

Summer 2022

NASCENT STATE

Journal of Intuition

Magazine

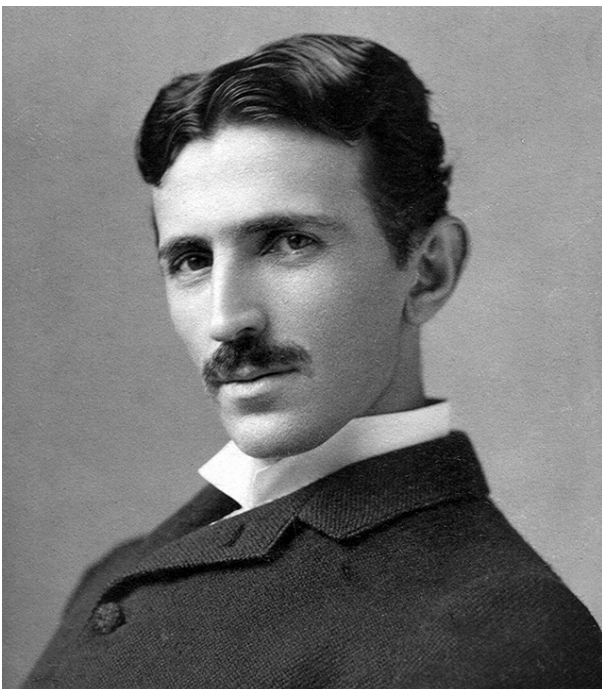
Intuitive Genius



Eckhart



Rousseau



Tesla

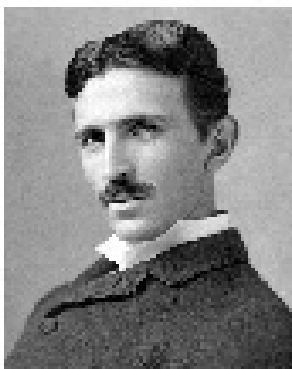


Ouspensky

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Magazine



Top left to bottom right:
Eckhart, Rousseau, Tesla and Ouspensky

From the Editor

Intuitive Genius

Logic defines intelligence as the ability to process information. From a logical point of view, a genius is a person who is gifted at processing information. Intuition defines genius in terms of insight. An intuitive genius is a person who sees what others cannot see.

'I know my heart, and have studied mankind.'

Jean-Jacques Rousseau

This edition of Nascent State follows on from the Winter 2021 Edition and provides another four examples of intuitive genius. In this Edition, the examples given are Meister Eckhart, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Nikola Tesla and Peter Ouspensky.

Each is in part associated with the time and circumstances of their life, but each was unique in their thinking. While genius must be expressed through a particular medium, there is something universal about it which is independent of time and circumstance.

This edition focuses on their genius as intuitive thinkers. To study intuitive genius is to aspire to be like them, and that means to be unique, thoughtful and insightful.

Nascent State magazine is presented in a PDF, free-to-download format; download it and read it at your leisure.

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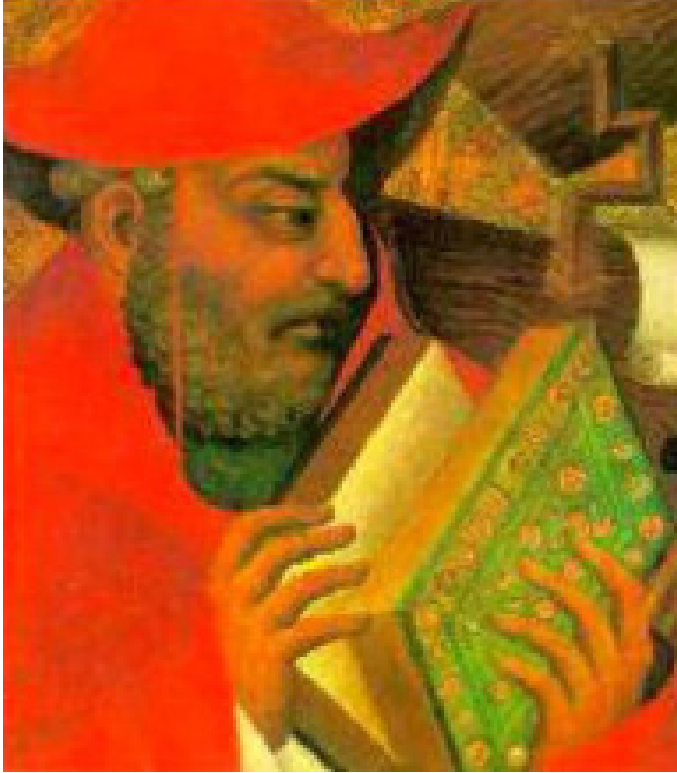
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Meister Eckhart

A free mind in a cloister



Representation of Meister Eckhart

‘The most powerful form of prayer, and the one which can virtually gain all things and which is the worthiest work of all, is that which flows from a free mind. The freer the mind is, the more powerful and worthy, the more useful, praiseworthy and perfect the prayer and the work become. A free mind can achieve all things.’

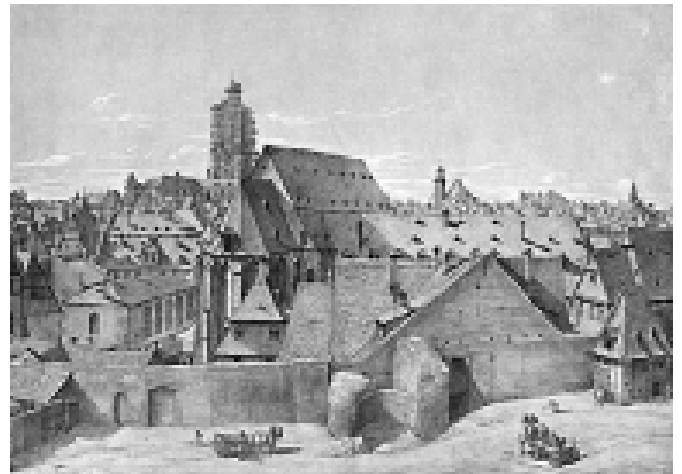
Just as there are free-thinkers today, so too have there been free and independent minds throughout history. One such person was Meister Eckhart (1260 - 1328), a German monk of the Dominican Order. Eckhart’s position within the order, at one time vicar-general, meant he had to submit to the rules governing that order. He was however independent enough to have been accused of heresy and called before the Inquisition. It is fortunate for Eckhart - and for us - that he died before any judgement was passed.

