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## CONSCIOUSNESS AND FUNCTIONS

### PART 1

In order to know oneself one must study oneself according to a certain plan. The System provides such a plan. Study without plan leads nowhere or only to conflicting theories.

First one must realise that one is the possessor of a magnificent and intricate machine and one must study this machine 'so as to be able to tighten some screws or loosen others'; so as to get it to do what one wants; and so on.

When a man knows something about this machine he will see that his machine can work in different conditions of consciousness; he will discover that by the time he is grown-up he cannot directly *change* the machine; but that by learning to acquire some command over consciousness, the functions or output of the machine can be completely transformed.

At first we learn that while man has the possibility of living in four states of consciousness, as he is, he lives only in two – deep sleep at night, relative sleep by day. In these two states five chief functions reveal themselves:

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|-------------------------|---|--|
| 1. Instinctive function | } | belong to the lower storey of the house. |
| 2. Moving function      |   |  |
| 3. Sex function         |   |  |
| 4. Emotional function   |   | middle storey.                           |
| 5. Rational function    |   | top storey.                              |

Each function is controlled by its own nervous centre or 'mind'. We do not realise that they are quite independent, need different energy, work at different speeds. We do not realise that there are five independent beings in each of us, five independent minds. We always try to reduce everything to one mind, talk about *my* mind as if it were always the same, and doing the same thing. The one we call 'instinctive' responds to pleasant and unpleasant physical sensations and the mind, or centre in control, commands all the intricate physiology of the body, breathing, circulation of blood, the balance of the endocrine glands and so on. The one we call 'moving' or 'motor' is in charge of all those movements which, once learned, have become automatic. The one we call 'rational' is the one through which we have to learn everything. While the instinctive and moving minds use Hydrogen 24, the rational mind uses Hydrogen 48, and is therefore much cooler and slower. It is like the car you see going along with 'L plates' on, the learner has to work out everything intellectually – where's the clutch, where's the brake, where's the gear lever, which way? etc. Oh, the relief, when the moving mind has taken over, the L plates are off, and one races along exceeding the speed limit, with one arm round one's girl friend, and thinking about everything but driving! Alas, while the moving centre can make all ordinary calculations at high speed, it is totally inadequate when confronted with an entirely *new* situation and if there were no new and completely unexpected situations, accidents would probably not occur. So it is better to retain possession of one's reason even though one doesn't have to drive the car with it!

The one we call the 'emotional' mind is quite starved and anaemic. We always confuse emotion with excitement, the middle storey of the house with the lower storey. We say, 'I am an emotional person', whereas really one is just excitable. This is due to unchannelled sex energy, for the sex centre uses Hydrogen 12, the most powerful of all.

We see then that while the five minds or centres have their own appropriate energies and functions, they very rarely work as they should; they are always stealing from another centre, taking over its job and doing it very badly.

(Discussion)

So the first year or two in a School for change of Level of Being may well consist of self-study along these lines. In the course of self-study quite naturally the state of affairs improves. One has only to see the chaos, the waste of energy, the frustration which is due to the wrong work of the centres and to submit to a little discipline, and a state of comparative harmony will gradually supervene. This will result in the different minds using their appropriate energy, and in particular both the restless intellect will stop interfering, and the emotional mind will begin to work nearer its right speed, for it should work with Hydrogen 12.

This all belongs to the first step – the process of waking up – and leads naturally to more and longer experiences of Self-consciousness. Even if Self-consciousness comes for only half-an-hour, one begins to get glimpses of another centre whose existence isn't even suspected by ordinary people. This, the Higher Emotional mind or centre, is fully developed and functioning, but we do not hear it because of the noise and hubbub of the five other minds. In a state of quiet – emotion without excitement – we shall hear its voice – the 'Voice of the Silence'.

Command over the third state of consciousness brings command over the Higher Emotional Centre and we experience ecstasy and those emotions which cannot turn negative: joy, love, faith, awe, realization of the Truth about ourselves and our friends. After some time at this stage we begin to get flashes of Objective or Cosmic Consciousness, in which state we come in contact with the seventh or highest mind of all, called the Higher Intellectual Centre, or quite simply Higher Mind. Through this we can glimpse the operation of Cosmic laws, the world as it is, and each part in relation to the Whole.

To sum up, we can now see the different functions in relation to consciousness. In deep sleep at night practically only the instinctive mind is working enough just to carry on the vital functions. In the small hours of the morning life is often at its lowest ebb, and this is the time that most old or mortally ill people die. During the day – in the state of Relative Consciousness – five other minds can function, but chaotically. In the Third State of Consciousness – 'Full Self-consciousness' – all the five functions are subdued again to the very minimum, while the sixth, the Higher Emotional function, holds the field. In the Fourth State of Consciousness, the seventh or Higher Mind is in control with each function working selectively under the control of a single Will.

