

27 April 1964

READING 1

If you wish to continue to meet weekly in groups this Summer, then you need to be clear *why*, and what you want to do. School work – Conscious work – was defined as ‘Definite effort for definite purpose’, and ‘such a purpose should be useful to the School as a whole’. Now there are several lines along which your experiments and your discussions could be useful, and some people are more interested in, or equipped for, one line, and some for another. For instance, there are big ideas and there are psychological ideas; both repay more understanding; the study of both can be equally practical through the setting up of Attention. Maybe we can move from one scale to the other, pursuing whatever seems promising.

Though scientific progress is in many ways leading to a situation full of promise for this most important work (Self-realization), there are certain quite wrong ideas and points of view which die hard and continue to impede progress. These errors all come from wrong interpretation of the established facts due to defective and formatory thinking, to fixed attitudes, prejudices and obsessions. In order to see these errors and help to get rid of them, we have to be working steadily on Attention from day to day; we have to remember to observe many situations and combinations of people; we have to assemble the evidence; and we have to do some good thinking.

One such wrong idea is immediately at hand for this sort of research. It is contained in the following statement by the very best of our neurologists:

When we speak of consciousness we say we are conscious *of* something, which we may call the *content* of consciousness, and we know what we mean by this, whatever logical view of these statements the logicians may take. We are normally actually or potentially conscious of sights, sounds, touches, smells, etc., i.e. of sensations; of anger, fear, interest, excitement, etc., i.e. of feelings or moods; of memories and recognitions based on memories; of ideas and thinking; of images; of actions; of being sleepy and awakening from sleep. This list is not meant to be complete. In addition there are abnormal contents of consciousness such as disordered sensations, like pains and giddiness; disordered perceptions, such as illusions and hallucinations; disordered memories, and disordered ideational states, such as delusions..’

(from *Recent Advances in Neurology and Neuropsychiatry*,
Brain, 7th Edition, 1962, p. 24)

Now what is wrong with that? It is based on a wrong premise and it leads to much else that is wrong in the outlook of psychology today. One change could put that formulation right.

But can you find exactly *what* is wrong, can you formulate the right alternative, can you give us ‘the evidence’, and can you follow the implications? Meanwhile a letter has been written to the Shankaracharya putting this question to him, because incidentally it contains one of the chief differences between Eastern teachings and the Western point of view.

Discussion – arrange a week’s experiments designed to find out the truth in this matter, and be ready with the results next Monday.

In order to find out what is wrong, we need to be able to describe some notable change in Consciousness (comparable with waking from sleep) when it comes along. As you well know these changes are not under our control and they come as a complete surprise. Daily delight in

setting up the happy state of General Attention will bring or revive past experiences of them in the memory. Meanwhile there are plenty of descriptions in our anthology[†] (like the poem by Rupert Brooke, p.10). Here is part of another from Edna St.Vincent Millay (p.156):

I saw and heard, and knew at last
The How and Why of all things, past
And present, and forevermore...

And as I looked a quickening gust
Of wind blew up to me and thrust
Into my face a miracle
Of orchard-breath, and with the smell –
I know not how such things can be! –
I breathed my Soul back into me.

Ah! Up then from the ground sprang I
And hailed the earth with such a cry
As is not heard save from a man
Who has been dead, and lives again...

*

As regards the big ideas, it is said that February 1964 should go down in the history of physics as the time when a new fundamental law was established, governing the relationships between what are now known as strongly ‘interacting particles’. The key is given by a new mathematical theory known as ‘Unitary Symmetry’, which is being used not only to demonstrate the relationship between particles known to exist, but also to predict the existence of others as yet undiscovered. In particular, the now well-publicised particle known as ‘Omega-minus’ was discovered by this process of prediction, precisely as anticipated.

This really means that the conception of the Universe as the manifestation solely of chance, which was previously held by physicists, has gone by the board, and a fundamental principle of eight-fold symmetry has replaced it – though so far only in this particular field. It may prove in time to confirm the prophesy made by Mr. Ouspensky in 1930 that:

The laws of symmetry, when they are established and elaborated, will occupy a very important place in the new model of the Universe.

(New Model, 2nd Edition, p.452).

Indeed, Professor Matthews writing in the *New Scientist* makes a somewhat similar statement:

The confirmation of unitary symmetry in strong interactions will be a dramatic advance in our understanding of the laws of Nature. High energy physicists are walking around with a slightly hysterical look as though they are actually witnessing the apple landing on Newton’s head.

[†]An anthology of poetry compiled by members of the Society and available in the Library.

At present this theory needs high-powered mathematics to understand it, but our Maths Group will, we hope, present us from time to time with simplified explanations.

