

TEN

10.1 Introduction

¹Mental consciousness is of four main kinds, corresponding to the molecular kinds 47:4-7. The majority of mankind is activating 47:6, principle thinking. The next mental goal is the activation of 47:5, perspective thinking, a process that has barely started. Also the minority at the cultural stage are often content to activate this useful thinking just slightly. This section intends to remedy that somewhat, by giving information of a practical nature.

²As we shall see, it is apposite to divide mental consciousness into:

lower mentality, 47:6,7, and

higher mentality, 47:4,5.

³Lower mentality is the mentality of the emotional stage, the intellect that has difficulty in asserting itself against emotionality and so more often than not becomes its servant instead of its lord; intelligence at work to satisfy emotional desires and to rationalize emotional valuations. Examples are collectively: ideologies, dogmas, conventions; individually: our personal world view and life view.

⁴Higher mentality is the mentality of the mental (humanist) stage, the intellect that is able to emancipate itself from the dependence on feeling and imagination; which therefore is the more efficient mentality. We can manage in physical life with lower mentality. If it is our goal to reach physical and emotional satisfaction alone, then we will not need higher intellectual capacity than 47:6. It is only when we begin to be interested in life as a problem, in the problems of world view and life view, that we need a more efficient thinking than the usual one.

⁵This higher kind of thinking is of importance not just for solving theoretical problems of knowledge. Its greatest value lies actually in the fact that it is our tool for solving practical problems, for analysis of and release from individual and collective limitations and sufferings.

⁶In this section we shall chiefly describe perspective thinking, partly by showing its methods and typical insights, partly by contrasting it with emotional mentality.

10.2 Emotionalism

¹Man's ordinary thinking is only exceptionally determined by reality. Also when it is in his own interest to consider the facts of the matter first of all, he will find this to be the most difficult thing of all. Mostly he is the victim of emotional thinking, and the more his thoughts concern things personal and human, the more emotionality holds sway.

²This is not to say that feelings are bad. On the contrary we need feelings of attractive power which can urge us to action and kindle our longing for ideals. But then we should direct our feelings to the world of physical action, not to the world of thought. Whenever emotion has any say in the mental world, the result is always misleading, always in some manner.

³Emotion in the world of thought, emotion as the instrument of control and selection of thought, emotion as a surrogate of clear thought, is called emotionalism. The following tendencies characterize emotionalism.

⁴The most typical is the tendency to make everything a matter of emotional attraction or repulsion. This tendency wants to sort everything – real things, people, events, statements, ideas – into either of two pigeon-holes: “I like it” or “I don't like it”. This is mostly done unconsciously. When something has once been given its emotionally positive or negative character, this will colour all subsequent impressions so that our views on the thing or person in question all have the same tendency: positive or negative. That is why the bad guy must always be wrong and do the wrong things, why the good guy must always be right and do the right things. That is also why different people, with positive or negative prejudices, tend to value the same action or trait

of character differently so that the same individual is viewed by the one as “soulful” and by the other as “affected”, by the one as “spontaneous” and by the other as “lacking in self-control”. This tendency makes us exaggerate or minimize whatever we view as attractive or repulsive, depending on whether we have a positive or negative attitude ourselves.

⁵The tendency to react with attraction or repulsion easily stifles the faint beginnings of mental perception there may be. “Emotion blinds.” Impersonal, matter-of-fact criticism is taken personally and negatively, and the message is overlooked.

⁶A great problem is the emotionalization of concepts. In order to communicate with others we must use words. Words are largely common to all. Concepts, on the other hand, the ideas or conceptions that the words serve to express, are far from being common property. When a concept is emotionalized it means that the man has not been able to conceive its mental content but has replaced this with a predominantly positive or negative emotion that he connects with the word from then on. Many words, in the vocabulary of politics, for instance, in many people evoke mainly emotional associations – positive or negative – and when they subsequently use the words themselves, they above all express their personal feelings connected with them. The words “democracy” and “fascism” may serve as examples.