Eckhart’s writings are problematic for the modern reader because they are expressed through religious language, and religion is associated with blind faith and submission to an authority. The whole of the modern era is founded on the principle that the individual must be free to formulate their own ideas of what is

true or untrue, and so the language of submission does not sit well with the modern reader.

However, if the time and conditions of Eckhart’s life are taken into account, we can see how much of what he taught and wrote was highly original, and indeed universal enough to survive beyond his death.

Because the modern era is secular, what drives its values is the pursuit of material gain. And yet the pursuit of material gain does not make us happy or content. The dilemma of the modern era is that we seem to have to choose between blind faith for the inner life or the blind pursuit of profit for the outer life. Eckhart’s spirituality, born of the mind of a free-thinker, defies this conventional view.



12th century German monastery

The orthodox view of ‘God’ is that of a father-figure, distant and unknowable. This view means that we, as mere mortals, can have nothing other than faith to guide us. Eckhart’s God was that it is something manifest within each human being, and for that reason it is possible to know God by means of direct experience.

‘What is life? God’s being is my life, but if it is so, then what is God’s must be mine and what is mine God’s. God’s is-ness is my is-ness, and neither more nor less.’

This passage sums up Eckhart’s approach to spirituality. To find God, we have to look within, and we can do this by liberating the mind. The

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free mind that Eckhart refers to is not the secular idea of freedom, but that of a mind free of the interference of the pressures of this world.

Eckhart's use of the term 'is-ness' caused later thinkers to find a correlation between his teachings and what has come to be known as 'the perennial philosophy'. The term refers to the view that, independent of time and circumstance, all spiritual teachings point to the same fundamental outlook. Aldous Huxley, whose interest in Eastern mysticism led him to see a correlation between Eckhart's teaching and those more commonly associated with Paganism, wrote:

'Istigkeit - wasn't that the word Meister Eckhart liked to use? 'Is-ness.' The Being of Platonic philosophy...'



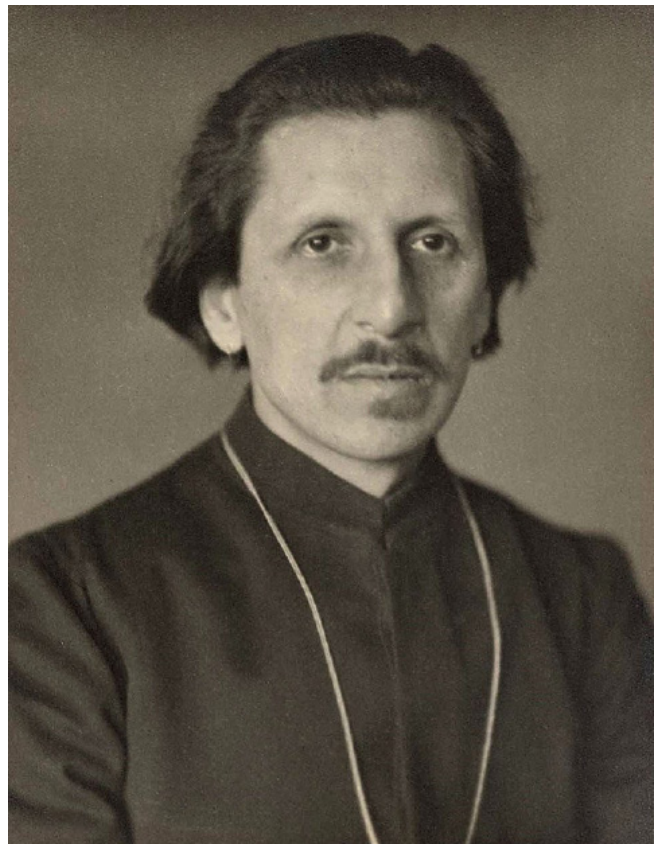
Aldous Huxley

The 'Being' Huxley refers to is the direct experience of the Divine. It was Huxley's own interest in mysticism that led him to experiment with mescaline and to publish his experience in the book *The Doors of Perception* (1954). For Eckhart, however, any form of hypnotic trance could not lead to anything reliable in this regard. For this, only a particular quality of mind would suffice:

'I have read many writings both of heathen philosophers and sages, of the Old and the New Testaments, and I have earnestly and with all diligence sought the best and the highest virtue whereby man may come most closely to God and wherein he may once more become like the original image as he was in God when there was yet no distinction between God and himself before God produced creatures. And having dived into the basis of things to the best of my ability I find that it is no other than absolute detachment (abgeschiedenheit) from everything that is created.'

His use of the term 'abgeschiedenheit' or 'detachment' in this sense so closely mirrors the 'non-attachment' found in Buddhism that it caused the Ceylonese historian and philosopher, Ananda Coomaraswamy (1877 - 1947), to make the following remarks:

'Eckhart presents an astonishingly close parallel to Indian modes of thought; some whole passages and many single sentences read like a direct translation from Sanskrit.'



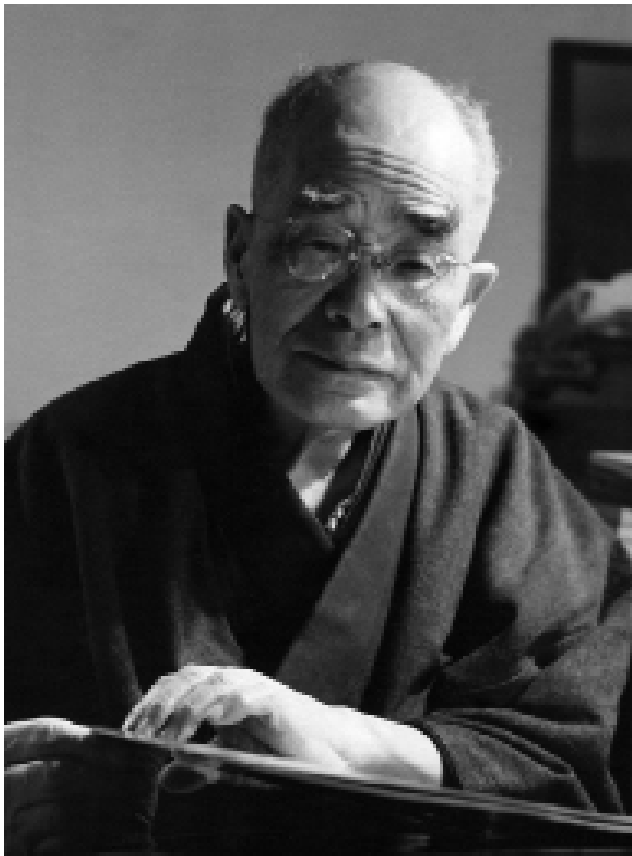
Ananda Coomaraswamy

He was not alone in this respect. The Buddhist writer D. T. Suzuki came across a book of Eckhart's writings at a young age, and was so struck by its contents that he later came to write

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Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist (1957) in order to present the case that Eckhart was more than a conventional Christian theologian.

