

15 January 1962

## CONSCIOUSNESS

### SECTION 1

It is the opinion of those biologists who agree with Teilhard de Chardin that the great evolutionary step for mankind today is 'to break its way out by forcing some threshold of greater consciousness', and that the energy required for this step is 'Universal love'.

On a smaller scale we can define the aim of the members of this School as follows: '*To Be. To Be Conscious. To teach how to be Conscious.*' So first of all we ourselves need to have a clear conception of Consciousness and a simple way of expressing this conception based on actual experience. Such an expression is lacking in the world today, and no research could be more important than this.

The word 'consciousness' means by derivation, 'Knowing the whole Truth' or 'Knowing everything all at once'. While such a state would be 'absolute' or 'cosmic' consciousness, there are many degrees of 'relative' consciousness. In India we learnt that our ordinary consciousness day after day goes through three phases described thus:

Endless we turn through these three:

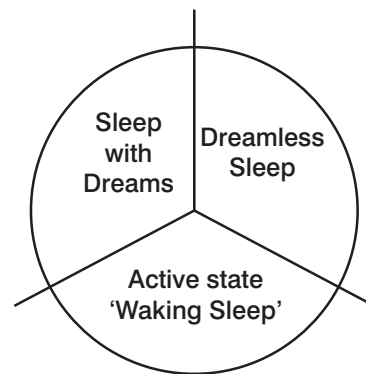


Figure 1

At rare moments in our lives we here have all experienced glimpses of something different, called 'Turiya' or 'Enlightenment'. When we begin to practise some valid method of acquiring consciousness, these glimpses become more frequent, deeper, more vivid. They are apt to occur at the junctional moments where one of the three phases passes into another – i.e. along one of the radial lines in Figure 1. Keep this word 'Enlightenment' simple – it means a manifestation of Consciousness like a shaft of light coming through a rift in the clouds or a chink in the curtain. It is unexpected; it tends to occur at moments of transition from sleep to waking and vice versa; its effects are different at different times and in different people – because it lights up whatever is present in the mind at the time.

**Discussion:** What characteristics of moments like that have you experienced? (e.g. ecstasy, timelessness, feeling your own existence, selflessness, understanding, vivid memory, etc.) When have you found such moments tend to occur, and what has apparently produced them? (N.B. Please take down what people say – it is of great value in this research.)

A well-known writer recently put the question to her friends: 'Have you ever experienced transcendent ecstasy?' It is significant that of the 63 people asked, 60 had clearly experienced some manifestation of it. This transcendent ecstasy, combined with feelings of reality and certainty, gives perhaps the chief characteristics of Turiya or Enlightenment.

## SECTION 2

Having now some idea of what is meant by a transient state of consciousness higher than those we ordinarily experience, we turn to a bigger scale, the System definition of four States of Consciousness possible for man:

1. Deep Sleep
2. Waking Sleep
3. Consciousness of the Self
4. Objective or Cosmic Consciousness

Strangely enough we know from hearsay far more about the fourth or highest state than about the third, for there are a great many valid accounts of it in the literature of mankind and some works of art produced in this state. Perhaps the most famous account is that in the sixth chapter of Isaiah, upon which was based Pushkin's celebrated poem 'The Prophet'. In this account the relation between Cosmic Consciousness and Consciousness of the Self is most vividly described.

So many mistakes however have been made about the third state of consciousness which must inevitably precede the highest state, that it is this which must be the chief object of the research of this School. To begin with, the old name 'self-consciousness' gives rise to the error of supposing that this is a selfish or egocentric state; when it is precisely the opposite. Until we find a better name let us call it Consciousness of the Self (meaning the 'Divine Self') or simply refer to it as the 'Third State'.

Another mistake which is nearly always made is to suppose that when a higher state of consciousness begins the lower stops. We commonly think that when we wake up in the morning, sleep stops. Not a bit of it. Sleep continues with all its dreams; but these become invisible like the stars in the daytime when the state of relative consciousness or 'day-time state' supervenes. But these dreams go on underneath and greatly influence all our thoughts and feelings, attitudes, speech and actions. It is the same also when appears that Turiya (that glimpse of enlightenment which heralds the third state). Through the rift in the clouds one sees oneself with the lower states of consciousness going on. It is the same also when the state of Cosmic Consciousness comes, for that too is added to what is present at other times.

Now, can our discussion lead us any nearer a valid description of this third state?

(Discussion)

## SECTION 3

After the discussion, it may be of interest to hear this abridged account of the conversation of a beginner with a Realized man, in this case the Head of a Buddhist monastery in Thailand:

After a little while... an old man entered, smiling and gracious, followed by four monks... and began to speak:

'I have been expecting you. How can I help you?'

'Can you explain to me the teaching of Buddhism?' I asked him.

'I will try. You will understand if you are ready. Many come asking the same question

but they interpret what they hear according to their own way of thinking, their own prejudices, and go away disappointed. Try to forget all you have learned and listen to my words as if they are the first you have heard. Does your way of life satisfy you?’

‘No.’

‘Why not?’

‘Because it is incomplete.’

‘How incomplete?’

‘Empty of meaning somehow, without purpose. ... How can one say what has value in this present world?’

