

26 February 1968

READING 5

PART 1

It has become obvious to me that all our troubles arise at this stage because, although we know what we ought to do, we are not doing it thoroughly enough. Consequently, we sit as it were between two worlds, and do not get enough of the energy we want. The nearer we penetrate to the centre at certain times whether with the help of meetings, meditation, turning or movements, so much by contrast does the active world confuse us unless we take Self-realization still further. Fortunately this is easier than we sometimes think! We have to understand something more.

Turning to that 'Basic Forebrain diagram' once more, (overleaf) we must realise that, although the mechanism of the higher control of all the mental and bodily functions is contained there, yet it is the body which is provided with sensory nerves; so it is a sort of sounding board where we feel what is going on in its appropriate place. Also a two-way process is required. Not only have we to penetrate to the centre at certain times to find ourSelves, but the Ultimate Observer has to come out and, assuming His rightful authority, take His seat on the throne between the two eyes. Then all our troubles melt away.

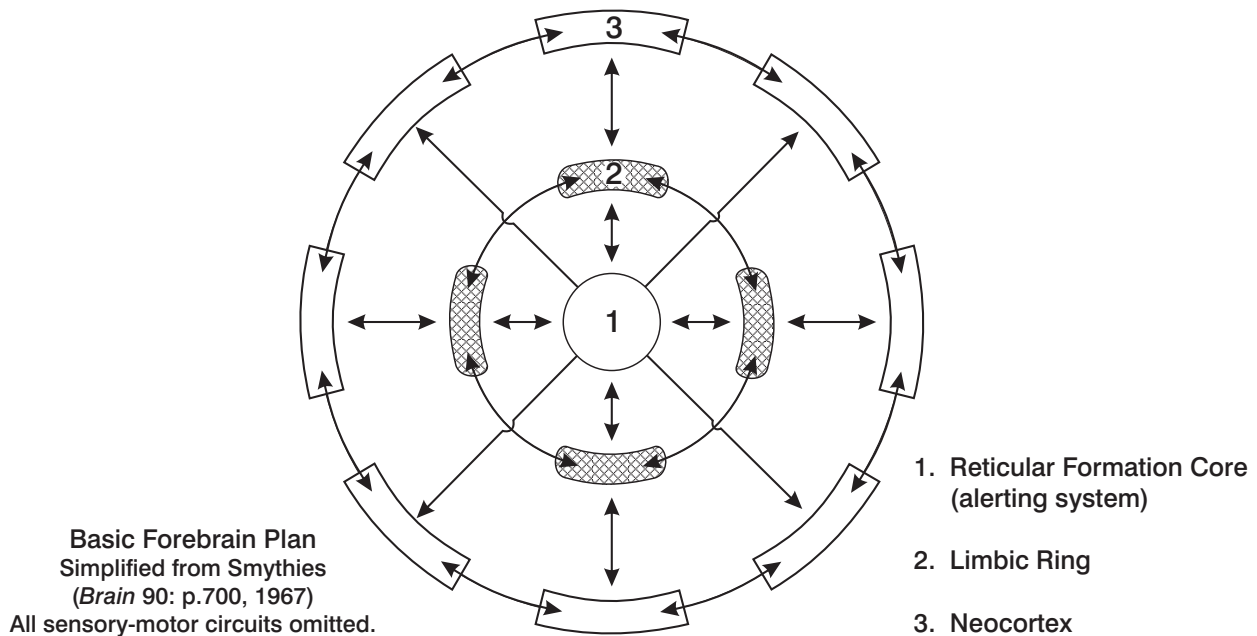
I can only recount my own experience last week when, for the first time, that state lasted for 48 hours in spite of two busy days full of distractions. It started with a great and increasing thirst – reminding one of Ben Jonson's lines:

The thirst, that from the Soule doth rise,
Doth aske a drinke divine.