‘When I first read – which was more than a half century ago – a little book containing a few of Meister Eckhart’s sermons, they impressed me profoundly, for I never expected that any Christian thinker ancient or modern could or would cherish such daring thoughts as expressed in those sermons. While I do not remember which sermons made up the contents of the little book, the ideas expounded there closely approached Buddhist thoughts, so closely indeed, that one could stamp them almost definitely as coming out of Buddhist speculations. As far as I can judge, Eckhart seems to be an extraordinary ‘Christian’.’



D. T. Suzuki

Indeed, Suzuki was so impressed by the nature of his teachings that he speculated Eckhart might have been an incarnation of the Bodhisattva. In the Buddhist tradition, a Bodhisattva is an enlightened individual who delays entering nirvana in order to save others, and so incarnates into a physical body again and again until finally becoming Buddha. Suzuki even speculated that Eckhart might have incarnated in the twentieth century:

‘But who can tell if Eckhart is not watching me writing this in the most modern and most mechanised city of New York?’

Whatever the truth of the statement, much of Eckhart’s teachings were outside the limited domain of conventional theology. An example of this can be found in Eckhart’s remarks regarding an inner experience, known in Buddhism as ‘satori’, whereby perception expands to include a time sense beyond the present moment:

‘There is the soul’s day and God’s day. A day, whether six or seven ago, or more than six thousand years ago, is just as near to the present as yesterday. Why? Because all time is contained in the present Now-moment.’

In 1328, the reigning Pope, John XXII, set up a commission to inquire into the nature of Eckhart’s teachings. The commission produced a document, the *Votum Avenionense*, which listed 28 articles written by Eckhart which were suspected of heresy. A Papal bull, *In Agro Dominico*, was issued in the following year, accusing him of such. It is fortunate that Eckhart died before he was called before the Inquisition.



Depiction of Medieval Inquisition

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While Eckhart was astute enough not to express any ideas which openly challenged the orthodoxy of the Church, his whole approach was that of a Gnostic, whereby knowledge of the inner life - in all its fullness - can be gleaned through silent contemplation and insight, and is not reliant on any scripture, doctrine or authority. It was this the Church feared most; that individuals might gain insight into the nature of the world and would no longer need to rely on the institution of the Church to guide their thinking or actions.

Eckhart's teachings are the very expression of an intuitive mind, and indeed given the highly restrictive times he lived in, that of an intuitive genius. He was a highly original thinker. Suzuki, in summing up his own study of Eckhart's teachings, wrote:

'Whatever influence Eckhart might have received from the Jewish (Maimonides), Arabic (Avicenna), and Neoplatonic sources, there is no doubt that he had his original views based on his own experiences...'

If logic is about processing existing information, intuition is about insight, creativity and originality. Intuitive insight will always challenge the existing order, because the existing order is based on the information we have, rather than what is presently unknown and therefore hidden. To contemplate the inner life as Eckhart intended does not mean to dwell on one's existing nature, but to seek to gain insight into its hidden

elements. Anyone who claims that no such elements exist betrays a lack of insight rather than any form of superiority in their thinking.

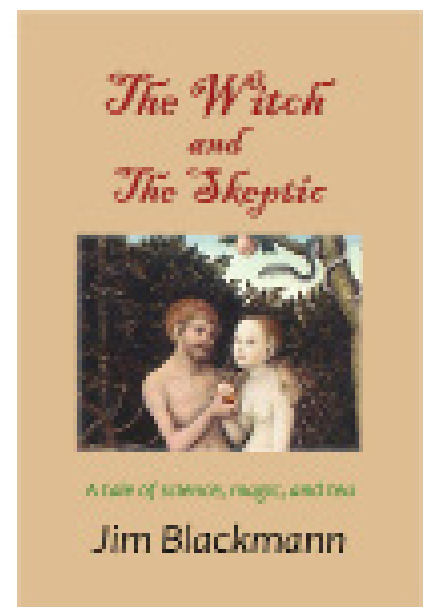
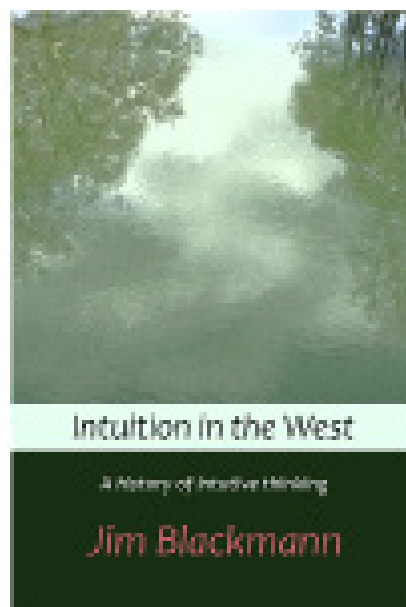
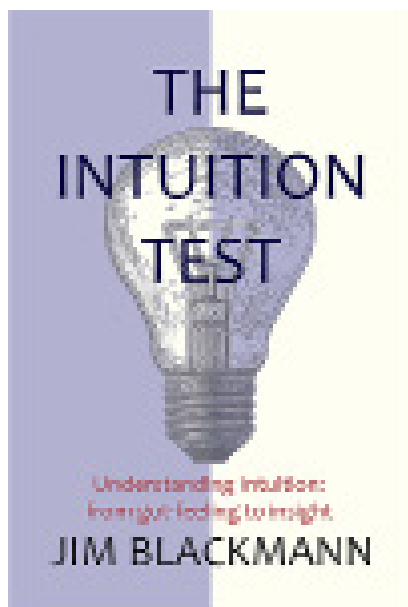
Eckhart's teaching is indeed perennial, not least because it addresses what we do not presently know. What is hidden - both outwardly and inwardly - is far greater than what we know. We pick up on this intuitively, and the stronger our intuition, the more we are aware of it.

