

February 1960

READING 4**ALL GROUPS****PART 1**

Many of you have forgotten the aim of this daily exercise on the Seven Principles – it is work on Being. There's far too much mental activity going on, and this is incompatible with *Attention*. The mechanical part of the Intellect is a *registering* apparatus; *it must never be allowed to think*. When you are attending, it will do its work well, absorbing selected impressions and storing them up to form the basis of memory. But when you are not attending, it will buzz with useless thoughts. All our problems and difficulties come from *them*.

(Pause: Try now to be *still* for two minutes; lift your mind above passing thoughts ('Passing Time')).

With a quiet mind, put to yourselves these questions:

1. 'Who am I?'
2. 'Am I just the materials of which my body is composed – a bit of meat – acted on by gravity – dissolving finally into the dust?' (First Principle)
3. 'Or am I merely a body (like the rest of organic life) eating and breathing until its time runs out?' (Second Principle)
4. 'Or am I just my physical constitution – a unique variation of a single species – Homo Sapiens, manifesting in dreams and involuntary actions, without any vestige of will?' (Third Principle)
4. 'If not, then *who am I?*'

(Pause for answers)

THE FOURTH PRINCIPLE

Look at your hand again. Now put the tip of the little finger against the thumb. This movement does not happen involuntarily. You have now performed a *Voluntary Action* and by so doing have brought a tiny part of the great cerebral hemispheres into use at *your* command. This is the beginning of *Principle Four*. In the whole of organic life such an action could only be done by man or (at the command of man) by an animal capable of obeying or imitating him.

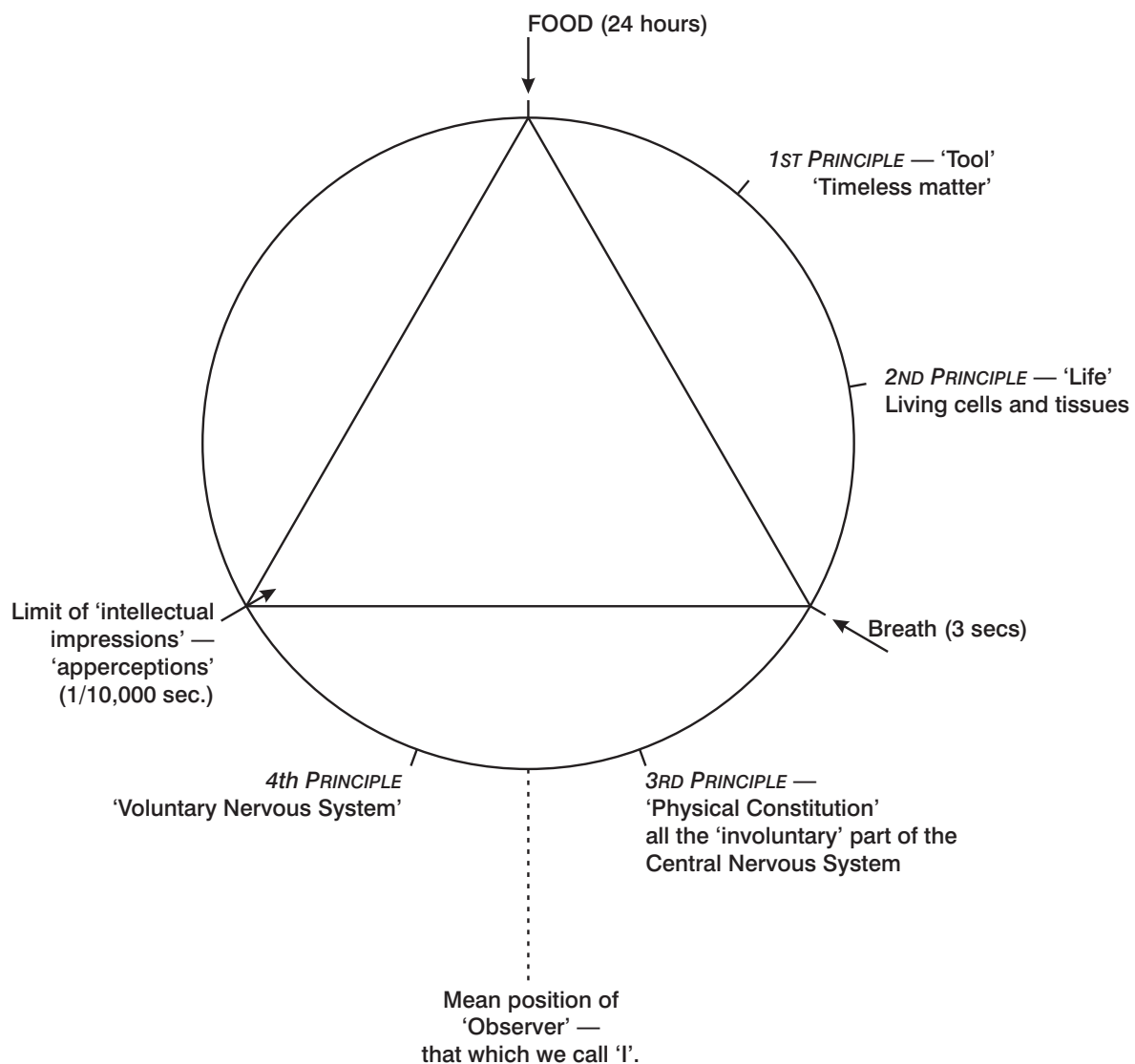
But how seldom do we, in fact, perform voluntary actions! Almost the only examples of the exercise of your will about which you can be sure, is when you *stop* some habitual or involuntary train of thought or action. We can go right through the day without any voluntary actions at all. At Miss M.'s Group on Tuesday, Miss R.'s observation was realistic: 'I noticed my hands in the act of knitting. Suddenly I realised the fingers were just carrying on. They seemed to be very busy – quite efficient. I felt they were detached from me. It seemed rather odd, rather frightening in a way, these things going on like that all the time.'