‘Only one thing has value: Enlightenment... Knowledge by itself serves no purpose unless there is also experience of the truth.’

‘But how can one experience truth? What is truth?’

‘Truth is the experience of Who one is.’

‘But how can I discover who I am? I don’t understand.’

‘You have experienced everything many times in different lives: love, hate, desire, suffering. Each time, when you have begun to perceive a little of the truth, you have said, “Next time I will change; next time try to be free of the wheel of rebirth.” But in each life you forget what you learned in the previous one and you cling to the desire and suffering of the present. You still do not realise that it is attachment to what does not belong to the Self that generates desire and suffering and ties you to the wheel of rebirth. The desire for things of life; for wealth, pleasure, power, love, draws you back into life. Purify your desire: attach it to the search for the Real Self and you can be free. Enlightenment is possible and not as remote as imagined.’

‘But how can I purify desire?’

‘... To be perfectly, completely enlightened, there must be first of all perfect understanding... of suffering, the cause of suffering, the overcoming of suffering... This is the path of detachment and realization.’

‘But that surely means withdrawing from life?’

‘On the contrary, the path is to be followed in the midst of life. Grow like a tree, in the soil of earth.’

The conversation concluded as follows:

‘Finally you will have penetrated the meaning of the words: “Not by any travelling is the world’s end reached. Verily I declare to you that within this fathom-long body with its perceptions and its mind, lies the world, its arising and its ceasing and the way that leads to its cessation”.’

I tried to remember and sat in silence feeling the horizon of possibilities drawing near.

The abbot spoke again.

‘Come,’ he said, ‘I will take you into the Lord Buddha’s House.’

I followed him into the Hall of Meditation. ... A gilded statue of the Buddha towered at one end of it. In front of me was a large dais that filled most of the room, raised about a foot above the ground. Monks began to come into the hall and to arrange themselves in rows on the dais facing in the same direction as the Abbot... Then intoning some words from the Dhammapada, in the rhythm and tone of a chant, he drew me with him, repeating the words of the prayer, until the hall vibrated with the sound of fifty voices intoning in unison... I forgot to look at the golden image of the Buddha or at the beautiful, unemaciated bodies of the monks in their orange robes... I

closed my eyes and listened, and went deeper, deeper, deeper into the chanting. It dashed against my hearing in great waves, now with the roar of a breaker crumbling, now with the softness of water being withdrawn into the sea. 'This is prayer,' I thought, 'not the mechanical repetition of formulas but the great Affirmation of Being.' The words came into my mind without my searching for them. A hand on my shoulder brought me back to the outer world.

'The abbot wishes you to wait for him in the little room.'

... He came to us in ten minutes.

'That was an extraordinary experience. Is it always like that?'

'By no means, but it could *become* like that always!'

'Is Nirvana like that?'

'Nirvana is far beyond but this could lead you to it. You will stay?'

'Stay?,' I echoed.

'Yes, you are ready to go further. It will help you to stay here for a few months.'

'But I can't stay. I have to return to my work in England.'

'What work is more important than this?'

I felt the panic of indecision rise in me. I saw myself caught between duty and desire.

'I will come back.'

The abbot smiled at me and my companions, then he rose and left.

The room was empty. We went out of the temple and felt the same sensation as when there is suddenly noise after long silence, but we were all happy.'

(Ref: Abridged from *The One Work, a Journey Towards the Self* by Anne Gage, Vincent Stuart, 1961, pp. 27–33)

\*

## SECTION 4

Introduction to the following week's material.

### The Transformation of Energy

In the main there are four kinds of energy to be observed in the universe:

1. Mechanical energy
2. Vital energy
3. Psychic energy
4. Conscious energy

Though this is said to be true of every level and of every kind of entity in the world, we can only observe all these four in man, a species of organic life on the earth. We can observe mechanical energy in terms of laws governing gravity, density, temperature, surface tension and so on; we can observe vital energy in terms of biological laws governing different living species as well as our own bodies: we can *infer* 'intelligence', 'memory', 'adaptability' in other species beside our own, though we can only *observe* their manifestations of psychic energy at first hand in ourselves; and though we can infer the presence of conscious energy at times, a man can only *know* it in himself.

From one point of view, evolution in the universe can be thought of as three successive transformations; the transformation of mechanical into vital energy, of vital into psychic energy and of psychic into conscious energy. The biologists (referred to in Section 1) have described in these terms the evolution of man with the rest of organic life, and have come to the conclusion that we are now at the stage when the third of these transformations has to take place; so our main interest is in the process of creating conscious energy from the psychological processes of thought, sensation, feeling and so on. The System describes these processes very precisely and in detail, but for that description a special notation is required; words are too vague and too easily misunderstood. We want to study this notation this term. It is based on the two fundamental cosmic laws, the Law of Three Forces and the Law of Octaves.

But will you first discuss the four kinds of energy and, if possible, give examples of each kind and their inter-relationship.

The relation between energy and the density of matter is an intimate one; the System states that energy measured in density or frequency of vibrations is the inverse of density of matter. Try to think what this means and find examples, e.g., in the sequence ice, water and steam.

\* \* \*

