say remain just simple consciousness rudimentary self-consciousness, or we can continue to evolve. We can continue the process; continue evolution. But if we decide to continue, if we decide that we want to evolve more, then this can be this must be - only by virtue of our individual determination and individual effort. Nature - one might even, if one wanted to be a little ironical, one might even say Mother Nature can do nothing more for us.

Moreover, from now onwards evolution means one thing and one thing only, which is development of consciousness; not development of material civilisation, material things, not development of the body, not the development of any of those qualities or characteristics that man shares with the lower animals. From now onwards evolution, the future of man, if you like - the true future - consists in this one thing: the development of his consciousness, the development of his mind.

Existence which is truly human, we may say therefore, is and by very definition must be a struggle. Nowadays people often do not like to think of existence, much less still human life, as a struggle. They would much rather, in some cases at least, think of it in terms of something that just drifts along, and you drift along with it: life as drift. Well, there are some aspects of life which are drift, but the Higher Evolution is not one of them, and truly human existence, therefore, cannot be a drift - cannot be anything passive - cannot be anything negative. Truly human existence is - must be - a struggle, an effort; even, if you like, a fight. It is a struggle for the development of ourselves, and at least some of us know that we are very recalcitrant material indeed; a struggle for the development of consciousness to its next highest level, its next highest stage. This, of course, brings us back to our four stages, and therewith, I am afraid, very nearly to the conclusion of today's talk.

But first of all, one or two more comments. Most people, regrettably, are content to stand still. They merely recapitulate the past - biologically, culturally, intellectually recapitulate the past. They don't think in terms of development. After all, how many people, when they wake up in the morning, ever think: "Now, how can I develop myself today?" At the most, they might think, some of them, in terms of developing their muscles or developing their intelligence, but not of developing their consciousness, not developing themselves in the fully human and distinctively human sense of the term. Most people, therefore, do not lead truly human lives. Most people live what are essentially animal lives; that is to say, lives based principally on simple consciousness, with just a vestige of self-consciousness, and no effort to develop further; no effort to develop their embryonic self-consciousness. This is the position of the majority.

So those who do try to develop themselves, those who try to develop their consciousness - to become more self-conscious, more aware, more mindful, more alive if you like - will find themselves in a minority. We hear a lot about minorities these days. We hear about the black minority in white America, and we hear about democratic minorities in totalitarian countries, and maybe totalitarian-minded minorities in democratic countries, and so on. But perhaps the minority which is in the most difficult position, in many ways, is the minority of those who try to develop themselves, their consciousness, in the midst of a majority which very decidedly does not make

any such effort. So if one is going to develop oneself, one's consciousness, one has to recognise and accept the fact that one is going to be, by virtue of that effort, in the minority.

The Higher Evolution is really the concern of religion. The development of consciousness to its next stage is really the concern of religion, in the sense of universal religion, the religion of the individual. But nowadays, unfortunately, not much help is to be gained, is to be looked for, from that quarter, especially in the West. In fact, the whole idea of going for help in the Higher Evolution, developing one's consciousness to its next stage, to the average priest, padre, minister, whatnot, might raise a smile on the faces of at least some people. Owing to the pull of what we called last year the gravitational pull - that is to say, the influence exerted by the conditioned on universal religion, universal religion has become, in most parts of the world, transformed and degraded into ethnic religion, and churches and similar bodies, we find, are just part of what is often pejoratively called the establishment; and in them there is very little concern for anything resembling the Higher Evolution of man or the development of human consciousness. There is much more concern, we may say, for such development in the sphere of the fine arts and in the sphere of psychology, at least in some of its branches.

As we have seen, the four stages of consciousness, which tell us how consciousness evolves, are: simple consciousness, self-consciousness, transcendental consciousness and absolute or universal consciousness. The last, the fourth, we can safely leave out of consideration for the time being. For man who is truly man, or man who is trying to be at least truly man, truly human, the immediate task is to develop his rudimentary self-consciousness into full self-consciousness, as well as to develop transcendental consciousness or objective consciousness. Some may ask the question whether one has to wait for the development, the full development, of self-consciousness before one can start upon the development of transcendental consciousness or objective consciousness. Well, one doesn't have to wait. Transcendental consciousness cannot be perfected before self-consciousness has been perfected, but one can begin to develop transcendental consciousness, objective consciousness, even before self-consciousness is fully or perfectly developed. The two are more or less continuous, we may say. The former need not wait for the full development of the latter. It is the full, perfect development of self-consciousness, of awareness, that makes one a fully and completely human being. The development of transcendental consciousness, development of complete objectivity, makes one what is termed in the Buddhist tradition - we had a whole talk about this last winter - a Stream Entrant; that is to say, in the terms of our present talk, one in whom the influence of the Higher Evolution preponderates over the influence of the Lower Evolution.

The development of consciousness is not an easy matter. The Higher Evolution is not an easy matter. It is a very difficult task, a very formidable proposition. It is a task that requires all our energy. And if we are concerned with the Higher Evolution, if we are concerned with the development of consciousness, then we have to think always and everywhere primarily in terms of development. We cannot as it were be half dedicated to development. It is either all or nothing. And this means that we have to ask ourselves, as each situation confronts us, as each experience befalls us, as each opportunity presents itself to us: "What bearing has this, direct or indirect, on my development - on the question of development of consciousness to its next highest stage?" This question we have to ask ourselves in relation to such matters as our job, the sort of work we do; our personal relationships; our interests, hobbies, activities of various kinds: what bearing does this have on the development of consciousness? What bearing does this have on the Higher Evolution, on my own development as a human, as distinct from a merely semi-animal, being? If we do this, if we make the development of consciousness the primary consideration, the primary motivation, in everything that we do, some progress will be made; some progress is sure to be made. Otherwise, not. And one can see already that this question of devoting oneself, not to say dedicating oneself, to the development of consciousness - first self-consciousness, then objective consciousness, transcendental consciousness - is very far from being just the living of a religious life, or even a spiritual life, in the ordinary, more or less conventional, sense.

As all this is very difficult, as all this is hard work, problems will arise as we struggle on; as we plant our feet ever more and more forward, as we get a foothold, as we seize hold of a crag and maybe haul ourselves up, we shall find all sorts of problems, problems that we had not anticipated, problems that we had not thought to encounter, problems, perhaps, of which we had not dreamt. It is with some of these problems, problems that arise for nearly everybody as they try to evolve, to develop, to develop consciousness, to follow the Path of the Higher Evolution - that we shall

be dealing in the course of this series of talks; in other words, problems arising in the course of our effort to develop, as some of us are trying to develop through meditation and in other ways, self-consciousness and transcendental consciousness. These problems will be dealt with on the assumption that everybody attending the meeting, everybody listening to the talk, is personally interested and personally concerned; that they want at least to understand in what the Higher Evolution consists and what the obstacles are which they are likely to encounter. This being the first talk in the series, I have had necessarily to deal with the theoretical groundwork, as we may call it, of the whole series, and treatment therefore has necessarily been a bit abstract, a bit dry. Especially we have had to deal with the four stages of consciousness. But as from next week, we shall be dealing with some of the actual problems arising in the course of the Higher Evolution of the individual; in other words, we shall be coming to grips with the subject matter of the talks, the subject matter of the series, in a much more concrete and practical fashion. Next week, in fact, we shall be dealing with one of the most important problems that can arise in the course of one's effort to develop the higher consciousness, to develop self-awareness: next week we shall be dealing with the difference between alienated awareness on the one hand and integrated awareness on the other, and trying to understand how it is possible for us to pass from the one to the other.