

CONSCIOUSNESS PART 3

Higher states of consciousness: the System

—for experts—

Four levels of consciousness are described in the System: sleep, waking state, self-consciousness and objective consciousness. Definitions are discussed below, but the higher states, self-consciousness and objective consciousness are similar in level to *Samadhi* and *Turiya* respectively¹. In terms of the nomenclature of Man No 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, Man No. 5 has self-consciousness and Man No. 6 has objective consciousness.

The System divides up the mind in an apparently different way from Advaita. The picture starts with the 3 rooms, or 3-storey house, with Moving Centre (or more precisely the Moving, Instinctive and Sex Centres) at the bottom, then there is the Emotional Centre in the middle, and on top of that the Intellectual Centre. Lastly there is the Fourth Room, which contains the Higher Emotional Centre and the Higher Intellectual Centre.

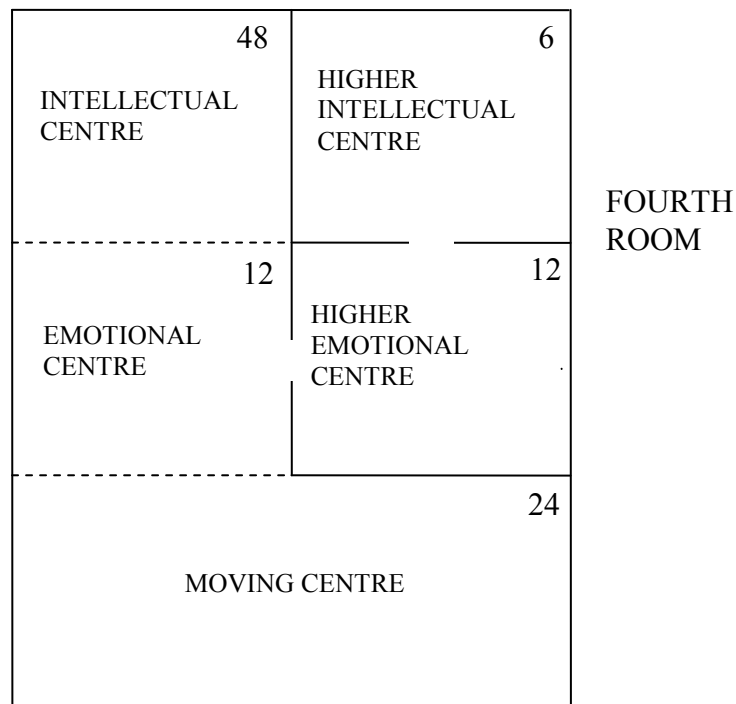


Fig. 1. The centres in the three-storey house (adapted from PD Ouspensky, *A Further Record*, p186).

¹ The similarity to higher states of consciousness in Hindu terminology was noted by Ouspensky, but (as he indicates), *Samadhi* and *Turiya* are sometimes used interchangeably in Vedic texts. Sometimes there are said to be only four states of consciousness: sleep, sleep with dreams, waking state, *Turiya* (*Turiya* = ‘fourth state’).

The dashed lines between the Moving, the Emotional and the Intellectual Centre indicate that there is no barrier between them. The (small) opening between the Emotional Centre and the Higher Emotional Centre indicates that on the one hand access to the Fourth Room is via the Emotional Centre but on the other access is problematic: 'strait is the gate'. Nothing is known about the connection between the higher centres.

Consciousness does not appear specifically in this diagram; it is a product of centres working with the correct fuel. Ordinary consciousness involves just the three lower centres and consciousness is said to be 'relative'; sometimes Ouspensky said that we are simply not conscious. According to the System the higher centres are functional but we do not have access to them. To gain access, Emotional Centre has to work with its right energy. To possess self-consciousness is to be conscious in the Higher Emotional Centre; someone who has self-consciousness is said to know the full truth about himself. To possess objective consciousness is to be conscious in the Higher Intellectual Centre; someone who has objective consciousness knows the full truth about the world. So 'relative consciousness' implies knowing only relative truth.