⁷Thus also subjectivism is typical, often unconscious, sometimes conscious, conceded and yet cherished. Even when undeniable facts point in the other direction, emotional thinking may say: “Yes, but I don’t feel it that way.” The desire for a warming belief, the urge to identify oneself with collective mass emotionality, the demand to be devoted and absolutely loyal to a teaching or a leader are all incompatible with the striving for an objective and balanced outlook.

⁸It is a piece of developmental work for man to learn to sort out his emotions so that he can feel solidarity with people without the need of sharing their views, even can recognize errors in their views and yet keeping his positive attitude to the people.

⁹As long as man is at the emotional stage he confuses the impersonal with the personal. At the stage of civilization, this is mostly done the negative way: he reacts negatively to a person and then the views, capacities, motives, etc. of that person are worth as little. At the stage of culture, man strives to have a positive view of people. Before he has reached a balance in his attitude, at the stage of humanity, he will have difficulty in seeing actual errors in their thinking, for in his opinion that is “to be negative”. “Wonderful people” (saintly types, etc.) he preferably exalts to infallible authorities in matters of objective knowledge.

¹⁰Emotionality has an inherent tendency to react on the basis of absolute extreme values without intermediate positions. When something is good, you tend to overlook the fact of the negative that must be there, the limitation there is to it after all. When something is bad, you find it difficult to see the positive that is in it nevertheless, its function in a greater context. This absolutization is done in semi-awareness of the fact that if just something is conceded of what belongs to the opposite tendency, then there is a risk that the entire view is changed into its contrariety. Belief must be absolute, for if the least doubt is allowed, then everything feels “abysmal” and you are prepared to reject it all. If you find a minor error in the teacher’s teaching you reject him. If the “imperfection” is a (real or imaginary) fault in the teacher’s personality (“character fault”) and you reject his teaching because of that, then your thinking gives proof of absolutization as well as confusion of personal and impersonal things.

¹¹It is manifest how emotionality values form at the expense of function, content, and meaning. To emotional man, the form and manner in which something is expressed are often more important than the very message. An adroit writer may paint with words that lack a sensible meaning, even to himself, since it is a matter of transferring, or influencing by, emotions (entertainment) rather than giving information (teaching). Not even authors of esoteric books have recognized the risk of using traditional terms such as “mind”, “soul”, “spirit”, “god”, which most readers unreflectingly receive in the habituated religio-sentimental spirit rather than

decipher as designations of various definite states of consciousness of which there is an exact knowledge. When hylozoics, in order to emphasize this fact, introduces unambiguous terms such as 47-, 46-, 45- and 43-consciousness (corresponding to “mind, etc.), they complain that they find them “incomprehensible”. As if, before, they had comprehended “god”!

¹²It is to be recognized that the tendencies of emotionalism are found in all people, even though at various degrees, that it is a component of our thinking as long as we are human. Therefore, we need not call individuals emotionalists, since we cannot determine a person’s stage of development in the individual case. On the other hand we should observe ourselves better, study our emotionalism and learn how to be less dependent on it. Just by using more self-observation and self-remembrance we gain much. If we can then calmly and methodically elaborate our observations into generally valid insights, more or less like the above ones, then we shall have taken just as many, important steps towards liberation from those illusions that tend to keep us on the level we have attained.

10.3 Identification and Projection

¹Objective reality outside our skin is no illusion, quite contrary to what certain philosophers have argued. Illusions are rife, however, in our inner reality. They are our delusions, misinterpretations of factual conditions.

²Being creatures in evolution we are imperfect and ignorant. If we are fairly aware of our immense ignorance and the serious shortcomings of our judgement, then we cause much less trouble to ourselves and others. Then we do not jump to conclusions about things of which we know nothing.

³A middle-aged couple comes out of the supermarket. She is carrying two heavy bags. He is carrying one little bag. Somebody in the surrounding crowd says something about “lazybones of a man” loud enough for him to hear it. Illusion got a voice and spoke. Reality: The man has a serious heart condition and his doctor has forbidden him to carry heavy things.

