

# THE FOURTH WAY

An Introduction by Lars Adelskog  
Part One of Two

What is a human being? Is he a creature that has within him an immense but unused potential for development? Does man possess dormant abilities and qualities that can be awakened? Is the human experience collected up to now only a fraction of the possible? Can man be transformed into something that is far beyond his present limitation? These and similar questions were put by a Russian journalist by the name of P. D. Ouspensky in the beginning of the 20th century.

Ouspensky had made experimental studies of manifestations of supernormal psychology, such as telepathy, clairvoyance, the possibility of knowing the future, of looking back into the past, and so on. In the course of these experiments he came to two conclusions. First, that we cannot study supernormal psychology, because we do not know normal psychology. Secondly he came to the conclusion that certain real knowledge exists; that there may be schools which know exactly what we want to know but that for some reason they are hidden and this knowledge is hidden.

Ouspensky began to look for these schools. He travelled in Europe, Egypt, India, and the Near East. Only when he had already finished his travels, he met in Russia in 1916, just while the war was raging at its height, a group of people who were studying a certain system which came originally from Eastern schools. Ouspensky made the acquaintance of the teacher of the group, a Caucasian by the name of G. I. Gurdjieff. He soon became convinced that Gurdjieff had a solid knowledge of the things he was teaching, and that this solidity was due to his having been trained in such hidden schools as Ouspensky had tried to reach in vain.

Being a Greek-Armenian, Gurdjieff was and remained an Easterner more than a Westerner, and he never learnt any Western European language very well. Despite his living almost thirty years in Paris, he largely remained alien to Western ways of thinking. The Russian Ouspensky, however, had got a Western education; he knew English very well; he could present the teaching he received from Gurdjieff in a simple and clear manner in speech and writing. The fact that Ouspensky became Gurdjieff's foremost disciple meant that the teaching could reach far wider circles than had been possible otherwise. At the same time it must be emphasized that Gurdjieff remained the teacher and Ouspensky, the disciple. Ouspensky never reached Gurdjieff's depth of understanding of the teaching of the hidden schools.

The chief idea of Gurdjieff's teaching was that we do not use even a small part of our powers and our forces. We have in us, so to speak, a very big and very fine organization, only we do not know to use it. In the group Ouspensky joined they employed certain Oriental metaphors. They told him that we have in us a large house full of beautiful furniture, with a library and many other rooms, but we live in the basement and the kitchen and cannot get out of them. If people tell us about what this house has upstairs we do not believe them, or we laugh at them, or we call it superstition or fairy tales or fables.

Gurdjieff's teaching deals with both the universe and man. Its purpose is altogether practical: man must get to know himself in order to develop. Man gets to know himself by observing himself. Self-observation must be based on an exact knowledge of man's real nature, what constitutes his *being* and how this being can be divided.

## SELF-OBSERVATION AND SOME INSIGHTS GAINED FROM IT

If a man begins to observe himself, he will soon have a couple of important insights. The first one is about "I". We say "I am doing", "I am sitting", "I feel", "I like", "I dislike" and so on, and without thinking, automatically, we assume that we have only one "I", which remains the same. This is our chief illusion, for we are not one. At one moment when I say "I", one part of me is speaking, and at another moment when I say "I", it is quite another "I" speaking.

At one moment our attention is captivated by something definite and at the next moment by some other thing, and then we do not even remember what captivated us just a short while ago: a new “I” replaces or suppresses an old “I”, and all this process is going on all the time and makes up our inner life. At the one moment one “I” decides something. At the next moment some other “I” has already taken over and knows nothing of the decision of the previous “I” and of course is not prepared to carry it out. We sometimes complain about our absent-mindedness when, for instance, we have walked out of a room into another to fetch something there and being in the other room we have already forgotten what we were going to fetch. We do not see that this division is our normal state. In other words, we are split into hundreds and hundreds of different “I”s. The first insight to be gained by our self-observation can be summed up thus: “I” am not one; “I” am many.

The second insight is about the fact that it is very difficult to observe oneself. This difficulty lies in one single fact: very soon you forget to observe yourself.

Now I want you who are reading this to stop and to ponder the most important thing you have learnt so far, which is this: You can not, however firm a decision you make, observe yourself more than a few seconds. You quite simply forget about your decision to do so. You think of something else, and then of something else from that, and so it will go on for many minutes, perhaps even hours, before you suddenly *wake up* and *remember*: “Gosh, I was supposed to observe myself! And I forgot about it!”