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## PART 2

We have said that individuals are different, and the difference depends to a considerable extent on different kinds of memory, but first let us ask ourselves what memory is?

We must find the reason why we cannot develop more quickly without a long period of school-work. We know that when we learn something we accumulate new material in our memory. But what is our memory? And what is new material?

To understand this we must learn to regard each centre as a separate and independent machine, consisting of a sensitive matter which, by its function, is similar to the matter from which gramophone records are made. All that happens to us, all that we see, all that we hear, all that we feel, all that we learn, is registered on these records. This means that all external and internal events leave certain impressions on the records. 'Impressions' is a very good word because they actually are impressions or imprints that are left. An impression can be deep, or it can be slight, or it can be simply a glancing impression that disappears very quickly and leaves no trace behind it. But whether deep or slight it is an impression, and these impressions on records are all that we have, all our possessions. Everything that we know, everything that we have learned, everything that we have experienced, is all there on our records.

Exactly in the same way our thought processes, calculations and speculations consist only of comparing our records with each other, listening to them again and again, trying to understand them by putting them together, and so on. We can think of nothing new, nothing that is not on our records. We can neither say nor do anything that does not correspond to something on the records. We cannot invent a new thought, just as we cannot invent a new animal, because all our ideas of animals are created from our observation of existing animals.

The impressions on our records are connected by associations. Associations connect impressions received simultaneously or in some way similar to one another.

Since memory depends on consciousness and we actually remember only the moments when we had flashes of consciousness, it is quite clear that different simultaneous impressions connected together will remain longer in the memory than unconnected impressions. In the flash of self-consciousness, or even near to it, all the impressions of the moment are connected and remain connected in the memory<sup>†</sup>. If we are more conscious at the moment of receiving an impression, we connect the new impression more definitely with similar old impressions and they remain connected in the memory. On the other hand, if we receive impressions in a state of sleep, we simply do not notice them and their traces disappear before they can be appreciated or associated.

(At one of his meetings Mr. Ouspensky was asked whether all the imprints on our records are formed in this life or whether we are born with some of them. He answered:)

The imprints in instinctive centre are born with us; they are already there, so are a very few things in the emotional centre. The rest come in this life; in moving and intellectual centres everything has to be learnt.

Now people differ by virtue of the fact that one or another centre predominates and, therefore, the impressions which enter tend to go on the records of the predominating centre and set the functions of that centre in motion. People in whom the instinctive or the moving centre

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<sup>†</sup>The same applies to impressions connected by their inner similarity.

predominates are called *Men No.1*, those in whom the emotional centre in the middle storey predominates are called *Men No.2*, and those in whom the rational function predominates are called *Men No.3*. Men No.1 reach their decisions either by physical reactions to pleasure or pain or through imitation of other people which is a strong feature of the moving centre. People No.2 go by their feelings; here it is necessary to be a little careful because there is considerable confusion between feelings, or emotion, and physical sensations. I have a dog who won't eat his dinner unless his feelings toward us humans are right! I know some people like that too! People No.3 have to have a theory. Everything happens to them of course as it does to everyone else, but they spend their spare time making up theories to explain why they did it. These people tend to be rather oblivious to their instincts though they may dislike 'what they fancy they feel'.

Some time you will hear of three Traditional Ways for extreme examples of these different categories – Man No.1, Man No.2 and Man No.3, but the *Fourth Way* is for those who are not extreme in any one respect but have something of each.

### PART 3. ESSENCE AND PERSONALITY

In addition to studying the details of the machinery, we must know something about ourselves in a big way. It must be understood first that, besides this physical body a man consists of two parts: *Essence and Personality*.

Essence in man is what is *his own*. Personality in man is what is 'not his own'. 'Not his own' means what has come from outside, what he has learned, or reflects, all traces of exterior impressions left in the memory and in the sensations, all words and movements that have been learned, all feelings created by imitation – all this is 'not his own', all this is personality.

From the point of view of ordinary psychology the division of man into personality and essence is hardly comprehensible. It is more exact to say that such a division does not exist in psychology at all.

A small child has no personality as yet. He is what he really is. He is essence. His desires, tastes, likes, dislikes, express his being such as it is.

But as soon as so-called 'education' begins personality begins to grow. Personality is created partly by the intentional influences of other people, that is, by 'education', and partly by involuntary imitation of them by the child itself. In the creation of personality a great part is also played by 'resistance' to people around him and by attempts to conceal from them something that is 'his own' or 'real'.

