

2 July 1973

READING 7

ATTENTION cont.

PREFACE

Attention being the practical key to this present-day System you are being offered, we contrasted last week the contribution of neuropsychology to this subject, with the Shankaracharya's instructions on how to set up and maintain the one-pointed attention on the job in hand. Since he suggested that each person should 'serve the Param-Atman chiefly with that special endowment in which he particularly excels', we could this week take a new look at the description in our Western System as given by Mr. Ouspensky forty years ago.

PART 1

This described three operational parts to any complex function of the human mind, which we can now call 'mechanical', 'emotional' and 'creative':

If we take them from the point of view of *attention*, we shall know at once in which part of any function we are. Without attention or with attention wandering, we are in the *mechanical* part; with the attention strongly attracted by the subject and kept there by this attraction, we are in the *emotional* part; with the attention controlled and held on the subject by Will, we are in the *creative* part. (see Figure 1)

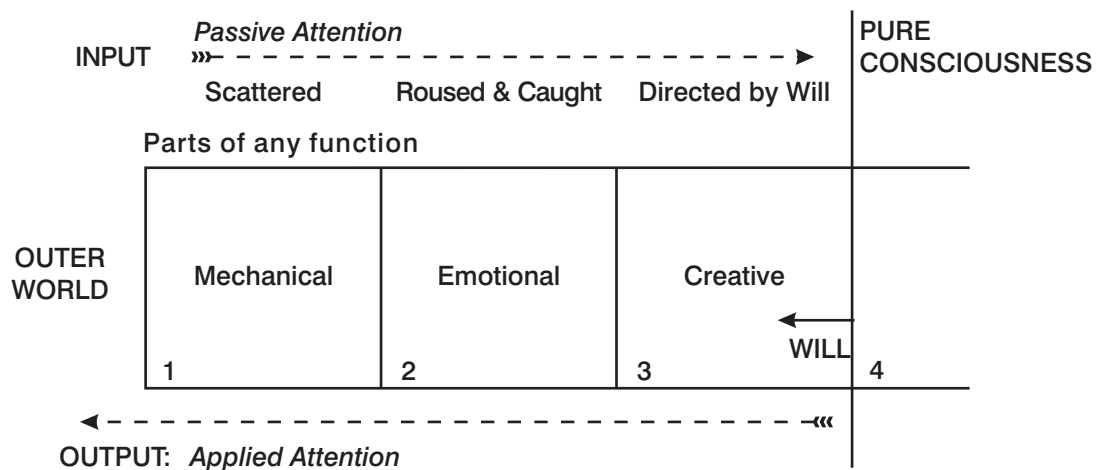


Figure 1. General plan of a complex function

With this we still agree. All forms of 'genius' were regarded by Mr. Ouspensky as belonging to those 'creative parts' (which he called 'intellectual') and, therefore, to the higher capacities for attention. The genius of a great thinker, poet, painter, composer, inventor, or man of action has (in their own descriptions e.g., Einstein, Pushkin, Cézanne, Mozart, Faraday, etc.) consisted in 'composing with great speed, but so that inspired energy is countered and disciplined almost simultaneously by an extremely sharp critical sense and (previously acquired) technical skill.'[†]

[†]*Inspiration and Poetry*, Sir Maurice Bowra, Macmillan, 1955, p.12

These three stages of attention described by Mr. Ouspensky were certainly made to work by him in his writing and speaking, but have never, to my knowledge, been adequately adapted to their own creative work by any of his followers. The reason for this is becoming clear through the influence of the Shankaracharya and the practice of his teachings.

There seem to be three new elements in our knowledge since Mr. Ouspensky's day:

1. Each of these chief functions is no longer regarded as 'governed by a single centre' in the brain, but as a complicated circuit involving many subsidiary and interlocking circuits in different parts of the nervous system, each with its input, feedback and output.
2. Though all the mechanism is available in every normal human individual, the actual creative spark is a 'grace' proceeding from the Divine Self (firm line on right, Figure 1), in response to his long and arduous labours. However great or richly endowed the 'genius', he has to wait each time for this spark or impulse, which often *appears* to be governed by the needs of the moment or triggered from the environment.
3. The practice of attention has shown that an individual is only motivated by this spark in the *silence* of the causal level. Much tempestuous or unremitting effort in the past has brought the genius to the point where his self-will is abandoned and he is reduced to silence and receptivity. He has ceased to regard himself as the agent or doer, and has become the transmitter of a Will which he feels as other than his own.

