

PART III. ESSAYS ON CONSCIOUSNESS, AND
ITS RELATION TO MAN'S FUNCTIONS.

III/I.

Man has a physical body. Within his physical body is life. Within the living body are his various functions - his ability to think, to feel, to make skilled movements and so on - and within the living and functioning body of man is consciousness.

Consciousness is quite distinct from functions - it works on a different level, exists in a different place. Functions each have their separate centres within us, but the place where consciousness dwells is the kingdom of heaven. And the kingdom of heaven is higher than all our functions - it stands above them and influences all their actions.

Consciousness in its origin is undivided. It comes from the divine will within us. But when it reaches the kingdom of heaven there are three different ways in which it manifests. The first is in the feeling of 'I' - of a presence within us that is always there, that cannot be lost or destroyed. The second is ⁱⁿ happiness, ecstasy, bliss - for deep within us everything is happiness, everything is bliss. And the third is in knowledge - the direct experience of knowing - the reflection within us of consciousness.

These three elements act together in various ways. But when the middle element, when happiness predominates, there is unity in the kingdom of heaven. When there is unity in the kingdom of heaven our functions work in unity also. When our functions work in unity, the life within us is well regulated. And when the ^{life} within us is well regulated our bodies are full of well being. In this way consciousness penetrates deeper and deeper within us - we are brought under the influence of the kingdom of heaven more and more.

III/II.

The first of these three elements - the 'I' or the will within us - is by its nature active. It lies behind all that we do - is the driving force behind our activity. The third element - the knowing or reflecting part - is by its nature passive. Like a mirror it reflects what we are - it experiences whatever falls upon it. But the middle element - the happiness within us - is neither active nor passive. By its nature it is different from the other two elements - it is able to fuse them together. Like a flux which causes two metals to join, it is able to make them unite.

When the first element manifests there is action. When the third element manifests there is awareness. But only when the middle element joins them together is there simultaneous awareness with action. It is possible through our own efforts to be aware to some extent of our actions, but this is not the same. We are not with our actions - we are aware of them after they happen. When awareness is fused with action it is different. We are, and therefore we do. There is not any question of struggle or effort.

Simultaneous awareness with action is bliss. That is where the difference lies. Everything we do is enjoyed to the full - nothing is done without enjoyment. This enjoyment of what we are doing arises from the fusion of these three elements within us - it arises from a state of unity in the kingdom of heaven. That is why we call this the "Way of Happiness". For the nearer we get to right action, the greater our happiness becomes.

III/III.

If right action arises from a state of unity in the kingdom of heaven, and this state of unity arises from the presence within us of happiness or bliss, how can this happiness be manufactured, and how can its store be increased?

There are two ways which lead to inner happiness - two ways in which its store can be increased. The first way is passive, and comes through meditation, the second way is active, and arises from ^{right} action. These two ways must both go on together - one cannot work without the other.

For when, twice a day, we are passive - when our nature is quiet and passive during meditation, then if we can find our way to the 'I' within us, happiness and bliss will be the result. And afterwards, during our daily work, when we are active, action will be fused with awareness, and once again happiness and bliss will be the result.

So once we have collected happiness within us, happiness will increase more and more. And then, at a time when we least expect it - at a time when we are neither active nor passive, a flash of understanding will come to us, and we shall see truth, within ourselves. For this is the third way in which these three elements can fuse together in the kingdom of heaven.

III/IV.

These three elements in the kingdom of heaven exert their influence in turn upon the world of functions below them, and in doing so they become translated into movements of various kinds - inner and outer movements, of our thoughts, our feelings and our actions, and movements of the instinctive mechanisms within us. All the enormous variety of these different movements, if they could be taken together, would add up to the total expression - the outer expression - of what we are.

But movements of themselves will generate movement. And through the very impetus of their own movement, three further combinations of these elements come into being. As they are not under the direct influence of the kingdom of heaven - as they originate of themselves on this lower level - the meaning of these further three combinations is essentially different.