⁴Identifications we may call such inner states where we treat real events and things, living people, as if they were identical with our notions of the “typical” about them. So we can identify a new situation with an unpleasant episode of the past, a new possibility with an old hindrance, a new living man or woman with the “type” our (sex, race, class, etc.) prejudice sees in him or her. We identify the whole with the part, the disabled individual with his disablement, the erring man with his error. We identify the group with a singular individual of it whom we have seen and who perhaps was not representative of it at all (“that’s how they are, the whole bunch of them” thinking). We identify the permanent with the accidental and momentary and judge or rather condemn an individual on our “first impression”.

⁵We identify because we are unaware of our partial view. Every view is partial. We know the part, or the accidental, or we believe we know it. The whole we do not get to know through the part. If we reach the awareness that our view is partial, then we can eventually stop identifying. Then we can study humility instead.

⁶During our childhood and school years we are inoculated with innumerable delusions belonging to all spheres of life. If we have more correct ideas latently from previous lives, these can assert themselves more and more strongly at each new life period (at 14, 21, 28 years) to regain their lost dominance at 35 years. But this presupposes that we live reflectively, thoughtfully, observe ourselves and others, work daily upon the experiences we have had. As most people wander through life with the least possible reflection, their illusions and fictions are ineradicable for their present incarnation which often is wasted.

⁷If we allow our false notions of a certain thing to become firmly rooted, then we grow impervious to other information, new impressions. Then we cannot receive the new as it is, but project the old onto it. Then we learn nothing new but only see what we already know or believe

we know. The new impressions and experiences that could have vitalized us with fresh energies and ideas are powerless when we continually allow old memories and associations to push them out. In that way we handle more than 95 per cent of all new impressions and experiences, and this is the explanation why so much seems to be ordinary, ingrained, monotonous, routine. We live in our subjective and dead past, not in the objective and living present.

⁸Those who spread information about esoterics may hear many kinds of objections to this knowledge of life. The common feature of almost all these views, however, is that they are based on unconscious projections. The thing people believe they criticize is not the esoteric idea in question but their own misconception of it (often a private obsession) which they project onto the idea. This tendency to projection is reinforced by the enviroing pressure of opinion and the mass tendency of always having a view formulated on something before they know what it is about.

⁹The fact that projections in many cases are ineradicable is due to their being woven into strong emotions – negative, painful emotions in most cases.

¹⁰A few instances of serious identifications and projections.

¹¹*The girl who never learnt French.* At school she had a very unsympathetic teacher of the language, a sadist. She got many painful experiences and no skills worth mentioning. As an adult she had several impulses to take up her studies again, but they were always stifled. As she took out the books, she also brought up her old memories. She identified the new (self-chosen) learning situation with the old (enforced) one. She projected the memories of pain on her concept of “French”. Identification: French = pain.

¹²*The man who hated women.* He had been unlucky in several relationships in succession. The fault lay, as he saw he it, with the women, in their unreliability, etc. He started to hate the entire sex: “That’s how they are, the whole bunch.” He identified all the new live women he met with his concept of “women”. That concept he had isolated out of memories where disappointment was the common characteristic. Identification: women = disappointments.

¹³*The boy who feared the sea.* He had once survived a ghastly accident at sea. He had seen friends drowning. Never more he wanted to travel by ship. He detested the sea. He identified sea, ships, etc. with his terrifying experiences. He projected his terror on his concepts of “sea”, “ships”, etc. Identification: sea, ships = horror.

¹⁴Why do we identify? Because we have the ability to recognize, to see similarities between many memories and experiences, so that details of new things remind us of old things. Our ability to see factual differences is not equally well developed. It is more important, however. That ability eventually enables us to see that the things we identify are not identical, that concept is not reality, that the conclusion drawn from an observed event is not the event.