Eckhart had to express his ideas through the language and values of the age he lived in, and at times his writing appears to be very little different from the dogma of the Church. Our own values, born of a secular outlook, can interfere with our understanding of him if we are not able to put any prejudices aside and attempt to understand him. He would not have found favour with modern thinkers from both East and West if his thought was not unique, insightful and original. Eckhart was an intuitive genius at a time when it was dangerous to be one.

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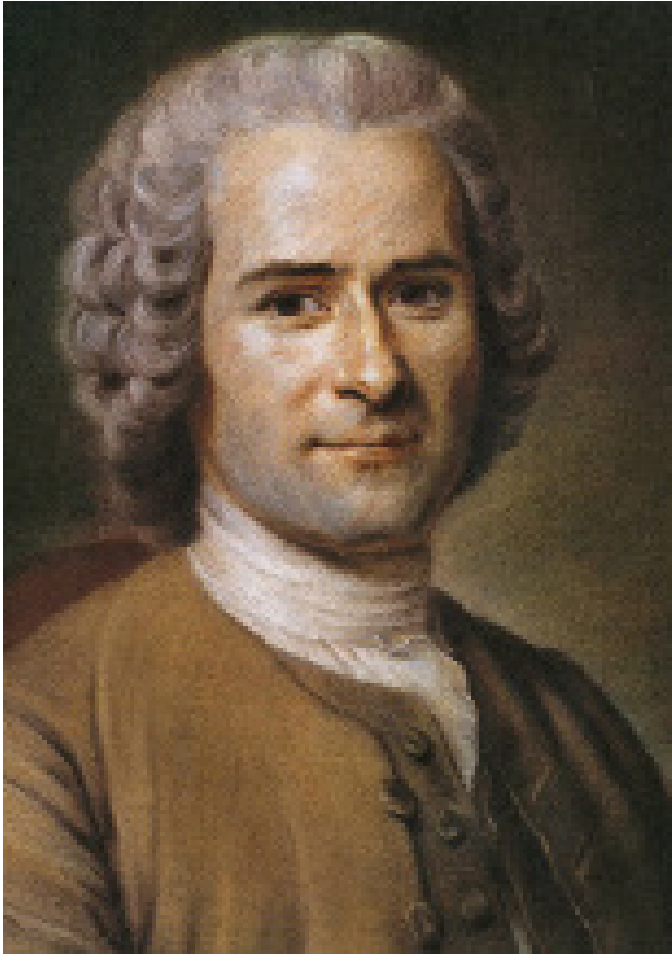
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Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Thinking with the heart



Rousseau by Maurice Quentin de La Tour, 1753

‘This book is not meant to circulate in society, and is suitable for very few readers. The style will put off people of taste; the contents will alarm strict people; all the sentiments will be unnatural to those who do not believe in virtue. It is bound to displease the devout, the libertines, the philosophers: it is bound to shock gallant women, and scandalise honest ones. Whom then will it please? Perhaps no one but me: but very certainly it will please no one moderately.’

This is the opening statement for the novel *Julie, or The New Heloise*, written by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in 1761. The novel was based on a love-affair between a twelfth century nun, Heloise, and her tutor, Peter Abelard, who was more than twenty years her senior. The affair scandalised Parisian society at the time, and Rousseau intended his own novel to do the same. For Rousseau, the book was as much a declaration

of his outlook as a novel, and his intention was to show that life must be governed by the heart rather than by convention.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was born in Geneva in 1712. His mother, Susannah Bernard, died nine days later, from the complications of his birth. The loss affected his father, who was open to a show of emotion with the young Rousseau. Owing to the circumstances of his childhood, emotion played an important part throughout his life; indeed, it could be said that Rousseau’s thinking was heart-centred.



18th century Geneva

In his *Confessions* (1782), he records that he read much from a very young age. His reading included his mother’s romances and his father’s more academic works, including Plutarch and Ovid. He says that Plutarch’s *Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans* was his favourite, which he read ‘with an avidity and taste uncommon, perhaps unprecedented at my age’. In spite of this, Rousseau’s education was patchy. He became an apprentice to an engraver, whom he described as ‘violent and boorish’. The occasion was not a happy one, to the point where it affected his character and, as he put it, ‘I learned to covet, dissemble, lie, and, at length, to steal...’.

At sixteen, Rousseau found himself in the company of the wealthy Francoise-Louise de Warens, herself 29 at the time. De Warens became his benefactor and, a little later, his lover.

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She helped him complete his education, providing him with the means to study mathematics, philosophy and music. His interest in music allowed him to contribute to the *Encyclopédie* (c. 1751), through which he became friends with the politically motivated Encyclopédistes, Denis Diderot, Jean le Rond d'Alembert and Baron d'Holbach.



Francoise-Louise de Warens

While the circumstances of Rousseau's life no doubt contributed to the shaping of his character, it was the strength of his emotions which was his defining feature. If he was in love, he was wholly in love, and if he fell out with someone, that too was complete and whole. It also meant that everything he wrote was first-hand and from the heart, and with an openness that caused David Hume to remark that he had 'no skin'.

So it was that he came to write *Julie, or The New Heloise*, and had that been all he had written, he would be remembered for being a groundbreaking novelist. But his interests were much wider, and his early interest in Plutarch meant he also wrote extensively on politics and philosophy. An example of this can be found in his *Discourse on Inequality* (1755):

'The first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, bethought himself of saying 'This is mine', and found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society.'

His political writings gained the approval of the Encyclopédistes, who were highly instrumental in informing the ideals of the French Revolution. His *The Social Contract* (1762) was particularly influential, and it was read and admired by the

revolutionary Jacobins, who adopted the phrase 'Friends of Freedom and Equality' from their reading of him.

All of Rousseau's writings, fiction and nonfiction, were as much a work of the heart as the head. He had a significant influence on Maximilien Robespierre (1758 – 1794), who was one of the leading lights of the revolution. Indeed, the battle cry of the French Revolution - 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, or Death' - was based on the following passage from *The Social Contract*:

'If we ask in what precisely consists the greatest good of all, which should be the end of every system of legislation, we shall find it reduce itself to two main objects, liberty and equality - liberty, because all particular dependence means so much force taken from the body of the State and equality, because liberty cannot exist without it.'



'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, or Death'

It did not concern Rousseau that liberty and equality were contradictory values, because for him they were something he felt emotionally. Logic demands that something either 'is' or 'is not'. Emotionally however, we can feel hope and fear at the same time; we can feel anger and even hatred towards a lover, and then guilt and sympathy for them moments later. The emotional life is not as clear-cut and defined as logic, and if

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we are to understand human nature - and more particularly to advocate social change - then we must do so on the basis of a fuller image of what it is to be human.