Essence is what man truly is; personality contains much that is false. But in proportion as personality grows, essence manifests itself more and rarely and more and more feebly and it very often happens that essence stops in its growth at a very early age and grows no further. It happens very often that the essence of a grown-up man, even that of a very intellectual and, in the accepted meaning of the word, highly 'educated' man, stops on the level of a child of five or six. This means that everything we see in this man is in reality 'not his own'. What is his own in man, that is, his essence, is usually only manifested in his instincts and in his simplest emotions. There are cases, however, when a man's essence grows in parallel with his personality. Such cases represent very rare exceptions especially in the circumstances of cultured life. Essence has more chances of development in men who live nearer to Nature in difficult conditions of constant struggle and danger.

But as a rule the personality of such people is very little developed. They have more of what is their own, but very little of what is 'not their own', that is to say, they lack education and instruction, they lack culture. Culture creates personality and is at the same time the product and the result of personality. We do not realise that the whole of our life, all we call civilisation, all we call science, philosophy, art, and politics, is created by people's personality, that is, by what is 'not their own' in them.

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Sometimes, though very seldom, and sometimes when it is least expected, essence proves fully grown and fully developed in a man, even in cases of undeveloped personality, and in this case essence unites together everything that is serious and real in a man.

But this happens very seldom. As a rule a man's essence is either primitive, savage, and childish, or else simply stupid. The development of essence depends on work on oneself.

A very important moment in the work on oneself is when a man begins to distinguish between his personality and his essence. A man's real I, his individuality, can grow only from his essence. It can be said that a man's individuality is his essence, grown up, mature. But in order to enable essence to grow up, it is first of all necessary to weaken the constant pressure of personality upon it, because the obstacles to the growth of essence are contained in personality.

If we take an average cultured man, we shall see that in the vast majority of cases his personality is the active element in him while his essence is the passive element. The inner growth of a man cannot begin so long as this order of things remains unchanged. Personality must become passive and essence must become active...

As has been said earlier, in the case of less cultured people essence is often more highly developed than it is in cultured man. It would seem that they ought to be nearer the possibility of growth, but in reality it is not so because their personality proves to be insufficiently developed. For inner growth, of work on oneself, a certain development of personality as well as a certain strength of essence are necessary... Without some store of knowledge, without a certain amount of material 'not his own', a man cannot begin to work on himself, he cannot begin to study himself, he cannot begin to struggle with his mechanical habits, simply because there will be no reason or motive for undertaking such work.

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A successful beginning of work on oneself requires the happy occurrence of an equal development of personality and essence. Such an occurrence will give the greatest assurance of success.

(Pause for discussion)

#### **PART 4. LAWS GOVERNING HUMAN LIFE**

Human life is governed chiefly by two laws – the first being the *Law of Cause and Effect*, which must first be seen as the inevitable sequence of events which follows *some action of one's own*. Our memories are short and we mostly do not relate the cause and its effects, so that when the effects come along we have often forgotten the action that caused them. By being kind to someone just for the sake of being kind we often set up a beneficial chain of events, and by not being unkind we can often avoid an adverse chain of events.



The other important law is the *Law of Chance* or *Law of Accident*. This means that another line of 'cause and effect', arising outside oneself, has crossed and deflected the first. Suppose I call at a friend's house and at the very moment when I ring his front door bell, a heavy tile drops on my head. Someone who knew me well might be able to calculate that at this moment I would be standing in that spot, but it would require a super builder-magician to calculate that this particular tile would be loose enough to fall and hit my head. In fact 'accident' by its very nature is unpredictable; and we live far more under the Law of Chance than we realise. All statistical laws are examples of the *Law of Probability* or of *Large Numbers* which for the individual operates as accident.

A man's body and his personality are chiefly under these two laws, 'Cause and Effect' and 'Accident'; but his Essence is under a third law – the *Law of Fate*. Since Essence is so completely dominated by personality in most people, Fate plays little part in their lives, determining their birth and death and only the main events. With the growth of Essence that follows right work on oneself in a School, Fate plays a greater and greater part in one's life and accident less and less.

'If essence is subject to the influence of fate, does it mean that compared with accident fate is always favourable to a man?' asked somebody present at an early meeting when this idea was first given.

'No, it does not mean that at all,' he was answered. 'Fate is better than accident only in the sense that it is possible to take it into account, it is possible to know it beforehand; it is possible to prepare for what is ahead. In regard to accident one can know nothing. But fate can be also unpleasant or difficult. In this event, however, there are means for isolating oneself from one's fate. The first step towards this consists in getting away from *general laws*. Just as there is individual accident, so there is general or collective accident. And in the same way as there is individual fate, there is a general or collective fate. Collective accident and collective fate are governed by *general laws*. If a man wishes to create individuality of his own he must first free himself from *general laws*. General laws are by no means obligatory for man; he can free himself from many of them if he begins to escape from imagination and identification and to distinguish the true from the false.'

(Discussion)

How does memory fit with this bigger aspect of man?

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