¹⁵We identify because we do not think, do not reflect. What we call thinking is in the overwhelming majority of cases a chain of mechanical associations by similarities, often just apparent or superficial similarities. Then no discerning function is present to point out: “this situation is new, it actually has just a few and superficial similarities with the old one; most things in it are entirely new.” The man who hated women would just see similarities between the new women he met and his thoroughly negative concept of “woman”. The differences – the positive qualities in the new women – he either would not see at all or he rationalized them away: “exceptions that prove the rule.”

¹⁶Of course we do not project only negative emotions but positive ones as well. We project joyous expectations on new concrete situations which we identify with our concepts. This too may cause us trouble. One tragic example is the entry of the Khmer Rouge into Phnom Penh on April 17, 1975. The entire Cambodian capital was in a whirl of happiness, government and rebel soldiers fraternized. Now, at last, peace had come. However, after just a few hours everything had changed into terror and chaos. Using immense brutality, the Khmer Rouge

drove the inhabitants out of all towns into the countryside, murdering all who made resistance. It has been calculated that more than one million people were killed in the ensuing terror. People had identified a totally new and thoroughly unknowable situation with their concepts of “peace and reconciliation” conditioned by their longing. They projected their need of positive emotions on a rebel movement of whose true aims they at the time knew nothing.

10.4 Awareness of Identification

¹We can keep ourselves better aware of the fact that we identify and so identify and project less. In so doing we can avoid many mistakes and sufferings. We start by observing our own and other people’s identifications. Then we sum up our findings:

²(1) Concrete reality around us is infinitely rich in details, characteristics. Our concepts of these concrete things are limited sections, selections from the concrete and are poor in details and characteristics.

³(2) Reality exists only in the present, is ever dynamic, changing in every detail. Charlie₁₉₉₀ is not the same as Charlie₂₀₁₀. Our concept of “Charlie” is static, rigid, represents the past and so is more or less obsolete.

⁴(3) Concrete reality is inexhaustible, indescribable, inexpressible in the sense that whatever we say about it (our description is concepts), this is not everything. The concept is exhaustible, describable, expressible. The territory cannot be exhaustively described; the map, however, can.

⁵(4) Reality consists of individual things and events, which are all absolutely unique and individually different. Of course there are similarities between them and important similarities. But similarities are not identities. Chair₁ is similar to though not identical with chair₂, chair₂ is similar to but not identical with chair₃, etc. You cannot sit on all concrete chairs_{1,2,3...}. Some of them are broken.

⁶Into our concept of “chair” we have unreflectingly put the characteristic “possible to sit on”. But if we identify concrete chairs_{1,2,3...} with our concept of “chair”, as we do when we do not observe reality reflectingly but just associate mechanically, we try to sit on the concept and so have a sudden, hard contact with the floor when the real chair does not keep what the concept promises.

⁷(5) Factual differences are at least as important as imaginary similarities.

⁸(6) Concrete individual things (chair_{1,2,3...}) are always unpredictable to a certain extent. They continue to exist into the future. They have to be examined individually and should not be taken for granted. By contrast, our concepts have been formed once and for all in the past.

10.5 Non-Identification

¹When we have seen that we identify, we can start training ourselves in non-identification. We have learnt that the thing, the person, the event are not identical with our impressions of them, are not identical with our concepts, thoughts of or words for them. Now we go further in thinking: Whatever we can see of the thing, etc., is not its whole reality; whatever we can say and think about the person, etc., it concerns only a tiny portion of all his qualities, his inexhaustible reality. We keep our attention on this fact for a moment. Then we observe objective reality – the thing or the person – and are silent. When subsequently opening our mouth, we keep our attention on what we are saying, being aware of the fact that whatever we say, our words and thoughts are not this reality.