In this way six different combinations occur in all - three from above, from the world of consciousness, and three from the level of functions themselves. By a simple mathematical rule no further combinations are possible. Afterwards, actions repeat again and again, come under more and more laws, manifest in fields of ever increasing density. But never, beyond these six, are actions essentially different. Strange as it may seem, there are only six different things a man can do.

III/V.

What is the real difference between our actions?
How do actions originate, and how do they come into being?

The impulse behind all action comes from the divine will within us. When this impulse reaches the kingdom of heaven the form of actions is conceived. But only on the level of functions do actions come into being; and even then many stages may pass before each action occurs. In the end actions may even run contrary to the impulse from which they started.

Like an artist who paints a picture - first there is the impulse, the desire. Then at a certain point the work is conceived in his mind. Only afterwards does he take up his brush and begin, and then gradually the whole painting unfolds.

The kingdom of heaven is like the artist's conception - it is above the level where actions begin. Everything there is whole and perfect, for everything comes from the one will. Only when actions begin do separate wills arise. In the kingdom of heaven also, everything that exists is positive - only on lower levels do negative actions occur. And lastly, in the kingdom of heaven, everything that is done is conscious - only on lower levels do mechanical actions begin. And only when mechanical actions begin can evil come into being.

Nothing in its origin is evil, for the origin of all things comes from above. In the kingdom of heaven there is no evil, for everything there is conscious. But on the level of our functions evil for the first time arises. And only through the growth of unity within us can evil be avoided, for when the influence of the kingdom of heaven circulates within us evil is unable to manifest.

When we consider the manifestations of these six combinations on the level below man's functions - the level of his living body, with its breathing, its heartbeat, its circulation, and the endocrine systems which control it - we find ourselves in a totally different world. Instead of nerve impulses we find biochemical substances. Instead of the immediate response of sensations and feelings we find moods, physical and emotional states, changes of temperament and so on. It is a world which moves at a very much slower speed - a world of matter, no longer a world of energy.

We can imagine, and we shall not be far from the truth, that each of these six combinations corresponds, on this lower level, to an actual physical substance - a substance secreted by the endocrine glands and circulated in the bloodstream. These substances each have their own effect - an effect which lasts, not for a matter of seconds, but perhaps for several hours. The effect may be one of stimulation, or it may be one of depression. It may lead to a state of relaxation, or to one of tension or irritation. Each substance is in fact the counterpart, in a different medium and on a different scale, to one of the six combinations on the level above, and each is directly affected by what happens on this level, and in its turn affects it also.

In the ordinary way we have no control whatsoever of the quantity or distribution of these substances within us, and sometimes their effects are devastating. But if we can experience the unity and happiness that exists in the kingdom of heaven for long enough, and are able to return to it often enough, then an actual substance will be produced on this lower level, and will begin to circulate in the bloodstream. This substance will bring the action of the endocrine glands into greater harmony, and will ensure that they work together as one whole. If in time a sufficient quantity of it is produced, it will mean that the influence of the kingdom of heaven becomes continuous in our lives.

So the interplay of different elements in the worlds above results, on this lower level, in the production of living substances. And as they multiply these substances increase in density, come under more and more laws, grow more static and less intelligent.

But the influence of the kingdom of heaven still exists, even on these lower levels. And the substance it secretes in the bloodstream can transform many things. It will bring into action many parts of our nature which are not at present in use, and it will make our nature as a whole more harmonious, bringing unity to whatever part it reaches.

In this way the influence of the kingdom of heaven sooner or later reaches the last level within us - the level of the physical body itself. For just as the food we eat is carried in the bloodstream and supplies the cells of the body with the nourishment it needs, so these different substances will also get conveyed sooner or later to the cells of the body, and each will produce a different effect.

But instead of these effects being comparatively shortlived, (as they are in the case of substances circulating in the bloodstream), when the cells themselves are affected the results are very different. For it is our cells which determine the materiality of the living body. And if the influence of the kingdom of heaven reaches them in this way, sooner or later this materiality will be transformed. And when this happens the effect will be permanent - permanent within the life cycle of the body itself.