The fact that we are not able to observe ourselves more than for brief moments is connected with the fact that we are not one, not a unitary “I”, but many small “I”s constantly replacing each other. One such “I” makes a decision about self-observation, but the next “I” soon appearing is up to something else and does not carry out that decision.

The fact that we are split into many “I”s implies that we largely lack will. If we were a unitary “I”, we would be able to observe ourselves however long; then it would just be a matter of doing it. But we cannot keep concentration and so we must admit that we lack will.

In Gurdjieff’s teaching, which is usually called the fourth way, self-observation has an important place. Two things are emphasized here: you must know what is the purpose of self-observation and you must, when observing yourself, know something of how man is divided. First we take the division of man, and then the purpose of self-observation.

## THE DIVISION OF MAN’S FUNCTIONS

It is stressed here that the manner in which the fourth way divides man’s functions is very different from both our ordinary view and that of academic psychology.

In the fourth way, what is constantly going on in man’s outer and inner life is called *functions*. We know the difference between intellectual and emotional functions. For instance, when we discuss things, think about them, compare them, invent explanations or find real explanations, this is all intellectual work; whereas love, hate, fear, happiness, worry, suspicion and so on are emotional. But very often, when trying to observe ourselves, we mix even intellectual and emotional functions. When we really feel, we call it thinking, and when we think we call it feeling. But in the course of study we shall learn in what way they differ. For instance, there is a great difference in control: intellectual functions we can somewhat control; emotional functions we cannot control. Moreover, there is an enormous difference in speed: intellectual functions are slow, emotional functions can be extremely quick.

Then there are two other functions, which no system of ordinary psychology divides and understands in the right way: instinctive function and moving function. Instinctive refers to the inner work of the organism: digestion of food, beating of the heart, breathing. Instinctive functions also include ordinary senses – sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, the feeling of cold and warmth. Moving functions include almost all of the body movements. It is very easy to distinguish between instinctive and moving functions: we are born with the capacity to use all the instinctive functions, whereas moving functions all have to be learnt. Of reflexes, only simple ones belong to instinctive function. Acquired reflexes, such as those appearing when

you drive a car, thus belong to moving function. Moving functions also include dreams – both dreams during sleep and day-dreams – imagination, and imitation.

When observing oneself according to the teaching of the fourth way, it is necessary first of all to divide these four functions and to classify at once everything that one observes, saying, “This is intellectual function”, “This is emotional function” and so on. If you are honest with yourself, you will find at once how difficult it is; that you can work at it only for a short while at the time, because you *forget yourself*, forget your decision and your work. Working diligently, methodically, and strenuously, however, you will eventually achieve better results. With time, you will have a clear idea of the process of one function unceasingly replacing another. For example: a thought arises, is at once pushed aside by an emotion, which in its turn disappears as a movement function enters when you change your sitting position or turn your head, or when an instinct function in the form of visual or auditory impression makes itself felt. It must be emphasized that all these functions – thoughts, emotions, movements, and sense impressions – arise mechanically, that is: without our will and control. The exchange or replacement of functions occurs mechanically as well; you do not decide that a certain thought shall cease and be followed by an emotion or a movement.

From these facts, which are based on an increasingly clearer self-knowledge through self-observation, we draw the following conclusion: in his present state, man is almost completely a machine. A machine is a thing where processes go on mechanically, through impulses from without. A machine has no consciousness, no will. If we human beings had consciousness and will, thoughts and feelings would not arise and stop mechanically, through impulses outside of our control. If we were conscious beings, we would think conscious thoughts and feel conscious emotions. But practically everything happening in our inner and outer life occurs mechanically. In this respect, there is no difference between scrubbing floors and writing poetry.

What is the meaning or purpose of observing oneself? First and foremost, to arrive at an understanding of our low state of consciousness, of the fact that we are machines. Only understanding this can we have the motivation to make efforts at seeking to become something else than machines. If we want to become something else, we must try to do such things as a machine cannot do. A machine cannot observe itself. At the very moment we observe ourselves we are not machines. Soon self-observation stops, however. It stops from a mechanical cause, a force we do not control, and then we are machines again, and remain so until we *once again initiate self-observation from within ourselves*. If we initiate self-observation on the basis of a correct knowledge of our division and motivated by our desire not to be machines any longer, our desire to become beings with our own consciousness and our own will, then self-observation becomes a tool in our effort to develop consciousness and will.