Maximilien Robespierre

It is for this reason that it can be said the ideals of the Enlightenment were inspired as much by the heart as by rationalism. Ideals and social change have always been driven by emotion, and yet, owing to the dominance of logic in Western culture, we do not recognise the validity of the emotions. This is highly dangerous, not least in the social sphere, because our blindness to our emotions allows them to dictate reason without our being aware of their influence. This can be seen in the *Principles of Political Morality* (1794), written by Maximilien Robespierre, who established The Committee of Public Safety to serve the ideals of the Revolution:

‘If virtue is the spring of a popular government in times of peace, the spring of that government during a revolution is virtue combined with terror.’

The Reign of Terror followed, in which some 17,000 people were executed, many by guillotine. Ignoring the emotional life leads to a half-picture of what it is to be human, and the resultant blindness can lead to highly inhuman behaviour.

For all the destructiveness of the Terror that followed, Rousseau’s genius is that he pointed to the necessity of including the emotions in our understanding of human nature.

When Rousseau wrote ‘We suffer before we think; it is the common lot of humanity’, he pointed to the relationship of the emotions to thinking. It could be said that suffering is the cause of thinking. If we could live as innocent children we would not need to think. To approach the emotions, we have to approach them intuitively. It is for this reason that Rousseau can be regarded as an intuitive genius.

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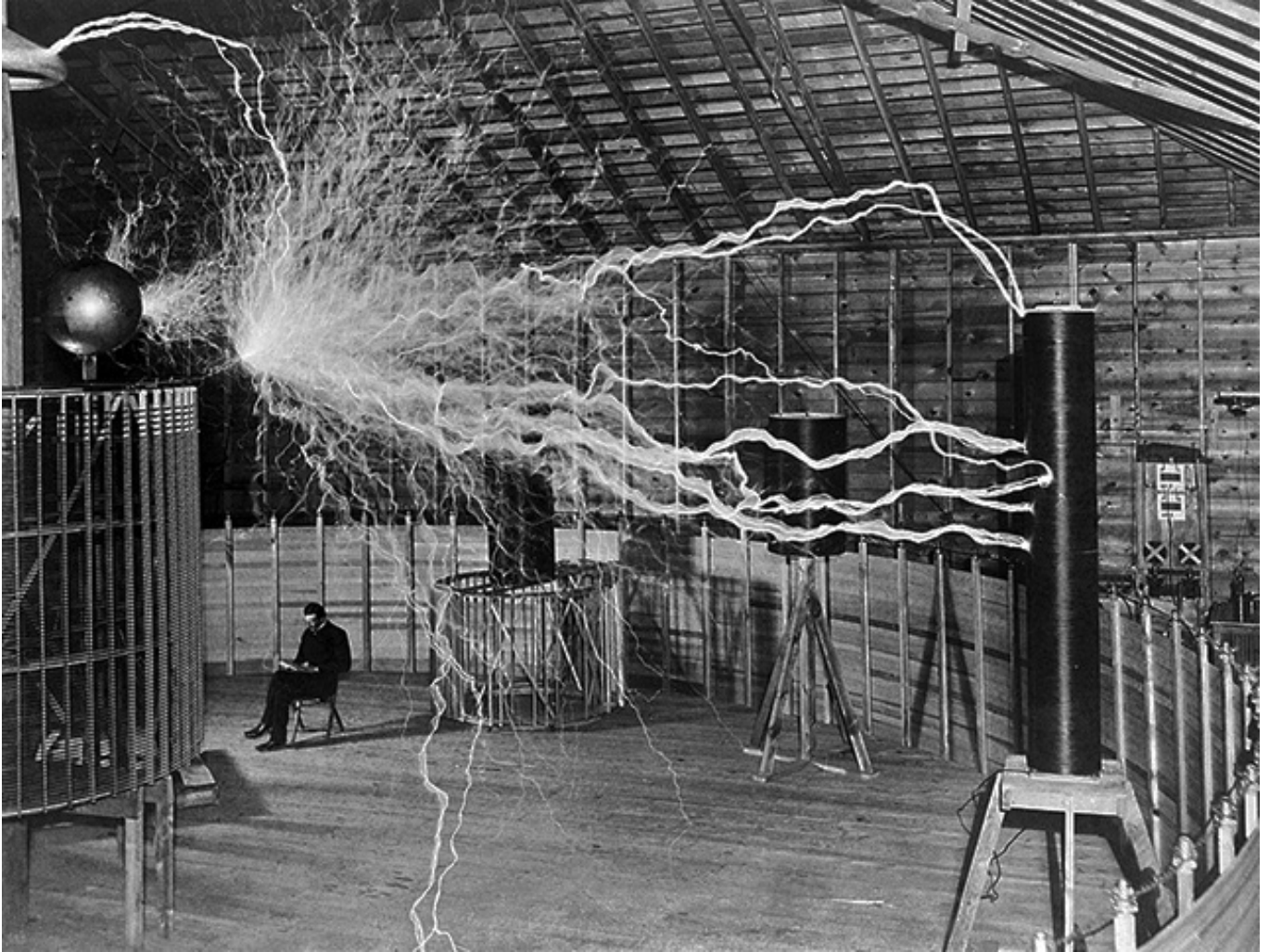


Rousseau as the inspirer of Revolutionary ideals

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Nikola Tesla

A mind driven by ideas



Nikola Tesla in Colorado Springs, 1899

'You would think me a dreamer and very far gone if I should tell you what I really hope for. But I can tell you that I look forward with absolute confidence to sending messages through the earth without any wires. I have also great hopes of transmitting electric force in the same way without waste. Concerning the transmission of messages through the earth I have no hesitation in predicting success.'

Nikola Tesla was an enigma. While the same could be said of any human being, he was uniquely gifted. He had a photographic memory, a clear grasp of mechanics and a visionary mind like no other since Leonardo. The list of his inventions include the alternating current system and motor, the neon light, the radio, x-rays, radar,

hydroelectric power, remote control, and the wireless transmission of energy. If he is not credited with all of the above discoveries it is because he was driven by ideas rather than by personal ambition. And he was indeed visionary. In his 1893 pamphlet announcing a World System of energy transmission, he stated:

'By its means, for instance, a telephone subscriber here may call up any other subscriber on the Globe. An inexpensive receiver, not bigger than a watch, will enable him to listen anywhere, on land or sea, to a speech delivered, or music played in some other place, however distant.'

