

THE BIG SCALE

It's time for a change of scale. Dr Roles produced a series of papers in 1974-5 in which he presented, in a new and simple way, some of Ouspensky's own ideas and the ideas of the System about the universe and the place in it of the human being. In the 1975 series he started with a kind of health warning about the relative nature of our perception by quoting from the preface to the 1934 Second Edition of *New Model of the Universe*, in a passage which connects very neatly with our discussion about objective and subjective:

One of the American reviewers of the first edition of the "New Model of the Universe" remarks that two ideas in this book presented particular difficulties for him: the idea of esotericism and the idea of the psychological method. . .

First of all both ideas need the recognition of the fact that human thought can work on very different levels.

The idea of esotericism is chiefly the idea of *higher mind*. To see clearly what this means we must first of all realise that our ordinary mind (including the mind of a genius) is not the highest possible order of human mind. The human mind can rise to a level almost inconceivable for us, and we can see the results of the work of higher mind, those most accessible to us in the Gospels, and then in Eastern Scriptures; in the Upanishads, in the Mahabharata; in works of art such as the Great Sphinx at Gizeh, and in other memorials (though they are few) in literature and art."

Ouspensky then outlined what he calls "four levels of thought" in ordinary life, and Dr Roles put these in the form of a diagram:

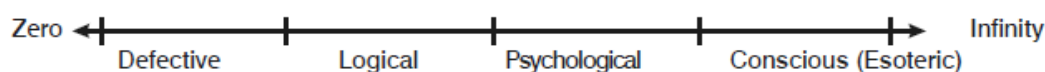


Fig. 1.

Ouspensky continued:

Let us try to imagine the four methods of observation and reasoning in relation to the room in which I am writing this. The defective method is based upon a glance at the room through the keyhole or through a narrow slit and its characteristic feature is the certainty that what is seen through the keyhole or the slit represents all there is and that there is and can be nothing else in it except what is visible in this way. Given a certain imagination and a tendency towards superstition the defective method can make something very strange or monstrous out of an ordinary room.

The logical method is based upon a glance at the room from one definite spot, at one definite angle, and usually without enough light. Too big a confidence in it and the defence of this angle of vision makes the logical method defective.

The psychological method compared with the two first would be like a view of the room in daylight, moving about in it in various directions, knowing the objects in it and so on. It is quite clear that it is possible to learn more about the room in this way than by the logical method, and that it is possible to find many mistakes and wrong conclusions of the defective method.

The esoteric method of approach to the study of the room would include not only the whole room with everything it contains but the whole house, all the people in it with all their relationships and their occupations; and further, the position of the house in the street, of the street in the town, of the town in the country, of the country on the earth, of the earth in the solar system and so on. The esoteric method is limited by nothing and always connects every given thing, however small it may be, with the whole.