The idea of a pathway for the energy of consciousness is a special feature of the System. It is described in the Food Diagram, in which material (whether chemical or mental) is generated by refinement of ordinary food, air and impressions. The refinement takes many steps and at two points 'conscious shocks' are needed to allow the refinement to continue. The centres are supposed to work with the hydrogen numbers shown in Figure 1, but often they work in us with a lower energy – like a petrol engine running on diesel fuel – and occasionally with higher energy than they should – more like a diesel engine running on petrol – with explosive results.

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Each of the Moving, Emotional and Intellectual Centres is subdivided into an intellectual, emotional and mechanical part, as shown in Figure 2 (this threefold division is described in some

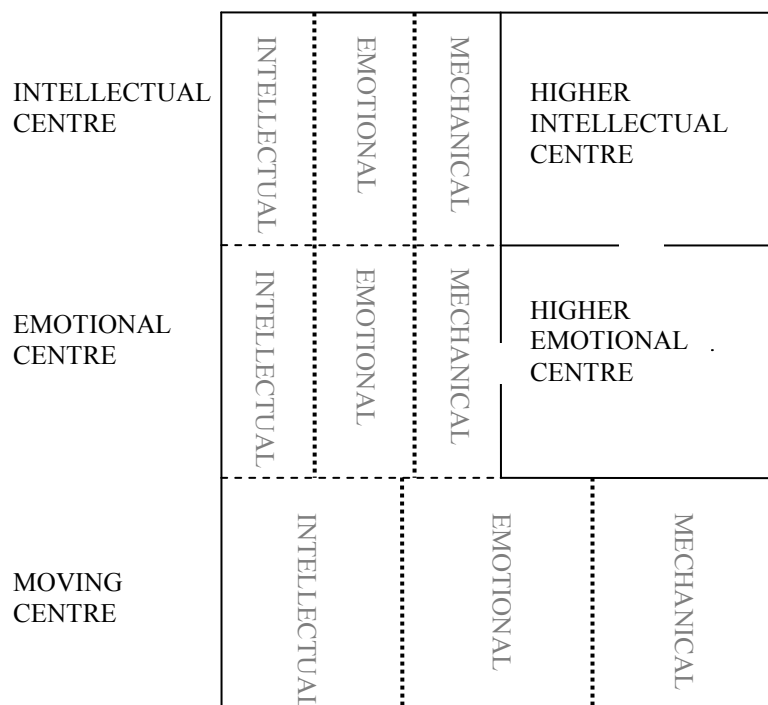


Fig. 2. 3-fold division of centres

detail in Ouspensky's Fifth Psychological Lecture; a synopsis is appended to this paper). There is also (not shown) a positive and a negative division in these centres (making six parts in all in each centre), but not in the other centres.

The Advaita picture of the *Antahkaran* does not include emotion, but the Shakaracharya spoke

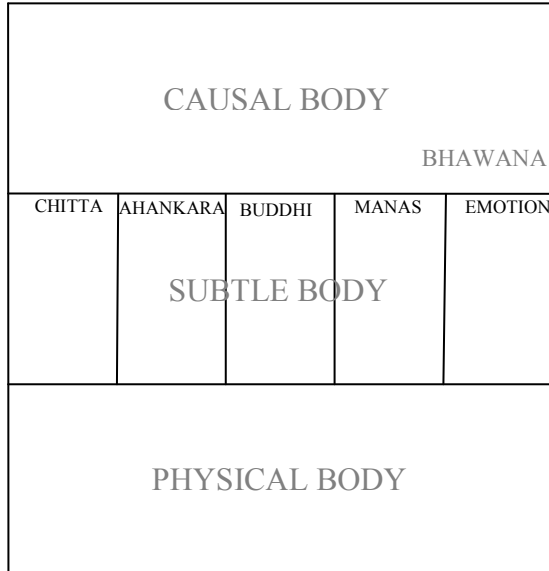


Fig. 3A. Advaita.