Nothing would assuage this thirst except that 'Elixir of Life' (Sattva), which is neither the force of action nor the force of inertia, but which brings with it a love and a longing for the One. Two half-hours a day were all there was time or need for, but those half-hours were real ones. In other words, one firmly put aside everything that was not 'I' and kept attention only on this One. At other times when, momentarily, one felt it (notably in the stillness of the night), one was ready to apply the same attention. All this brought the creative force up from its cave in the pelvis through six of the seven gates, past the two plexuses in the abdomen, those round the heart and lungs, the throat, to the centre behind the forehead and deep between the eyes. It is here that the Atman, or Holy Spirit, has in the end to take His seat on the throne and assume His rightful authority.

One cannot place the Mantra or produce these effects by will; they are the natural results of the energy released by the longing. Rediscovering the following description by His Holiness helped to explain what had happened naturally. It was given in 1964 in answer to a question by Allan about breathing during the meditation:

The natural process of breathing is through the nose, and our two nostrils are designed for inhaling and exhaling. [Breathing through the mouth may come from defect or habit, but Nature did not intend it.] In meditation a third place comes into play at the root of the nose where it joins the forehead. This connects with the pelvis through the spinal cord, and takes over when the body is still. [The same thing is described as the continuation of the Air octave in the Food diagram.]



This is where (Spiritual) energy is created in people, and unless this happens none of this energy is available. Even away from meditation this third source can be used when extreme energy is directed on anything [e.g. story of the arrow-maker given recently]. After fifteen minutes this happens; it is known to great artists, scholars and thinkers also, who, though they do not meditate, draw the energy they need in this way through their powers of attention.

He went on to describe the process of 'Insight' (5th stage):

We see the world with our eyes, but they cannot see ourselves. For that we need the eye of the mind (Manas), but the eye of the mind has its limit. Beyond that is the eye of the Soul (Buddhi), which penetrates into subtler forms, but that is limited too. The most subtle depth is fathomed by the Atman, which is beyond the Soul.

(Refer to diagram)

An example shows the [two-way] process by which the Atman apprehends deeper and further. Divers dive for pearls, but unless they surface they don't know what they have picked up. Sleep may be very profound, but we don't know how profound till we wake up. The same in meditation; you have gone deep into yourSelf, but it is only when you come back into the world that you realize the full peace you now have.

Q. (Allan) We were told originally that there should be no preparation for meditation, but that one should just sit down and start the Mantra. You have indicated that there should be *some* preparation – washing the hands, eyes and mouth, preparing place and choosing the time. Are there any mental preparations which should be made?

S. The preparations mentioned should not be made a big issue. If you choose a place where there are too many distractions, they may keep nagging; and the same with bodily impurities and time of meditation. If you choose a time of great activity the particles which you create by meditation may not be enough to curb the Rajas. But once you have reached a state where Rajas has no effect on you, then you can meditate anywhere, any time. As for other preparations, meditation itself prepares everything else.

(12 August 1964)

To which I would only add as the result of subsequent conversations and experiences: 'Keep seeking out the particles of Sattva, inside and outside, wherever you can find them. You never get all that is there to be got.'

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PART 2. FOUR ENERGY SYSTEMS

Our teaching says that there are four kinds of energy in the universe which are incommensurable one with another. They describe different worlds, require different methods and units, and different languages for communication. Three of these, the mechanical, the biological and the psychological, exist in parallel, and the fourth, the conscious, exists at the centre of those three concentric worlds.

The truth of this is beautifully illustrated by the current series of talks about the brain by leading authorities, which are being repeated at present on the BBC Third Programme.