²Now note that this insight is no variety of illusionist philosophy saying that we do not perceive any objective reality, that our perception is just subjective. Our insight instead concerns how we perceive objective reality, how subjective our perception is. It is emotional thinking that conceives of the world only in terms of identities and opposites. It naively started from identity between consciousness and object: everything there is in consciousness is also in the

object, and vice versa. Using reflection (philosophy, etc.) they eventually understood that consciousness and object are not identical. According to philosophical (two-valued) thinking, non-identity could only mean the opposite of identity: nothing there is in consciousness is in the object, and vice versa: nothing there is in the object is in consciousness, which quite logically implies that we cannot perceive anything of the external world.

³Experience teaches us that the words “everything” and “nothing” are seldom useful when we are to make an exact description of actual facts. “Something” is most often the better alternative. Awareness of identification is simultaneous insight of non-identity and of non-contrariety. The two useless categories of identity and contrariety are rejected. Instead, we introduce the always useful category of relation: something that exists in consciousness also exists in the object; and vice versa: something of the territory is in the map, etc.

⁴Having the concept of relation in our consciousness we can always ask ourselves: What relation is there between my subjective conception and objective reality, between my valuation of a person, for instance, and the real person?

⁵“I see something of the person, but not everything.”

⁶“Something of what I see is right, but not everything.”

⁷This “something” is sometimes bigger, sometimes smaller than it is right now.

⁸We should more often ask ourselves: What relation is there between conception and reality, between abstract and concrete, in our views of events, other people, and ourselves?

⁹Some examples of various kinds of relation (neither identities nor opposites):

¹⁰An individual is not a collective (“somebody is not everybody”). Just because I was disappointed once with a lawyer, a woman (a man), an Indian guru, etc., this does not mean that “such are lawyers”, etc.

¹¹Some time is not the whole process (“once is not always”). The first and only time I saw Charlie he was rude to me. That does not mean that he is so always.

¹²My reaction to a person is not that person. My feelings, assumptions, conclusions, psychologizings about other people are more often based on my desires to assert myself, justify my actions and views, etc., than on the people themselves.

¹³One aspect is not the whole. “I am a failure.” But if I reflect, I should see that my failure was just one aspect out of the many aspects that make me up, that I also have better aspects. It was not me that was a failure but something I did. “I” am not identical with my failure. Else I would not dislike it nor go on in my striving to improve myself.

10.6 Two-Valued and Multi-Valued Thinking

¹Emotionality is two-valued. It swings between opposites: attraction and repulsion. In its evolution, mentality has been activated by emotionality. The lowest two kinds of thinking, inference and principle thinking (47:7 and 47:6, respectively) are unable to liberate themselves from their emotional origin. They are dominated and motivated by emotion.

²Therefore, these two kinds of thinking are two-valued. They go by opposites that they are wont to regard as absolute. They have difficulty in finding a steady point for observation in between the extremes of all/nothing, yes/no, 100/0 per cent, white/black, etc. As perspective thinking (47:5) is activated, thought liberates itself from its dependence on emotion and so abandons thinking by opposites.

³Two-valued thinking has shaped language and the pairs of opposites typical of it. Even though individuals may raise their thinking above the scheme of two values, yet they are compelled to use the modes of expressions afforded by the common language and are thereby tempted to accept opposites as absolute and essential: water is either warm or cold, we either love or hate, we either know or are ignorant, we are either brave or cowardly, etc.

⁴The phenomena of reality can seldom be described as mutual opposites. We adapt ourselves

and our thinking better to reality when we abandon the all-or-nothing categories and instead introduce gradations and modifications; in our language use words such as “partially”, “almost”, “usually”, “seldom”, “in certain cases”, etc; reason in proportions (percentages, for example); comparisons, relativizations (“A is warmer than B but colder than C”). Moreover, we could use the insight that the “same thing” (the same word, for instance) does not mean exactly the same in every context: for example one man can “do exactly the same thing” out of a selfish motive as another man does unselfishly. All these are instances of multi-valued thinking.