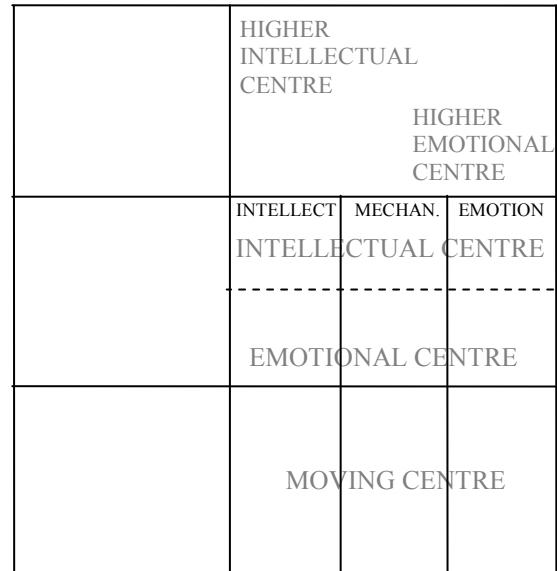


Fig. 3B. System.

several times about an emotional centre (*Bhawana*) in the causal body, though the precise way in which this operates is obscure. Figure 3A shows the diagram used last week slightly redrawn, and includes a hypothetical pathway for emotion.

Figure 3B shows the System diagram of Figure 1 redrawn on the same grid as the Advaita picture of Figure 3A, with the higher centres on top, and including the three divisions of the centres, which are now aligned vertically. Three apparent equivalents can be found by comparing Figures 3A and 3B:

Buddhi is the same as the intellectual parts of the Intellectual and Emotional Centres.

Manas is the same as the mechanical parts of the centres.

Bhawana (and its *sequelae*) is the same as the emotional parts of centres.

Real observations are needed to test these similarities. For example descriptions of the operation of the Formatory Centre (mechanical part of intellectual centre) seem very close to *Manas*.

There is a blank space on the left in Figure 3B where the System teaching lacks equivalents to *Chitta* and *Ahankar*. The System has a scheme, the Food Diagram, that describes the production line for making the fuel for consciousness required for the different centres. We do not have this for Advaita; it is assumed that there must be an equivalent scheme to describe the flow of energy through the Chakras.

There is something very attractive about the idea of the two permanent states of higher consciousness in the System, in that it is easy to see what has been achieved: consciousness in the Higher Emotional Centre and, a stage further on, consciousness in the Higher Intellectual Centre. It is less clear in Advaita what happens (inside the mind) in someone who has achieved realisation, but being conscious in the causal body may be at least part of it.

There is an apparent difference between the System and Advaita in terms of permanent states of consciousness. Transient experience of *Samadhi* and of self-consciousness seem to be similar, but it seems a realised man is not permanently in *Samadhi*, while in the System Man No 5 has permanent (or nearly so) self-consciousness. There is a similar caveat over equating *Turiya* and objective consciousness.

A detailed study of the Ladder of Self-Realisation should throw some light on these discrepancies.

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Here is another account of an experience of higher consciousness; it seems to go a bit further than the Brooke poem:

I must have been between five and six when this experience happened to me. It was a summer morning, and the child I was had walked down through the orchard alone and come out on the brow of a sloping hill where there was grass and a wind blowing and one tall tree reaching into infinite immensities of blueness. Quite suddenly, after a moment of quietness there, earth and sky and tree and wind-blown grass and the child in the midst of them came alive together with a pulsing light of consciousness. There was a wild foxglove at the child's feet and a bee dozing about it, and to this day I can recall the swift inclusive awareness of each for the whole – I in them and they in me and all of us enclosed in a warm lucent bubble of livingness.

Mary Austin, *Experiences facing Death*.

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Examples of threefold division of centres.

Moving Centre:

Mechanical part – instinctive, learned movements

Emotional part – love of movement

Intellectual part – brain of organism

Emotional Centre:

Mechanical part – cheap thrills

Emotional part – humour, real love

Intellectual part – artistic creation

Intellectual Centre:

Mechanical part – registering impressions, formatory responses

Emotional part – desire to know

Intellectual part – invention