Meanwhile it is delightful to observe at this time of year the symmetry of living forms springing up so fast around us and regard them as examples of movement along the fourth dimension. (*New Model*, pp. 99–101)

And these recent discoveries bring us to the Realization that our own understanding of the Law of Octaves is still fragmentary. Yet this general law could lead us to the special laws – for instance, governing the interactions between human temperaments, and to many other things we desire to know.

We have also now the beginnings of a special chemistry of Mind according to the Law of Three Forces and the original formulation:

The cosmic properties of each substance are determined first by its place, and secondly by the force which is acting through it at the given moment.

For the substance needed for the setting up of Consciousness in a particular place in the brain or mind of man can be active, passive or neutralizing.

Any of these things can now be studied. You have plenty of choice.

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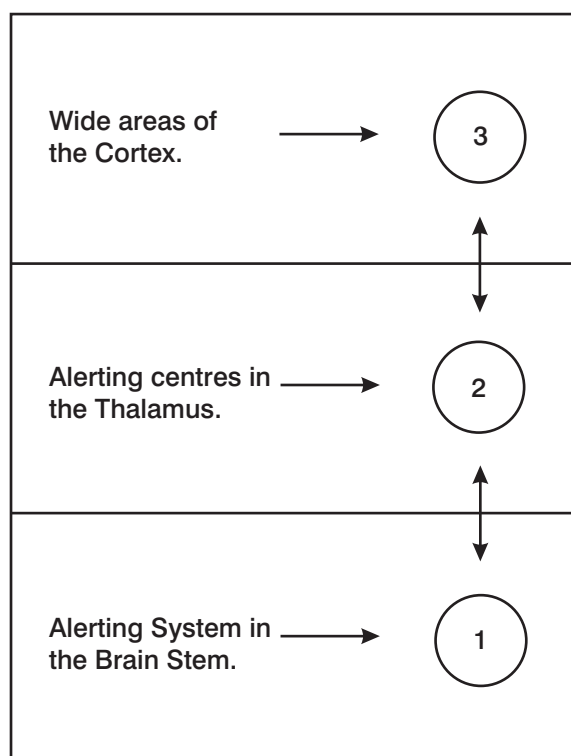


Figure 1

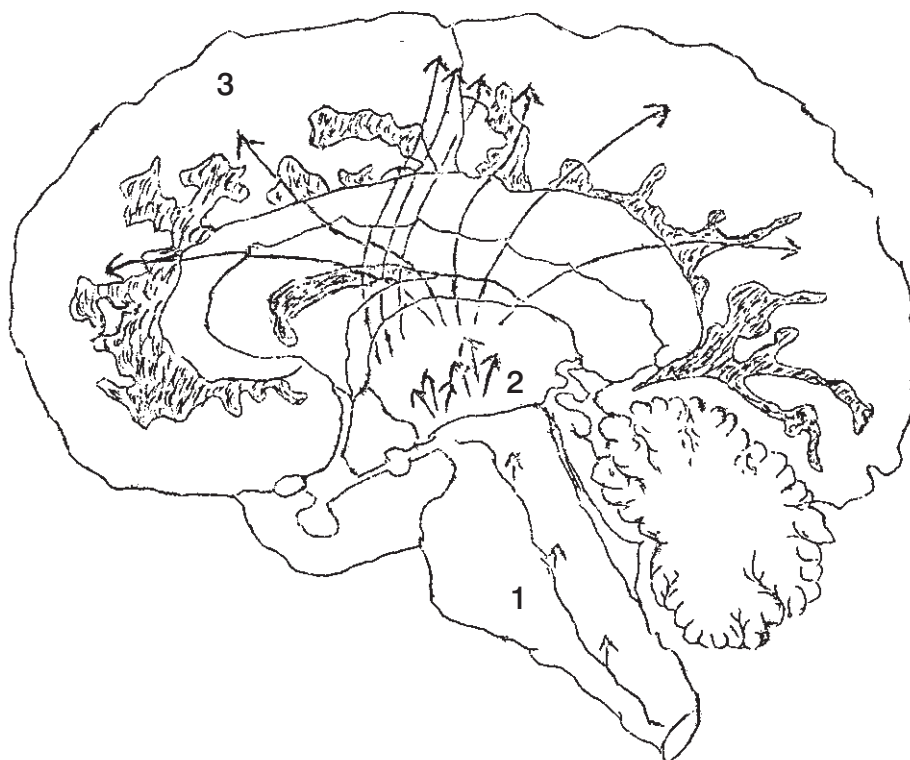


Figure 2

[**Note:** In the original volume these two diagrams were bound on a page inserted between 64/20 & 64/22. They seem, however, to refer more obviously to 64/26.]