⁵Multi-valued thinking is non-exclusive (non-absolutizing). Two-valued emotional thinking has a marked tendency to exclude one thing in order to emphasize some other thing, to construct opposites that do not exist in reality. One example of this is when they criticize theoretical studies (of the esoteric world view, for instance) pleading that “we should try to solve the practical problems of mankind instead”. As if the one work excluded the other or stole power from it! On the contrary, they stimulate each other. Another example is when man in evolution (generally at the stage of culture) “discovers” the consciousness aspect, sees that this aspect holds the true values of life, etc., and then is at once prepared to call “spirit” the only reality and matter “illusion”. It is as if thought, in these early phases of its development, could not retain a newly found concept in any other way than by putting it in absolute opposition to something already known.

⁶Multi-valued thinking is the realization of the fact that there are “infinitely many” positions between the two extremes that our ingrained pairs of opposites bid us to believe in and go by. This is the aspect of perspective thinking that is the easiest one to understand more generally, though not so easy to apply. How common is it not, when we have some pressing duty to do for another, that we act in a great hurry but as we get the quieting information “it’s not that panicky”, we relax completely and put off the thing till next month – as if it were not pressing still? Also compare how, when we are informed as to serious environmental problems, we oscillate from deep worry to indifference when the alarms turn out to be slightly (but then just slightly!) exaggerated.

⁷Multi-valued thinking understands that the words of language are highly defective tools for the expression of thoughts, that few words have exact meanings in themselves, and that, consequently, you have to discover the intended meaning in each particular context. Two-valued thinking tends to get stuck on the form, the linguistic expression. Therefore it often finds contradictions (paradoxes) between sayings in which the same word has been used (multi-valuedly) in several meanings.

⁸In esoterics we are enjoined to “forget ourselves, our comical insignificance” but also to “exercise self-remembrance, to remember who we are and where we are going”. This is a good example of a paradox, which principle thinking has difficulty in digesting. We dissolve the paradox when understanding that the word “self” does not refer to the same thing in the two sentences, but that the first instance refers to the “false self”, transient personality, whereas the second instance refers to “the true self”, the monad’s self-consciousness.

⁹Esoterics teems with such paradoxes for principle thinking. And so it is since esoterics refers to realities of which most people as yet have very little individual experience, and so our common language is still very deficient in generally comprehensible words for these realities.

¹⁰Perspective thinking pays particular attention to the time factor or dynamic aspect. Whatever is true at a certain time, in a particular situation, need not be true at another time: “Do not say that Caesar is brave. Say that he was brave on that occasion and on that.” Emotional thinking has a disastrous tendency to refuse to see how the law of change rules all things. When this thinking has finally grasped something, assimilated some view, then it wants to have this unshakably firm for all time to come. The most obvious examples are people’s indiscriminate belief in so-called sacred books. The fact that such books gave useful

and even necessary rules of life to desert people of 1500 B.C. does not imply that they have any validity for modern people.

¹¹“You shouldn’t generalize”, they say. However, what most people call generalizations are no generalizations but absolutizations or, anyway, are understood as such: Scotsmen are thrifty, Swedes are stupid, etc. (implying “all are such ones”). The meaning of a generalization, however, is to make a general statement that is valid for most cases, while you are aware of the fact that many things are beyond the validity of the generalization (so-called exceptions that prove the rule). You should generalize only when you know why you can do so in that particular case. Most generalizations are without foundation and senseless. Sensible generalizations belong to multi-valued perspective thinking. It is typical of principle thinking to misunderstand such generalizations as two-valued absolutizations (all-or-nothing statements), and so think that they can be refuted by pointing out unimportant exceptions from the rule.

¹²Correct generalization: “The middle ages were (on the whole) a dark period in Europe.” Principle thinking “refutes”: The middle ages were not dark at all, just think of...” and then they enumerate a handful of light-bringers who of course were persecuted or executed.

¹³There is no desert without oases. The fact that you can find oases does not mean then that the desert is not a desert.

¹⁴Principle thinking thinks that “darkness is always darkness”, that is, one hundred per cent. If you can find ever so small a gleam of light in it, thought is apt to turn over to say “not dark at all”.