Tesla was Serbian, born in 1856, in what is present day Croatia. He claimed to have inherited his photographic or 'eidetic' memory from his

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mother who, unable to read or write, could recite epic Serbian poems by heart. His father was an Eastern Orthodox priest who wanted the young Nikola to follow him into the Church. Nikola however had his heart set on engineering, and it was only after contracting cholera, from which he nearly died, that his father relented and promised him that, if he recovered, he would become an engineer. From that moment, life came back into his eyes.



Graz, Austria, 19th Century

He went on to attend the Polytechnic Institute in Graz to study electrical engineering. It was during his time there that he came across an early direct current electrical motor, which seemed to him very clumsy. He believed it would be possible to achieve a much better result through an alternating current motor and said so. No such motor existed, and his tutor, Professor Poeschl, devoted a whole lecture pointing out the absurdity of his suggestion. Tesla later recalled:

‘I could not demonstrate my belief at that time, but it came to me through what I might call instinct, for lack of a better name. But instinct is something which transcends knowledge. We undoubtedly have in our brains some finer fibres which enable us to perceive truths which we could not attain through logical deductions, and which it would be futile to attempt to achieve through any wilful effort of thinking.’

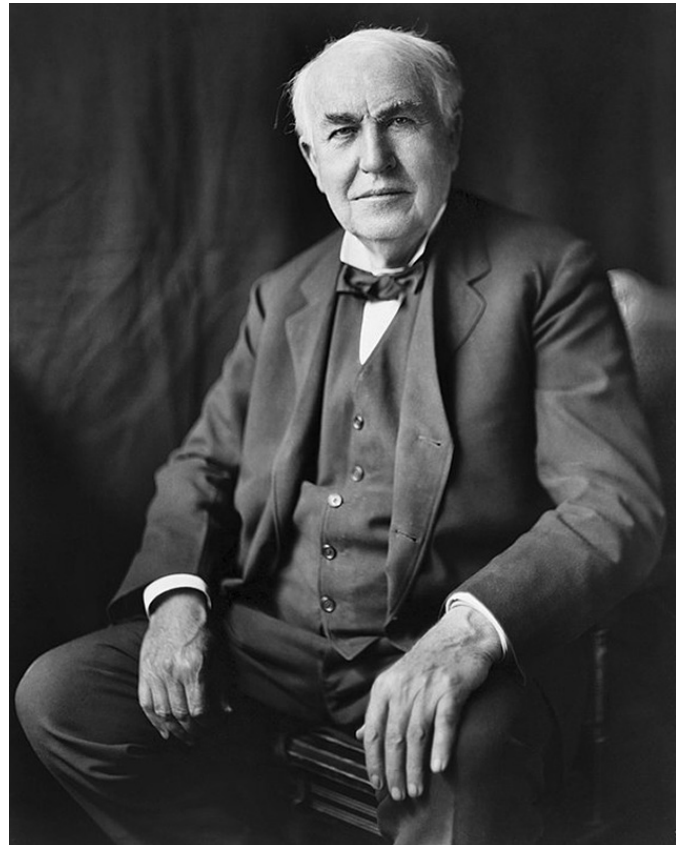
The above statement defined the whole of Tesla’s approach. He was not methodical and analytical, but inspired and spontaneous, to the point where

he was regarded by many as an eccentric.

His path from childhood prodigy to pre-eminent inventor was not without incident. After his graduation from the Polytechnic Institute he was employed as a telegraph officer, and then put in charge of a telephone exchange. His devotion to his work was detrimental to his health. It was in Budapest in 1882, while walking through the city park with a friend, that Tesla suddenly stopped. He saw an alternating current motor running, as a vision, there before him and he tried to describe it:

‘Don’t you see it?’ he called out to his friend. ‘See how smoothly it is running? Now I throw this switch - and I reverse it. See! It goes just as smoothly in the opposite direction. Watch! I stop it. I start it. There is no sparking. There is nothing on it to spark.’

He then gained employment at the leading electrical company in Europe, the Continental Edison Company in Paris, as a junior engineer. He tried to convince others of the viability of his motor, and after some persistence, he was recommended to go to America to work with Thomas Edison. He arrived in New York in 1884, penniless and with no more than a letter of introduction.

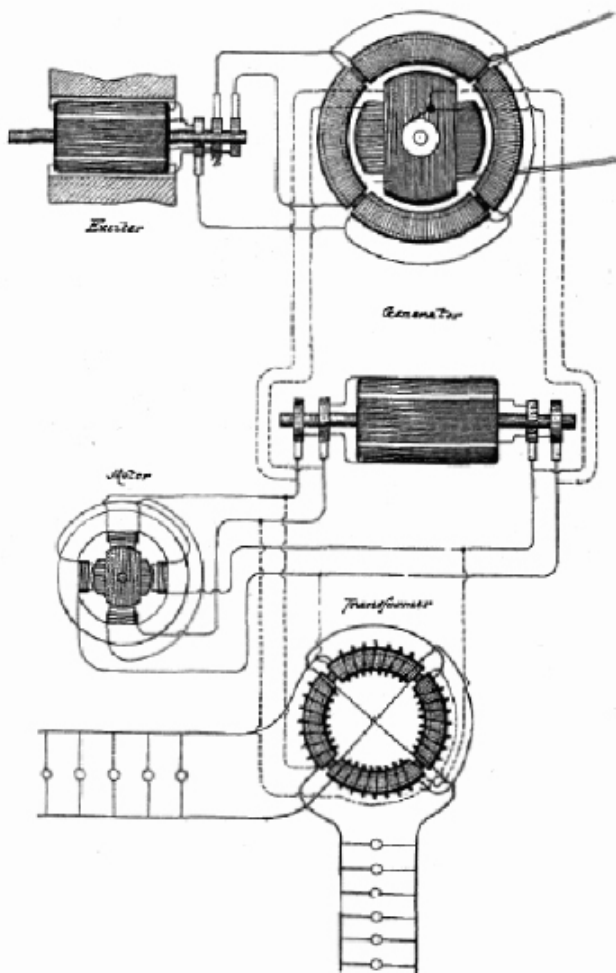


Thomas Edison, 1922

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Tesla then worked directly under Edison, and during this time he invented and designed two dozen dynamos for his employer. He tried to convince Edison of the viability of his alternating current motor, but for reasons of self-interest, Edison would have no part in it. The two parted company, and Tesla again found himself penniless.

