

10 July 1972

READING 15

You will not want to read much this week at your last meetings; this paper is again divided into two parts so that you can use which you like.

The newer groups, after concentrating last week on 'mechanical parts of centres', naturally want to know how the full centre is meant to work. For others who found the beginning of the Shankaracharya's 1968 series of talks so refreshing, a further quotation is given.

PART 1. HIGHER PARTS OF CENTRES

Manifestations of these have a magical quality, to which we give the name 'genius'. In science and the arts these always arouse great interest, because most people live all their lives in the mechanical parts from which many long to escape. We shall describe the arousal of the intermediate or 'emotional' part of each function separately; though usually two or more tend to work together when attention is fully alerted, though not yet controlled.

1. The emotional part of the intellectual function is felt (in Mr. Ouspensky's words) 'as desire to know, desire to understand, satisfaction at knowing, dissatisfaction at not knowing, pleasure of discovery, and so on, although these can manifest on many different levels'. A scientist learns to ask the right questions until one of them becomes 'a burning question'; then, quite unexpectedly and without apparent effort, the emotional part begins to work and he gets a 'hunch' or preview of the answer, which must then be proved by experiment or assembly of the evidence. If undisciplined, the arousal of the function only leads to exhaustion of the mind through dispersion and identification.
2. In the emotional function, arousal of attention shows itself in religious, moral or aesthetic emotion, and may lead to the awakening of *conscience*. Through the discipline of his art, the creative artist also learns how to make good use of this arousal – see the poet W. H. Auden's description (quoted in *A Lasting Freedom*, note 9, p.63). If undisciplined, however, the artistic impulse at once becomes degraded into the accustomed channels of mechanical and imitative technical dexterity. Just so in the religious field, the sharp voice of conscience dissipates into conventional morality; and with identification the emotional function becomes 'ironical, sarcastic, cruel, obstinate, wicked and jealous'. The history of all religions shows endless examples of inquisitions, persecutions and religious wars by their adherents, whom His Holiness describes as 'not very high on the Ladder of Self-realization'.
3. The emotional part of the moving centre shows itself as love of harmony and rhythm in music, pleasure in movement, love of sport, and so on; but with loss of attention, it also quickly degenerates into exhibitionism, record breaking, mere 'show business' or virtuosity and habit formation generally.
4. In the instinctive centre we really know only the emotional part, which manifests in physical pleasure and pain and those sensory delights and fears which lead to forgetfulness of more important aims.

Pause

We all know how evanescent these brief impulses are, but through the practice of attention the rewards are great. In Self-realization they are experienced on the 5th and 6th steps of the Ladder. In worldly activities, the *intellectual* centre includes in itself the capacity for creation, construction and discovery; the *emotional* centre contains the power of artistic creation, and the emotional realization of Truth, Happiness and Love.

Some people develop a 'magnetic centre' in their personality, which arises through a combination of both these functions, leading a person to a Realized man and a Tradition.

The full capacity of the '*moving*' centre is very important and very little understood, since those not naturally endowed with it so often regard its manifestations as belonging to other functions, intellectual or instinctive. Its 'brain' is the cerebellum, a quite separate and very complex brain, the evolution of which plays a big part in the wonders of organic life as we go up the scale. One of the attractions of watching wildlife and also of watching top-quality human sports and athletics, is the admiration one feels for the enormous variety of skills of movement displayed when there arises a sort of 'flair' or 'native genius' that defies intellectual analysis and surpasses the greatest application of efficiency and training. In addition, it includes 'the power of *imitating at will* the voice, intonations and gestures of other people, such as actors possess', and also the capacity to invent one's own techniques and labour-saving devices.

Finally, the intellectual part of the *instinctive* centre reveals itself in the state of Self-consciousness, and can teach one much about the workings of the brain behind the machine and the 'wisdom of the body'.

Even this very sketchy summary can show the vast range of the human endowment and make one feel the truth of Alberti's statement; 'A man can do all things if he has the will to it'. But life is short, and our aim as members of this Society must be to 'serve the Param-Atman with that quality chiefly in which each of us excels'.

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[NOTE: the quotations in Reading 14 and in Part 2 of this paper represent about a quarter of what was said at that series of talks, which we hope to continue later.]

PART 2

To continue the Shankaracharya's 1967 talk which was begun in Reading 14:

S. (in reply to a question about using 'discipline' to free people from the bad influences under which they live):

There are two stages. Perhaps you will recollect the illustration given some time ago that one needs to pick up a thorn to remove the one in one's foot. After removing the thorn from the foot, both thorns are thrown away.

When one sees oneself as having been taken over by bad influences, one needs to be under different and opposite influences. This is done through discrimination; by discrimination one extracts the good from the bad. As regards other people, one may use this example:

If a child is playing with a sharp knife, one cannot just snatch it from him, because it is risky and displeasing to the child. One gives him a toy to play with,

and while he is playing the knife is removed and then the child can be told about the danger.

In the same way all the people in a School who have formed bad habits due to bad influences that have affected their lives, must be weaned from those habits and trained for creative work through discrimination. After some time, all those disciplines which have been imposed from outside can give place to their own inner rules.

The good and the bad are relative states, for nothing is intrinsically good or bad. To displace the relatively bad, one needs some system of living in order to take up what is relatively good. When the pure Light of wisdom dawns, then good or bad do not matter. Once this stage is reached, the influence of different surroundings has no effect for such people are free.

In a previous talk the following illustration was used:

The sandalwood tree, owing to the sweetness of its sap, is unaffected by the snakes, reptiles and insects which swarm about it.

Q. Perhaps I could ask in a little more detail about the kinds of processes and artificial structures in the subtle world which adversely affect the senses and the reception of information?

S. The two bodies (which arise out of the causal), namely the subtle and coarse bodies, are made to function in such a way that the proper use of both of them channels the energies available to the person and keeps him in equilibrium. If a person is physically busy during the day, he is less liable to produce those harmful subtle elements, and the person who uses his subtle body properly never gets into bad habits. All *that* is due to improper use of the forces available to him.

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