10.7 Relativity

¹Just as higher emotionality feels that everything is unity, so higher mentality reaches the insight that everything is unity.

²Relativity is the insight that in reality nothing exists in isolation or exists as something in itself, but only in relatedness with other things and in mutual influence, interaction. Relations between things are what is essential in existence. And among relations, immutable, constant relations are the most important. Those we call laws. The thinking that always considers relations, that strives to see things in their relatedness to a surrounding greater whole, ever greater wholes, is one aspect of perspective thinking.

³As long as we use principle thinking, every concept tends to exist in our consciousness in isolation from other concepts, without a clearly apprehended relation with other concepts. Perspective thinking understands that the real things which concepts stand for are always “relative”, that is: they enter into greater contexts with other things. Principle thinking, on the other hand, is apt to confuse (identify) the concept with reality and to regard real things as if they were absolute and isolated phenomena.

⁴Principle thinking may reason about time and space, cause and effect, matter and consciousness, as if the reality behind these words consisted of “time”, “space”, “cause”, etc., like some sort of prefabricated units.

⁵The perspective thinker understands that reality is a unity of matter–consciousness–motion; a unity from which time–space cannot be separated but is the mode in which conscious and dynamic matter exists. Nor can you separate “cause” and “effect” in reality. If, in judging a certain course of events, you one-sidedly view certain forces and energies as “causes” and others as “effects”, then you will soon be compelled to revise your view. For the “causative” energies cannot avoid being influenced by the things they influence, and so there will actually be a system of composite interactions.

⁶The corresponding obtains in the matter of subjects and objects in psychology and education. Perspective thinking does not view the teacher as the mere subject of instruction and the pupils as its mere objects. The teacher learns by teaching and he does so through his pupils. If

he does not do so, then he is no longer a teacher. They are all subjects as well as objects.

⁷One more example. Principle thinking conceives knowledge as an absolute: the right conception of reality. When we study how knowledge works in the concrete, however, we see that it is a relative thing and no absolute. Knowledge is a relation between the conceiver and the reality which is the object of his conception, though not any relation but the relation of correct conception. Again, a “correct conception” is no absolute. Different subjects, different people have different abilities of conception. There is for everybody an upper limit to his understanding, a limit that is individual and different for everybody. What is knowledge for one man is not knowledge for another. What he does not understand is no knowledge for him; what he misconceives is the opposite of knowledge (fiction) for him. Some years or incarnations later, the same thing that seemed absurd to him may afford him a revolutionizing understanding.

⁸Valuations are concepts. Principle thinking uses them, too, in isolation, not seeing the things they refer to put into their surrounding whole. The leaders of big business see “profitability” or “economic growth” as absolute values, which thus must be secured at any price, also at the cost of values that in reality are superior – human and indeed global survival – values to which any group egoistic value must be subordinated.

⁹We are especially apt to make values absolute, since they are anchored in emotions of pro and con, and emotion is without measure. Whatever is good for us and in a certain phase of our development, we feel is good for everybody. Examples of this are certain Oriental schools of meditation that now proliferate in Western countries. They want to teach “Western man” to meditate – all people, and by the same method. These schools are ignorant of the facts that people are at different stages and levels of development, and that they all have different qualifications and needs. They do not understand the wisdom of the old saw: “One man’s meat is another man’s poison.” In the concrete this means that meditation must always be individualized, so that it is made quite different for the different needs. For many people, the best meditation (the best method of activation) is no meditation at all, namely for those who already are too introvert, tend to flee from reality. Their only “meditation” should be intensive work and attention in the physical world.

¹⁰It should be added that needs and desires are not the same thing. Exoteric psychology has not understood that and cannot even understand it. Desires are subjective and often go against the laws of life. Needs are objective being conditioned by the factors of the laws of development and destiny. Most things we desire we do not need. Many things we truly need we do not search for.