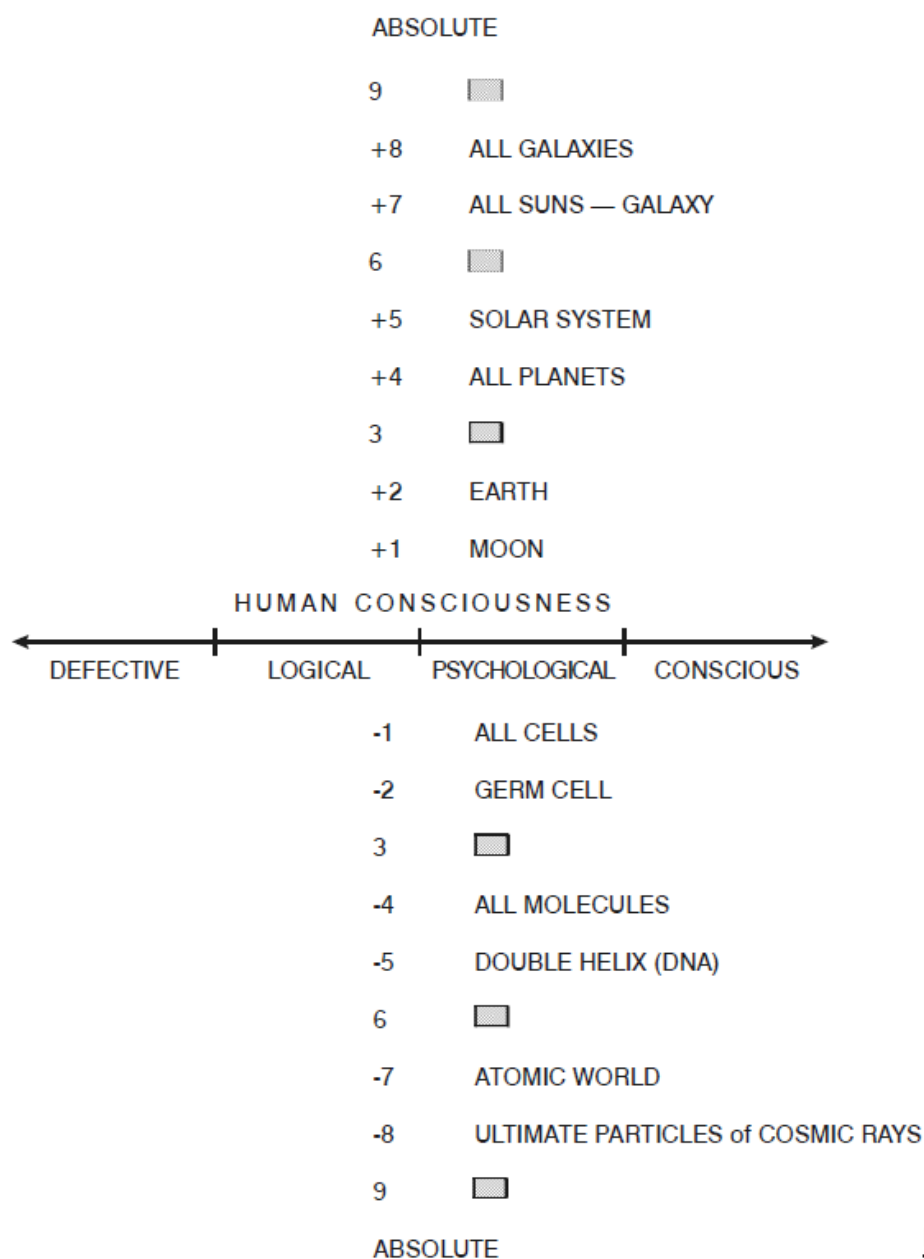


Fig. 2.

Figure 2 shows all the different constituents of the universe listed by size (the numbers are not important for the present), with the human position in the middle.

The four levels of thought are also shown. How do these apply to the rest of the diagram? Dr Roles gave just one example. The diagram shows how humans see the universe: everything bigger lies above the line, everything smaller lies below. That's how we think about it: aggregates above, components below. This is a fallacious and dualistic point of view.

But it has to be said that there is a paradox here, because humans seem to be in a privileged position in the universe, halfway in size between the infinitely large and the infinitesimally small, endowed with a unique (as far as we know) form of consciousness that can see both the large and the small, and knows that it sees them.

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We are all familiar with the experience of a widening of consciousness on seeing the stars or maybe looking down a microscope, or maybe just spontaneously:

On the beach at night alone,
As the old mother sways her to and fro singing her husky song,
As I watch the bright stars shining, I think a thought of the clef of the universes
and of the future.
A vast similitude interlocks all,
All spheres, grown, ungrown, small, large, suns, moons, planets,
All distances of place however wide,
All distances of time, all inanimate forms,
All souls, all living bodies though they be ever so different, or in different worlds,
All gaseous, watery, vegetable, mineral processes, the fishes, the brutes,
All nations, colors, barbarisms, civilizations, languages,
All identities that have existed or may exist on this globe, or any globe,
All lives and deaths, all of the past, present, future,
This vast similitude spans them, and always has spann'd,
And shall forever span them and compactly hold and enclose them.

[*On the Beach at Night Alone*, Walt Whitman]

No-one would deny the power of such experiences. How do they relate to the diagram?

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