

INDIVIDUALITY

PART 1

If all our human physical and other characteristics were of the 'either/or' type (male/female, light skin/dark skin and so on) it would only take about 30 such characteristics for everyone on the planet to be specified uniquely, and there are many more potential differences in our genes than that. So we are all different in major or minor respects, all individual. But what do *we* mean by 'individuality'? In the System, individuality presumably lies in a combination of Essence – the attributes we are born with – and Personality – what we acquire. In HH's teaching individuality¹ (is an attribute of the individual self, the Jiva Atman.

'Individuality' is prized in the West: one has only to think of Frank Sinatra singing 'My Way' to get the flavour of it. But in HH's hands it sometimes gets rough treatment:

Q. Would H.H. please say how the daily activities of a job in life can be brought more under the influence of Sattva? There are rare and wonderful times when a feeling of only being the instrument in trying to help people is felt. How to make these more frequent?

HH. Suppose one is engaged in caring for infants or small children then there is never a sense of duty, work, service, obligation, help, sacrifice or any other form of Ahankara (ego) for it is only play. This play is due to love, which is like an ocean in which two bodies are engaged in a certain type of movement. There is nothing beside love; no idea of personality or ego arises from either side.

This is real work. Here persons are only instruments and the creation is bliss. If one could establish the same relationship in daily work, then the doer is an instrument and the receiver is also an instrument, and the two Atmans become One. The unity thus achieved becomes a fountain of happiness. We all experience such moments of joy when we remove our covers of individuality or personality or any type of Ahankara. The remedy is simple. Give up all idea of being the doer and it will all be bliss everywhere. [2/2/71]

And yet, realized man and women are very individual. At heart they may be the same as HH says:

... there may be outward differences because of the individuality of the two men. [One] Realized man might take the Way of the recluse, get out of the world and meditate; while the other man might plunge into the world, do his work there and realize his function within the world. But within themselves, in their hearts, they are really one. There wouldn't be any difference between these two except the outward appearances. [18/10/62]

But it surely goes further than that as regards individuality: the whole of the Being of a realized man or woman seems to be integrated, personality and all. For those of us that do not have this level of integration, individuality presents a paradox. The sense of being a unique, separate individual is one of our most precious possessions; but it is also, so we are told, what stands in the way of unity. But one certainly had the impression that Dr Roles and Mr Ouspensky before him

¹ It's not clear what Sanskrit word HH used.

wanted to see their students bring their Essence and Personality to flower to the fullest extent possible: 'the glory of God is a human being fully alive' (St Iraeneus).

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Even if we are not realized it is still possible to attain a sort of stable platform from which the machinations of our individuality can be viewed. The final words of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* come from the character Levin, who perhaps represents Tolstoy himself. Levin, who tends to vacillate, has been thinking about God, religions and the cosmos, and he comes to some sort of realisation (which he decides not to tell his wife Kitty):

'No, I had better not speak of it,' he thought, as she passed in before him. 'It is a secret for me alone, of vital importance for me, and not to be put into words.'

'This new feeling has not changed me, has not made me happy and enlightened all of a sudden, as I dreamed it would. It is like the way it was with my feeling for my son. There was no surprise about this either. But be it faith or not - I don't know what it is - through suffering this feeling has crept just as imperceptibly into my heart and has lodged itself firmly there.'

'I shall still lose my temper with Ivan the coachman, I shall still embark on useless discussions and express my opinions inopportunistically; there will still be the same wall between the sanctuary of my inmost soul and other people, even my wife; I shall probably go on scolding her in my anxiety and repenting of it afterwards; I shall still be as unable to understand with my reason why I pray, and I shall still go on praying - but my life now, my whole life, independently of anything that can happen to me, every minute of it is no longer meaningless as it was before, but has a positive meaning of goodness with which I have the power to invest it.'