On the fourth way, it is emphasized that man, in his present state, does not have consciousness and will, that he can develop both, but that no such development can occur mechanically, automatically. This is a very important insight. We usually speak of “development” as a mechanical process, whether it concerns human beings, animals, plants, or social phenomena. What we mean then is the fact that certain things change or transform according to known or unknown laws: children develop into adults, society develops from an agricultural into an industrial community, etc. However, in so far as man wants to transform himself into something else than a machine, if he wants to acquire consciousness and will, this can only be the result of knowledge and of effort. It cannot happen automatically just like when children develop teeth. Consciousness can be produced only through conscious efforts. This is one of the basic truths of the fourth way teaching.

### STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The fourth way teaching says that man is made in such a way that he can live in four states of consciousness, but such as we are we use only two: one when we are asleep, and the other when we are what we call “awake” – that is to say, in this present state, when we can move about, talk, listen, read, write and so on. But these are only two out of four possible states, as

said. The third state of consciousness is very interesting. If it is explained to us what the third state of consciousness is, we at once think that we have it. This third state is *self-consciousness*. If people ask us whether we are self-conscious, most of us say, “Certainly we are self-conscious!” It might be true that for that very moment we are self-conscious, since then we direct attention to ourselves, but at the next moment it is gone. Thus we are self-conscious only very briefly. Most of the time we are not. A rather long time and repeated efforts of self-observation are necessary before we really recognize the fact that we are not self-conscious; that we are conscious only potentially. Our work at self-observation yields us the insight that we are not in the third state of consciousness, but that we live only in two. We live either in sleep or in a waking state, which in this teaching is called *relative consciousness*. The fourth state is called objective consciousness. It is inaccessible to us because it can only be reached through self-consciousness, that is, by becoming aware of oneself first, so that much later we may manage to reach the state of objective consciousness. Here objective consciousness means a state where you perceive things (objects) as they really are independent of our subjective misconceptions of them.

This brings us to yet another purpose of our exercises in observing ourselves: we want to reach the third state, we want to become self-conscious. So at the same time as we are observing ourselves we try to be conscious of ourselves by keeping the awareness of “I am here now” – nothing more. It is no thought, no emotion. Thoughts and emotions are functions; they usually appear without self-consciousness. Consciousness is something different, however. We can have functions with self-consciousness and functions without self-consciousness: we can think consciously or unconsciously, feel consciously or unconsciously, see and hear consciously or unconsciously, move consciously or unconsciously. If we perform functions consciously, with the awareness of “I am here”, we shall with time perceive that we have a much higher degree of presence of what we are and do, a sense of *self-control*, *meaning*, and *wakefulness*. We shall then realize that in our so-called normal state we are so mechanical, so little conscious that we actually are asleep. We call only the first of the four states of consciousness sleep, but in comparison with self-consciousness even the second state, our normal waking state, appears as sleep. *We are asleep*.

The fourth way teaching makes us see that we are asleep but can wake up. We can do so by making sufficient effort, like a man fighting against all but overwhelming impulses to fall asleep. Another name of the fourth way is the “war against sleep”.

## THE FOUR WAYS

Why is it called the fourth way? A very long time ago, there were some people who realized that they were asleep but wanted to wake up. They understood that they had to make purposive, intelligent, systematic efforts, if they were to reach to goal. Three ways were formed that could be walked by those who were prepared to make such efforts. The division into three ways is connected with the four kinds of functions mentioned earlier and basic differences between people.

There are people in whom moving and instinctive functions dominate, whereas intellectual and emotional functions are not as prominent. In another category of people, emotional functions predominate, whereas the other three are weaker. A third category is represented by intellectual people in whom emotional, instinctive, and moving functions are weaker. The three categories mentioned are called quite simply people number 1, 2, and 3.

For people number 1, the way of the fakir was formed. It is the way where one awakens and attains self-consciousness by working on the physical body, by overcoming physical pain. It is a long, difficult, and uncertain way. For people number 2, the way of the monk or nun was formed. It is the way on which you reach consciousness through devotion to God and abnegation of bodily desires. It is a shorter, more certain way than the way of the fakir, but only for people of strong faith. For people number 3, the way of the yogi was formed. It is the newest and most secure of the three ways. Only gnana yoga, the yoga of knowledge, and raja

yoga, the yoga of consciousness, are relevant here.

For all their mutual differences, the three ways are all characterized by the fact that they demand immensely much of man in external respect: he must from the very outset give up all his previous way of life, forgo everything, and do as he is told. So, the three ways are very hard even to begin walking for most people. Also, they do not suit our present mode of life. If there were only these three ways, it would be very bad for most of us, for then there would be no way to walk for us towards awakening.