¹¹Many beginners in esoterics embrace their new interest mostly in the emotional way, which is inevitable until they have learnt more. Often they wish their friends to study “these wonderful books”, not understanding that esoterics is not in itself good and suitable for everybody. Then perspective thinking has a different view on the matter. It knows how to put the idea of spreading esoterics into a greater context: the work for human evolution. In the concrete, this means that people are educated to take more responsibility, to show more compassion, to be more independent in feeling and thought, to be more self-active, and more critical in their thinking. Unfortunately, it appears that esoterics in the hands of immature people has an effect quite opposite to the one intended, strengthening undesirable tendencies such as flight from reality and responsibility, egoistic desire of salvation, belief in authority, gullibility, etc., while invoking “esoteric principles” they believe they have learnt by misunderstanding isolated data in the esoteric literature. If esoterics is made an absolute value, detached from its larger evolutionary context, it will unfailingly counteract its true purpose.

¹²To perspective thinking, many values are seen to be included in higher, superior, and therefore more important values, being parts of them. The lower values have, therefore, a justification only as long as they do not counteract the higher values. The laws of life indicate

the limits of what must be protected, may be allowed, and must be neutralized. The consideration of what is best for the whole is the lodestar.

¹³Examples of this are nationalism, humanism, and globalism, which in the order mentioned make up a series of ever higher values, a hierarchy of values. Nationalism is good and right as an expression of the national character. However, when it comes into conflict with the next higher value, the welfare of all mankind, the ideal of humanism, then nationalism must be checked. Yet humanism is no absolute value. Because it must be assigned its place as a part of the still higher value, the welfare of all life on our planet, the ideal of globalism. A humanism that suffers mankind to live a high life at the expense of all the other biological and energetic life proves to be false and untenable in the long run.

¹⁴The perspective thinker orders his other values correspondingly into hierarchic systems, and in this work he is greatly aided by his knowledge of the laws of life.

¹⁵Some more examples. Many pacifists hold that killing people is an absolute evil that can be tolerated under no circumstances. Attack and defence are equally reprehensible. Thus a nation must unresistingly accept the aggression of other states. The one essential thing is that “human lives are not lost” (as if they could be so!). The nation in question has to put up with occupation, terror, the introduction of ideologies that are hostile to life and knowledge, all of which hampers evolution.

¹⁶The perspective thinker has a very different view on these things. Physical life, life in the organism, is no absolute value to him but a relative one: a value inasmuch as it implies a possibility of further evolution. The greatest possible freedom (also freedom from fear) and self-determination – for the individual as well as for the nation – is necessary for evolution. Therefore, it is always justified to sacrifice physical life, if the life of consciousness cannot be secured in any other way. Moreover, according to the law of freedom, you always have a right (and a duty!) to defend your freedom against illegitimate intrusion, and anyone who forgoes that right contributes by his passivity to strengthening the power of evil in the world.

¹⁷How do I work to make my thinking less absolutizing and more relativizing?

¹⁸Above all by observing relations. By studying how “the same thing” works differently in different contexts and, conversely, how different things fulfil “the same” function. You search out and study the larger context, the ever widening fabric of relations that every individual thing always functions in. You do not stare at your absolute concepts, racking your brain on their mutual contradictions, for that is like hunting ghosts, but, instead, you go to the concrete realities behind the concepts, for they are always free of contradictions in their relations. You can contemplate the idea that what appears to be “the opposite” of something need not be it but may be its larger context.

¹⁹One example of this is how science at first fights new ideas as being detrimental to research, but later on accepts them as being a larger and more correct view of the same reality. Einstein’s physics was at first regarded as being in opposition to Newton’s physics, but was later seen to be a more general formulation, within which Newton’s physics could go on thriving as a specialization.

²⁰When studying causes and effects, you consider the fact that there is never one single cause of a certain result, and that some certain cause never has one single effect, but that such a simplified view has its basis in a confusion of concept and reality.

²¹To give an example: “This china will unfailingly crack if you wash it up in boiling hot water.” But if the china is lying there cracked, it does not necessarily mean that somebody has washed it up carelessly.

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