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Practice

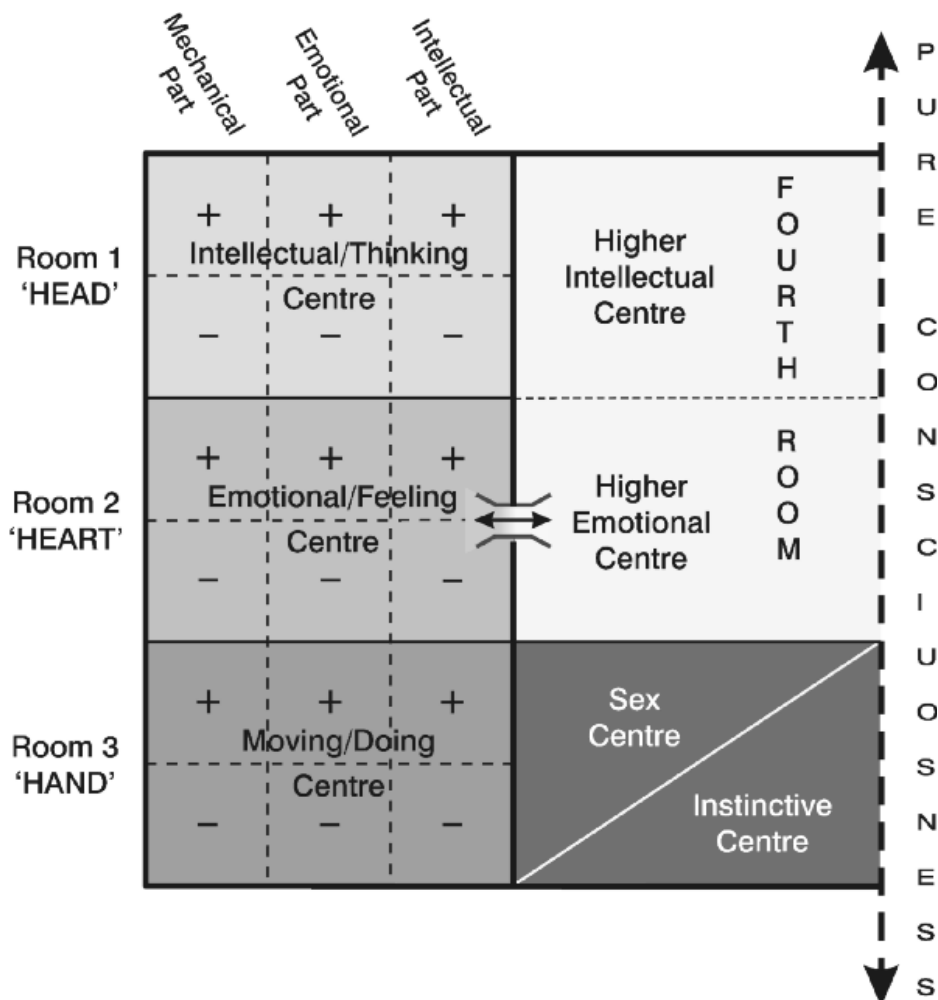
What is the importance of individuality in our lives? Does it get in the way?

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System teaching (Summary of E Group 10/03 & 10/04)

The material in 10/03 and 10/04 followed several weeks spent on the idea that for most of our lives we are 'asleep' and on trying to 'wake up'; then realising how much we fluctuate between our many 'I's'. The teaching of the 'three-storeyed house' is introduced in 10/03 with the idea of observing more closely what 'I' means. The diagram shows the three divisions or 'storeys' physical, emotional and intellectual. These rooms, often called centres are connected together, so that for example a particular emotion may lead to an associated set of thoughts and postures.

We live in the outer three rooms, but there is a fourth room with higher functions which we do not seem to be able to access at will. Each of the outer rooms is divided into three – mechanical, emotional and intellectual – and each of these has a positive and negative part. It is in these subdivisions that our many 'I's' live. The machine works very well, so that although we can observe all these different subdivisions, the whole thing appears to be integrated.



In Ouspensky's time it was thought that only by hard work on one's psychology could the mess be cleared up. But Dr Roles realised through meeting the Shankaracharya that a better way was to cultivate an inner stillness. Light begins to illuminate the rooms and one begins to realise when feelings arise what is helpful and what is not. The three centres can begin to function in a new unison.

Paper 10/04 goes on to the fourth room, to the two centres that do not work fully in us, the higher emotional centre and the higher intellectual centre. One of the functions of the higher emotional centre is Self-remembering; one of the functions of higher intellectual centre is Self-realisation. To become open to these higher centres, the System states that we have to improve the level of energy in our ordinary three centres, and we can do this by improving attention as described previously.

Mostly we use the mechanical parts of centres, so everything about us, movement, feelings and thinking is automatic. The mechanical part of intellectual centre is a special case. It is called the formatory centre, because thinking in this centre everything is black or white, right or wrong. There is nothing wrong with this centre, rather we use it wrongly: the capacity for real thinking, creation and discovery lies in the intellectual part of intellectual centre, and it can be awakened by an emotion and focussed with attention.

There is also a kind of passive attention, though focussing on the feeling of 'I'. This helps the ordinary centres become harmonized with the working of the higher centres.

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