I have heard only two of these so far. The first was called *The Brain in Outline*, by Steven Rose, and gives the biological picture (*The Listener*, 1st February 1968). The second, called *Perception as Continuous Problem Solving*, by Richard Gregory, (*The Listener*, 22nd February) gives the mechanics of the subject as seen by the technologist. Both pour scorn on what is called metaphysics (i.e. philosophy, religion and psychology), but otherwise have little in common and appear to diverge. However, those who are interested can learn a great deal from either or both, provided they are working in the psychological and conscious worlds as depicted on the one hand by Maslow's *Psychology of Being* and on the other by the Shankaracharya. It becomes clear that only confusion reigns if any one of these four is not taken the whole distance, but attempts are made to guess at what is outside one's province from a position of partial knowledge or complete ignorance.

To illustrate the divergence of language and direction, here are a few notes on the two talks mentioned.

The biologist speaks in terms of cells ('the brain is made up of ten thousand million units, each one of which may connect with ten thousand others'), of bundles of nerve fibres, of collections of cells called ganglia, of the evolutionary development of the brain, and of man's massive cerebral cortex as having primarily a controlling role, as administrative rather than as executive. No mention is made of all the recent work on the deep centres and circuits in the forebrain; no mention of the alerting system or of attention. The talk concludes with an illuminating paragraph:

Where, in the evolutionary drive towards bigger and better brains, did consciousness arrive? My own view is that consciousness – the cognisance by a nerve cell assembly of its own existence – is no more and no less than an inevitable consequence of a nerve cell number greater than a certain critical size. It is a profoundly exciting possibility that enough interacting units might eventually generate their own self-awareness. How large a number of cells is required for consciousness we can perhaps guess at by examining the growth of consciousness amongst mammalian species. Clearly there is a gradation, between man, other primates and the duck-billed platypus, say, but I would argue that it was an evolutionary gradation, not a revolutionary one. This is an area which experimental psychology, perhaps over-long obsessed with a sort of crude behaviourism or an equally naive, almost animistic, ethology, might do well to explore

further. There is another implication: if we could build computers with a large enough number of interacting units, they, too, ought to have the self-awareness that we define as the brain's trademark. But we're a long way from that. Compared to man's 10,000 million brain cells, the biggest computers yet built manage less than 100,000 units; and as for the unimaginable complexity of the 10,000 interconnections between each cell and the rest, we do not yet know, even theoretically, how to cope with more than five or so. Thus I conclude that man's hegemony over his artefacts is unlikely to be challenged for a substantial while yet.

Do you see the fallacy here? Steven Rose has presumably the same *number* of cells as any other of the 3,000 million human beings in the world today, all at the same stage of evolution, but he never asks the question: 'Where, in any twenty-four hours of Steven Rose's evolutionary drive, does consciousness arise?'

The second talk by the technologist begins optimistically with the following passage:

Psychology was the last of the philosopher's provinces to be captured from metaphysics by the power of experiment. ... What is truth, what illusion? Does all our knowledge of the outside world come from sensory experience? What kinds of beliefs are rational (to be taken seriously when not our own)? Is the brain essentially unique, or could we make a machine function like brains? It's amazing how technology has contributed to the deepest and most abstract scientific and philosophical problems – and yet academics feel in some way above the technicians.

Speaking in terms of information-handling and communication systems, of transducers, of pulse-rate coding, of background 'noise', of 'drift', of balanced bridge circuits, of impedance-matching, he deals with many problems to be found in the brain and sense organs which are of great interest to engineers, but not to those experiencing consciousness (which naturally is never mentioned). His final sentences were:

As soon as we regard perception as continually solving the problem of what is the object producing the image in the eye, we see the power and importance of computer analogies for understanding perception. The peripheral coding systems take us only so far; the challenge now is to discover the 'software programmes' used by the brain to read reality from the fleeting cartoon pictures in the eyes. We will then build machines that can see.

We can only hope devoutly that the world will be a happier place than it is now for Gregory and his 'machines that can see' – even if it is only 'fleeting cartoon pictures'! Let us learn all we can from their intricate work, but go on from where they leave off. The Annual General Meeting of the Society is being planned on this basis, illustrated by films, and entitled, 'Machine, Monkey or Man?'

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