Therefore what we need to do is to have recourse to that immense Source of Energy (the Param-Atman) in fullest concentration and humility. (S.)

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PART 2

As our first example we will take the Emotional function, which is the simplest (Figure 2). Here is Mr. Ouspensky's account (6th Psychological Lecture, 1934–1940):

Let us take the emotional function. I will not speak at present about negative emotions, we will take only the division of the function into three parts: mechanical, emotional and creative.

The *mechanical* part consists of the cheapest kind of ready-made humour and a rough sense of the comical; love of excitement, spectacular shows and pageantry; sentimentality; love of being part of a crowd; attraction to crowd emotions of all kinds and complete disappearance in lower half-animal emotions; cruelty, selfishness, cowardice, envy, jealousy and so on...

The *emotional* part may be very different in different people. It may include a [more sophisticated] sense of humour, as well as religious, aesthetic and moral emotion and, in this case, it may lead to the awakening of *Conscience*. But with identification it may become something quite different – ironical, sarcastic, derisive, obstinate and jealous only in a less primitive way than the mechanical part.

The *creative* part of the emotional function leads to the *emotional realization of Truth*. Also (with the help of higher parts of the moving and instinctive functions) it contains the power of *artistic creation*. Where there is insufficient training in one of the disciplines of the arts, it manifests itself only in dreams...

This part is also the chief seat of the 'magnetic centre' [present in the personality of some people to lead them in the direction of Self-realization]. I mean that, if 'magnetic

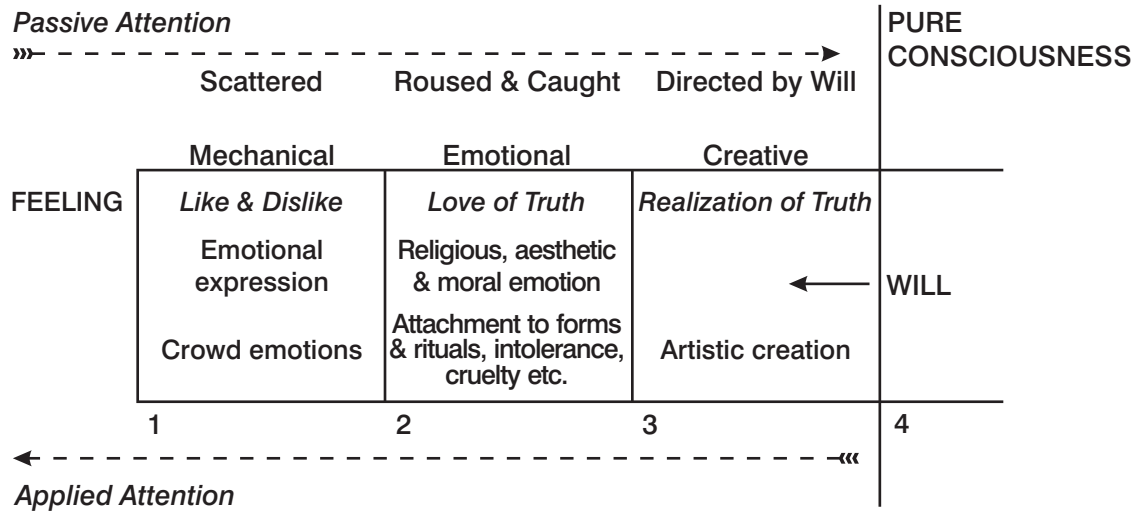


Figure 2. The emotional function

centre' is only intellectual, it cannot be strong enough to be effective and is always liable to make mistakes or fail. But when it is fully developed and working with its full power, the creative part of the emotional function opens the door to Higher Centres ['Intuition' and 'Pure Reason'].

This example may help to show Mr. Ouspensky's approach, and point the way to our own endeavours and perhaps to future research.

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[At your meetings it is suggested that those in charge should first master the principle expressed here, and then give it in a few simple words before reading the quotes.]

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