Tesla was reduced to working as a day labourer. By a quirk of fate, at a time when he was digging ditches, he was introduced to A. K. Brown, an employee of the Western Union Telegraph Company. Brown was convinced by Tesla and his ideas, and the two together founded the Tesla Electric Company. So it was that in 1887 Tesla registered his alternating current motor with the Patent Office.



US Patent 390721

His next introduction was to George Westinghouse, a businessman who had invented an air break, and went on to found and run his own company to produce and market it. The meeting changed Tesla's fortunes. Westinghouse had no interest in defending Edison's direct

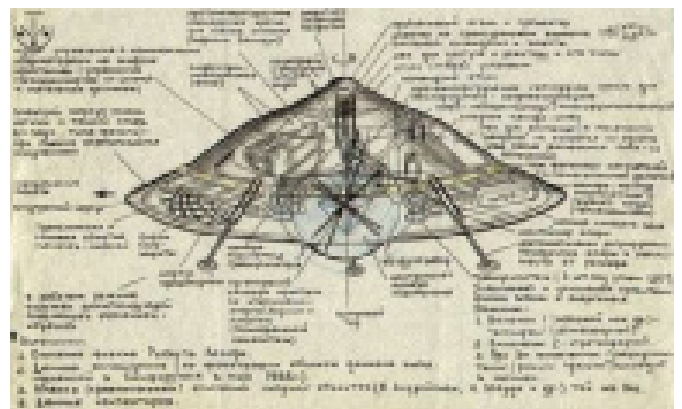
current system, and he paid Tesla a million dollars for his invention. The money freed Tesla from the need to supplement his inventive work with regular employment.

All of this is common history, but what is significant from the point of view of the intuitive mind, is Tesla's approach to invention. The success of his alternating current motor meant he was interviewed in the *American Magazine* in April, 1921, about the means by which his ideas came to him. His answer is instructive:

'Here, in brief, is my own method: After experiencing a desire to invent a particular thing, I may go on for months or years with the idea in the back of my head. Whenever I feel like it, I roam around in my imagination and think about the problem without any deliberate concentration. This is a period of incubation.

'Then follows a period of direct effort. I choose carefully the possible solutions of the problem. I am considering, and gradually centre my mind on a narrowed field of investigation. Now, when I am deliberately thinking of the problem in its specific features, I may begin to feel that I am going to get the solution. And the wonderful thing is, that if I do feel this way, then I know I have really solved the problem and shall get what I am after.'

Tesla's whole approach was intuitive. This can be contrasted with the approach of Thomas Edison, who is on record as saying 'Genius is one percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration.' With respect to Edison's trial and error approach to invention, that would be true. While there is little doubt that Tesla was equally hard-working - his health suffered throughout his life as a consequence - his own inventions were born wholly of inspiration and imagination.



Tesla Flying Machine

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This approach meant he was able to imagine things which did not yet exist and, at least at the time, seemed to be born of the mind of an idle dreamer. And yet Tesla was much more than a dreamer, and a list of his working patents testifies to it. Of his more outlandish ideas, he invented an earthquake machine, small enough to fit in his pocket. He also invented a deathray, and submitted it to the Patent Office. Furthermore he suggested it would be possible to light up the whole earth like a neon light by projecting an electronic pulse into the stratosphere. And finally, he invented the wireless transmission of energy, and undertook the building of a tower at Wardencllyffe in Long Island to project electricity across the Atlantic.



Tesla's Tower in Wardencllyffe, Long Island, 1904

Tesla was so much a man driven by his ideas that he found it difficult to attend to the practicalities of life, such as looking after his health and paying his hotel bills. His finances were so poor at one point that, to avoid embarrassment by association, George Westinghouse had to intervene, and provided him with a lifelong stipend, sufficient to pay his bills and give him money to live on.

Then in January 1943, at the age of 86, Tesla was found dead in his room at the Hotel New Yorker. In the days following, FBI agents entered his room and removed all his equipment and papers. There is some speculation about the motives for

their involvement, and some hold the view that they were concerned that some of Tesla's more outlandish inventions - the death ray, for example - might actually have been practicable. Whatever the truth of this, for many years after his death, Tesla was virtually unknown.

If Rousseau's thinking was driven by the heart, Tesla's thinking was driven by the head. Just as a purely heart-centred thinking can produce a fiery and ungoverned result, so to a purely intellectual approach can produce a cold and unhuman one.

It is highly probable that, given Tesla's genius, some of his more outlandish ideas - such as lighting up the whole earth like a neon light - might actually be possible. Whether this would serve humanity or not depends on our view of what it is to be human, and that would have to come from an outlook quite beyond electrical mechanics.

Nonetheless, Tesla was an intuitive genius. He was gifted with inspired ideas throughout his life, and could see in his visions what others could not even begin to imagine. In the same interview in the *American Magazine*, he stated:

'During my boyhood I had suffered from a peculiar affliction due to the appearance of images, which were often accompanied by strong flashes of light. When a word was spoken, the image of the object designated would present itself so vividly to my vision that I could not tell whether what I saw was real or not...'



Tesla and wireless lamp, c. 1901

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P. D. Ouspensky

A modern-day Buddha



Ouspensky in Encombe, Kent

‘It is the year 1906 or 1907. The editorial office of the Moscow daily paper *The Morning*. I have just received the foreign papers, and I have to write an article on the forthcoming Hague Conference. French, German, English, Italian papers. Phrases, phrases, sympathetic, critical, ironical, blatant, pompous, lying and, worst of all, utterly automatic, phrases which have been used a thousand times and will be used again on entirely different, perhaps contradictory, occasions. I have to make a survey of all these words and opinions, pretending to take them seriously, and then, just as seriously, to write something on my own account. But what can I say? It is all so tedious.’

Peter Demianovich Ouspensky was born in Moscow on 5th March, 1878. His mother was an artist, and his father, an officer in the Russian Survey Service, had a keen interest in mathematics. Ouspensky seems to have been mischievous as a youth, and it is recorded that he was expelled from school for painting graffiti on a wall. He went on to study at Moscow University, where he attended as a ‘free listener’, which meant he could attend but had no right to pass exams. After finishing his education he became a journalist, and then worked his way up to the editorial offices of *The Morning*.