Schools begin their practical work on the individual pupil by training the will to stop unnecessary words or actions through the cultivation of attention to his *Aim*. And unnecessary words and actions stem from unnecessary thoughts. Learn either to have physical awareness only without thought or, if you want to think, think of unchanging principles and just leave the passing thoughts to still themselves. Don't fight them.

So this week try to collect and bring examples illustrating the difference between voluntary and involuntary action.

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PART 2.



The diagram shows the 'Principles' up to the point we have now reached. The Third Principle contains the inner mind regulating the body which 'lives in the dark' and manifests itself to us psychologically in sleep and dreams. The Fourth Principle is designed to connect a man with the outside world chiefly through the 'distance receptors' – sight, sound and smell. It is the basis of learning and of voluntary as contrasted with involuntary action, and through it man can learn to perform actions appropriate to his position at any moment in his external environment.

But Nature leaves this part undeveloped in man, providing him with the necessary apparatus but leaving him to rise above the animals by his own efforts. In the Outer Circle, this Fourth Principle is merely the resultant of desires. An ordinary man has no 'will' but is either governed by habit or imitation, or by a thousand conflicting desires. In the Sankhya it is called 'Kama Rupa' – 'the body of desires'.

From the very first, however, a School begins to train the will of a pupil by engraving on the cerebral hemispheres the rules and principles of the School until such time as he develops his own 'centre of gravity' and can obey the Will of 'Permanent I'. For only that would be the final answer to the question with which we began this evening – 'Who am I?' All the rest is '*not* I'.

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So in our question 'Who am I' we stand with Ibsen and laugh at our usual selves like Peer Gynt: (Act V, Scene V)

Peer Gynt: Here lies Peer Gynt, a decent chap,
Who was Emperor of all the Beasts?
Emperor? (laughs to himself)
You absurd old humbug!
You're not an emperor, you're an onion!
Now, my dear Peer, I'm going to peel you,
However little you may enjoy it.

(Takes an onion and peels it, layer by layer.)

There's the untidy outer husk;
That's the shipwrecked man on the wreck of the boat;
Next layer's the Passenger, thin and skinny –
Still smacking of Peer Gynt a little.
Next we come to the gold-digger self;
The pith of it's gone – some one's seen to that.
This layer with a hardened edge
Is the fur-hunter of Hudson Bay.
The next one's like a crown. No, thank you!
We'll throw it away without further question.
Here's the Antiquarian, short and sturdy;
And here is the Prophet, fresh and juicy;
He stinks, as the saying goes, of lies
Enough to bring water to your eyes.
This layer, effeminately curled,
Is the man who lived a life of pleasure.
The next looks sickly. It's streaked with black.
Black may mean missionaries or negroes.

(Pulls off several layers together.)

There's a most surprising lot of layers!
Are we never coming to the kernel?

(Pulls all that is left to pieces.)

There isn't one! To the innermost bit
It's nothing but layers, smaller and smaller.
Nature's a joker!

(Throws the bits away from him.)

Deuce take all thinking!
If you begin that you may miss your footing.
Well, anyway, I don't run that risk
As long as I'm down on all fours here.

(Scratches the back of his head.)

Life's an uncommonly odd contraption;
It plays an underhand game with us;
If you try to catch hold of it it eludes you,
And you get what you didn't expect – or nothing.

(Goes closer to the hut, looks at it, and starts.)

That hut? In the forest... ! Eh? (Rubs his eyes)
I'm certain
I must have seen that hut before.
The reindeer horns there, over the door!
A mermaid carved on the end of the gable!
That's a lie! No mermaid – just logs and nails
And the bolt that should keep out plaguy thoughts!

(Solveig's voice is heard from the hut.)

Solveig: (singing)

Now all is ready for Pentecost.
Dear lad far away, are you coming near?
If your burden's heavy, then rest awhile;
I shall wait, because I promised you, dear.

(Peer Gynt rises to his feet, deathly pale and quiet.)

Peer Gynt: One who remembered – and one who forgot;
One who has kept what the other has lost.
Life's serious, not a foolish jest!
Ah, misery! *Here* my Empire lay! (Runs into the wood.)

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