

## NOTES ON 'ATTITUDES'

... There is an influence of a different kind which works through a different triad from that of direct effort, which can and does produce results. This is *attitude*. When we begin to realise that, but for rare moments, we are always asleep and that we are machines controlled by external influences, we at the same time understand how it is that our best intentions are constantly frustrated and that our decisions to change our life are of no effect. It is then possible to explain that change does not come in the control or regulation of external actions, but in the control of *inner attitudes*.

By attitude towards some action or process is meant our way of looking at it, the importance which we attach to it, the extent to which we do or do not justify it, the way we think and feel about it, that is to say, not the way that we suppose we ought to think about it, but the way in which we actually do think and feel...

Change of attitude works by the triad O-C-N, and produces results quite different from those of effort and initiative, which go by the triad of C-O-N.

A wrong attitude can be seen in justification. We may, for example, decide to struggle against some habit, but at the same time continue to think that it is somehow, in some way natural and justified. If we do this our efforts will soon break down and we shall revert to our former ways: but if our *attitude* changes, we will feel about this habit that it is an enemy of our welfare and something mean and undesirable, with which we do not want to be connected...

We will find that the strength of inner processes is entirely conditioned by our attitude towards them. If all traces of justification and approval disappear, it can well happen that the process in question will simply cease to exist and never return again. Striking examples of this have often been recorded in connection with what is called religious conversion. Such violent changes, however, rarely give good or permanent results. The new attitude may, by the force of an emotional experience, really permeate all centres and all personalities, but more often the effect is localised and the old attitude persists in some hidden corner of the man's being and gradually resumes its force.

This brings out a very important principle. Change of attitude is only effective if it is complete. So long as there is a trace of lingering attachment to or justification of the process from which we wish to be free, that little weakness will ruin all our efforts.

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A most important application of the principle of right attitude is in relation to negative emotions. It is essentially through change of attitude that their power can be broken. In mechanical life, negative emotions are to a great extent excused, justified, or even applauded. Some, such as worry and despondency, are regarded as misfortunes for which the sufferer is to be pitied. Others, such as indignation, that is 'righteous indignation' are taken, especially by those who indulge in them, as a very proper attitude towards other people's misdoings.

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