Beyond a good intellect and an ability to write, there is nothing to mark Ouspensky out in his early years. By the time he was 28 however, he had developed an interest in Theosophy and in higher mathematics. These twin interests led him to publish his first book, *The Fourth Dimension*, in

1909. The book dealt with the nature of time, and drew on the works of the British mathematician Charles Hinton (1853 – 1907), as well as his own interest in Theosophy.



Russian Edition of Ouspensky’s Fourth Dimension

He followed this three years later with *Tertium Organum* (1912). The title, meaning ‘the third canon of thought’, was a reference to the two earlier canons of thought, Aristotle’s *Organon* and Francis Bacon’s *Novum Organon*, and indicated the seriousness of the undertaking. *Tertium Organum* provides a detailed - almost laborious - analysis of the nature of time and space, as well as our relationship to them. As with *The Fourth Dimension*, Ouspensky drew on his twin interests in higher mathematics and esotericism to make the point that the world we know and see is but a small part of a greater whole, which is largely hidden from us. He termed this approach ‘higher logic’:

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'Higher logic existed before deductive and inductive logic was ever formulated. Higher logic may be called intuitive logic, the logic of infinity, the logic of ecstasy.'

His interest in esotericism, or hidden knowledge, led him to travel widely, to England, France, Italy, Egypt, Turkey, Sri Lanka and India, in pursuit of it. He intended to travel further, to Burma, Japan and America, but found his plans were interrupted by the First World War. Then on returning to Russia in 1915, he came across a small group of people gathered around the enigmatic teacher George Gurdjieff (1866 – 1949).



Gurdjieff, c. 1925

Gurdjieff himself had travelled much in search of the same hidden knowledge. He had then returned to Moscow with what Ouspensky described as an esoteric system 'which had been entrusted to him by others'. This teaching, later known as 'The System', was largely unknown to the West at the time. Ouspensky records that he probably got it from a Sufi school in Kashgar in Chinese Turkestan, but its exact source is unknown.

Ouspensky worked with Gurdjieff from 1915 until 1918, at which point he parted company with him. He wrote that he had begun to feel he had ceased to understand Gurdjieff, or that Gurdjieff's views had changed. So it was that Ouspensky arrived in London, in 1921, and began to establish himself as a teacher in his own right.

While many regard Ouspensky as no more than a disciple of Gurdjieff, much of what is in *Tertium Organum* in 1912, and in *A New Model*

of the Universe, which he described as 'begun and practically completed before 1914', had been written before meeting Gurdjieff in 1915. It follows that it is from these two books that we can discern what was uniquely Ouspensky's.

He subtitled *A New Model of the Universe*, 'Principles of the psychological method in its application to problems of science, religion, and art.' What Ouspensky referred to as the 'Psychological Method' therefore did not come from Gurdjieff. He initially referred to it in *Tertium Organum*:

'In order to obtain at least some kind of an answer to the questions which torment us we must turn in quite another direction - to the psychological method of study of man and humanity.'

A fuller definition of the psychological method had to wait until *A New Model of the Universe*:

'The most ordinary mind, let us call it the logical mind, is sufficient for all the simple problems of life.

'But a logical mind which knows its limitedness and is strong enough to withstand the temptation to venture into problems beyond its powers and capacities becomes a 'psychological mind'. The method used by this mind, that is, the psychological method, is first of all a method of distinguishing between different levels of thinking and of realising the fact that perceptions change according to the powers and properties of the perceiving apparatus.'

It follows that the application of the psychological method results in the type of thinking which leads to insight. The aim of the psychological method is therefore to lead from the limitations of logical thinking into intuitive thinking. Chapter Five of *A New Model of the Universe*, *The Symbolism of the Tarot*, for example, in which Ouspensky depicts each of the cards of the Higher Arcana symbolically in order to evoke, rather than to explain the meaning, is the very expression of intuitive thinking.

Ouspensky conducted study groups in London and New York, which were attended by, amongst others, T. S. Eliot, Aldous Huxley and Kenneth Walker. A record of answers to questions put to him were compiled in the book *The Fourth Way* (1947). Owing to his association with Gurdjieff - a

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full account can be found in the book *In Search of the Miraculous* (1949) - much of what Ouspensky taught is regarded as merely an interpretation of Gurdjieff's teaching, and yet from the record of answers, it is clear that Ouspensky was speaking first hand.

It is recorded that, in his later years, Ouspensky abandoned the System. When asked by Kenneth Walker whether he had done so, he answered 'There is no System'.

This was confusing for those present, who may not have understood that Ouspensky was employing the psychological method. The logical method expresses everything in terms of opposites - yes or no - but the psychological method is intended to provoke insight. An example of this may be found in the question put to Bodhidharma (c. 5th - 6th Century), the founder of Zen, by his successor Huike. 'I seek the Dharma,' he asked. To which Bodhidharma answered, 'I have nothing to teach you. I have nothing to say.' Zen is highly intuitive, which is why it appears illogical to those who do not understand its method.



Depiction of Huike with Bodhidharma

The whole of Ouspensky's teaching was about inner transformation through very strict practices intended to facilitate a change of perception from the limitations of the ordinary mind. Such a change cannot be manufactured, not least because it depends on factors we presently cannot see. Once, when asked if the object of

his teaching was to produce 'superman', he answered 'This is not a superman farm!'

Ouspensky played the role of the intellectual, and yet he thought little of the intellect as the means to arrive at intuitive insight. The 'miraculous' Ouspensky sought was not any crude breaking of the laws of nature or any hallucinatory magic, but of the arrival of new knowledge by means of insight. This is not unlike the Satori, or 'sudden enlightenment', of Zen Buddhism. In Buddhist teachings it is made clear this cannot be manufactured, and that the whole of Buddhist teaching is merely a preparation for it. In the terminology of the Fourth Way, this is referred to as 'higher emotional centre'. As Ouspensky put it:

'When you find yourself in a state approaching higher emotional centre, you will be astounded how much you can understand at once - and then you come back to your normal state and you forget it all.'

Ouspensky's genius was not fully recognised in his lifetime. Those who came closest often did so by inference rather than directly. The writer Rom Landau (1899 - 1974) attended Ouspensky's study groups in Kensington, London, and recorded his impressions in his book *God is my Adventure* (1935). Landau writes that Ouspensky entered the room and sat before the assembled group:

'One of the speaker's first sentences was: 'None of you here is awake. What you all do is sleep.' After he had made this remark he stopped abruptly, as though withdrawing from the world of words into his own more comfortable world. His appearance suddenly suggested to me some modern version of Buddha.'

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