

January 1964

READING 1

In order to continue with the new discoveries which were mentioned in November and December, it is best once more to go right back to the beginning and pretend we don't know anything. Then all we *do* know – all that proves true – will fit into a better shape.

So we start again with the first words of *Tertium Organum*:

The most difficult thing is to know what we do know, and what we do not know...
But what do we know?

We know that with the very first awakening of knowledge, man is confronted with two obvious facts: *The existence of the world in which he lives; and the existence of psychic life in himself.* Neither of these can he prove or disprove, but they are facts: they constitute reality for him... The sole obvious fact remains the antithesis of I and Not-I – our inner psychic life and the outer world.

Though we may not know them ourselves, yet we have some further facts on the highest authority about the relationship 'I and Not-I'. At 'street level' there is no steady 'I', so the pull of the outside world on the changing ego is all-powerful. As we ascend the Ladder the Truth becomes more and more powerful and illusion weaker, till at the highest point 'I and Not-I' become One.

We know also that before we can know the outside world as it really is we have to know ourselves very well, for all that we know of the outside world is that which is reflected in our own brains. Even though the newer instruments of science are probing the Universe, the interpretation of these facts still depends on the man himself; and then if his own mind is chaotic, if it is governed by chance, if he does not know the Laws which operate in his own organism he will regard the world as governed by chance also and will see nothing but chaos.

But in what sense is it necessary to know oneself? We will move on a step from *Tertium Organum* and quote from one of Mr. Ouspensky's Psychological Lectures given in London in the 1930s:

To know oneself – this was the first principle and the first demand of old psychological schools. We still remember these words, but have lost their meaning. We think that *to know ourselves* means to know our peculiarities, our desires, our tastes, our capacities and our intentions, when in reality it means to know ourselves as machines, that is, to know the *structure* of one's machine, its *parts*, functions of different parts, the conditions governing their work and so on. We realise in a general way that we cannot know any machine without studying it. We must remember this in relation to ourselves and must study our own machines *as* machines. The means of study is *self-observation*. There is no other way and no one can do this work for us. We must do it ourselves.

Now we are in a fresh and a better position after thirty years, for we now know that no one can know himSelf without 'the setting up of Attention' by certain particular techniques. And we now know very exactly indeed the mechanisms underlying the alerting of the Attention and the parts of the brain concerned. To those well acquainted with the nervous system this gives many possibilities; yet it obviously isn't essential, for certain people have throughout history attained full Knowledge of themSelves without it. Therefore it is unnecessary for the majority of us to start a study of neurology which might take a life-time.

But about *knowledge* there is one tip we used to be given, which is a great help just now; it is that we don't have to know everything equally.

We don't have to know the whole of London equally; we need to know pretty well the streets we go through daily, but we don't have to know all the houses even in those. We have to know our own street very well and our own house best of all. Indeed the more we know of our own house the better.

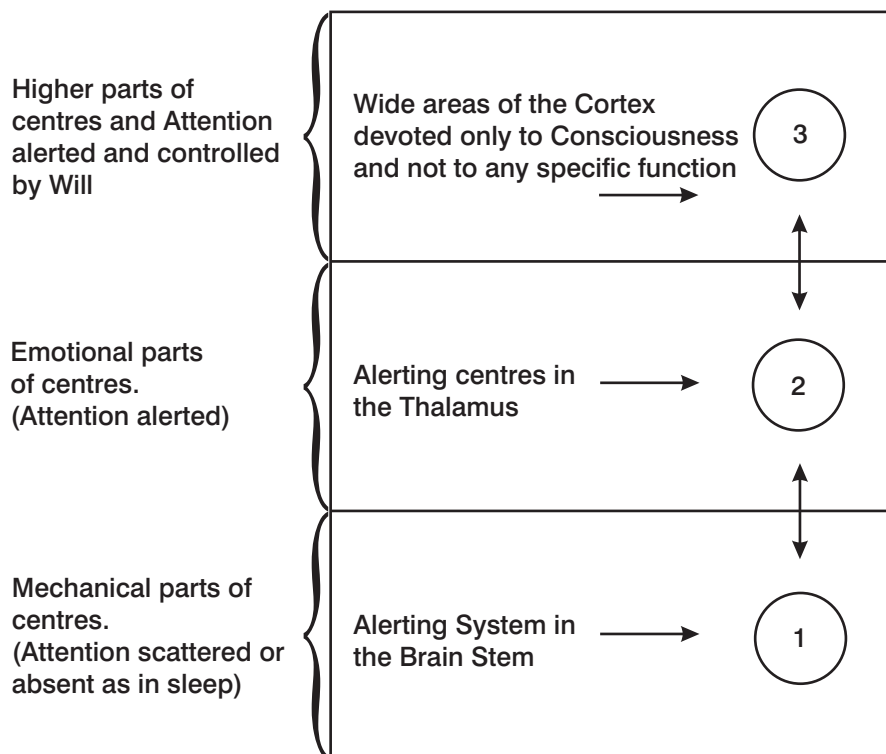
This is just one instance of the universal Principle of Relativity as applied to knowledge; and it was rather a pity that Einstein went off on exactly the opposite tack and applied his Special Theory of Relativity only to far away entities approaching the velocity of light!

So we have to know our own house – ourselves – better than anything else; but in this house we have to *know one room best of all*. The more we know about this one room, the better; and through knowledge of that we can come to all possible Knowledge of ourSelves and later of everything else. It is this particular knowledge that we shall centre on during the next months.

SUMMARY

It is important to think well then (and perhaps discuss) these three essentials:

1. To distinguish what each of us knows by direct experience from what is only from hearsay, and begin from there.
2. The necessity of Self-knowledge as a basis for all that is good in life, and
3. The Principle of Relativity of knowledge which makes it only necessary to know a certain part of oneself, but to know that very well indeed.



Those newer facts discovered by scientists in the last decade only give point to that especially practical part of the System about the three levels of Attention that we show nowadays in our diagram of the Three Storeyed House (Figure, opposite page).

We hope to go on in the next few weeks interpreting together the newer knowledge about how this 'alerting system' works. This should quite transform our old interpretation of the System, but is now easily understandable through the new techniques we have been using.

N.B. One lesson I have myself learnt in the last month is that in the pursuit of knowledge (as by studying books and original scientific papers), one will not see its *significance* if one is not oneself practising 'the setting-up of the Attention' every day with ever-increasing desire to achieve it, and never to be far away from it. To go for that always first, and then whatever else one wants will come naturally to one. So I want our meetings (in whatever form they take during the next few months) to be used as a stimulus *to each person to find his own way of setting up Attention* and to develop it in various circumstances. At meetings we talk about results, new understanding, new insight on particular subjects, because if you go on discussing Attention itself you don't practise it. So at the meetings we prove to each other what we have done by the results; and comparing notes we will act as a spur to each other to further development of this most delightful state. Everything depends upon asking ourselves the right questions. This Lord Adrian, the pioneer of the new discoveries, as you will be hearing, is continually reminding people.

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