Fortunately, there is a fourth way. The fourth way is intended for such people as do not want to be machines any longer, do not want to be asleep, who want to be conscious and awake, but who for various reasons cannot become fakirs, monks, nuns, or yogis. The fourth way affords people very great freedom, since it does not require any external giving up of things. This is so because on the fourth way all work is inner. A man must begin work in the same conditions in which he finds himself when he meets it, because these conditions are the best for him. If he begins to work and study in these conditions, he can attain something, and later, if it is necessary, he will be able to change them, but not before he sees the necessity for it. So at first one continues to live the same life as before, in the same circumstances as before. In many respects this way proves more difficult than the others, for nothing is harder than to change oneself internally without changing oneself externally.

When Gurdjieff's and Ouspensky's teaching is called the "fourth way", you should be clear about the fact that this is to some extent improper. The fourth way is much bigger than one school, however important this is. We could say that Gurdjieff's and Ouspensky's teaching belongs to the category of systems or teachings that make up the fourth way. We could also say that when Gurdjieff appeared with his school in the beginning of the 20th century, this was the first important manifestation of fourth way schools in our times.

#### SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

Man does not possess self-consciousness, but he can acquire it. Self-consciousness is actually the truly human consciousness, that which separates man from the animals. Even animals have functions: emotional, instinctive, and moving functions; the highest animal species even have intellectual functions. But animals do not even have the possibility of self-consciousness. Man has it, however, and when he is not living self-consciously, he is living below his true level. He has a right to be self-conscious.

Rare glimpses of self-conscious occur spontaneously in the lives of most people. All of us probably have experience of such moments where we have felt immensely present in what is happening to us and around us. In such moments all impressions are strong and vivid; light and colours, sounds, touches, and smells can be almost intrusive in their realness. From early childhood, we have some few strong and vivid memories that stand out clearly against long, grey stretches of oblivion and unconsciousness. Those are memories of moments when we were self-conscious. The fact that such glimpses occur particularly in childhood is explained by the fact that our inner centre of emotional functions is very alive at that age.

Moments of strong happiness and joy can be accompanied by self-consciousness. A young mother, feeding her first-born baby, is thinking, "Now I really know what happiness is; I will never forget what I am feeling right now." In that moment, perhaps, she experiences self-consciousness. Be it as it may, she cannot keep that state. Later she will only remember that she had the experience, but the feel of it is gone.

#### SELF-REMEMBERING

Is self-consciousness possible only in the form of rare, spontaneous glimpses? No. Man can create intentionally moments of self-consciousness, and working purposively he can make such moments last longer and longer. In the fourth way, such created self-consciousness is called "self-remembering". This term may be somewhat misleading, in the sense that it really is not about remembering or recalling anything that was, but, on the contrary, being intensely

present here and now. “Self-remembering” as a term connects with the corresponding concept in Buddhism, *sammâsati*, which is translated as “right recollection”. “Right recollection” is said to be one of the eight elements of the Buddha’s noble eightfold path, *ariya atthangika magga*. Early Christian authors, too, writing in Greek and Russian, treated self-remembering as a path to spiritual awakening. In Islamic sufism there is a corresponding experience and concept, *dhikr (zîkr)*, a word meaning “remembrance”.

Self-observation is not self-remembering, but self-observation can lead to self-remembering, if you do it while understanding the purpose of the exercise: “I am not conscious, but I want to become conscious.” Remembering oneself means the same as being conscious of oneself – “I am”. It is a very strange experience. It is no function, no thought, no feeling, but another state of consciousness. It comes of itself only for short whiles, usually when you are in a new environment, when you wake up in the morning after having spent the night in a strange house, for instance. Then you perhaps say to yourself: “How strange. I am here.” This is self-remembering, in that moment you remember yourself.

Another way of describing self-remembering is as attention in two directions. Usually we are hardly attentive at all or our attention jumps about, staying very briefly at different objects without being directed or controlled by our intention. At other occasions our attention can be attracted by some object that captivates, fascinates us, an exciting film, for instance. Seldom our attention is directed from within ourselves. This directed attention is the most valuable kind, however, and it is only when it occurs in our functions that they will be able to do work of any higher quality, whether in the realm of thoughts, feelings, sense perceptions, or movements.

Self-directed attention is not self-consciousness, however. Directed attention can come about with self-consciousness and without self-consciousness. Mere directed attention without self-consciousness can be pictured as an arrow having its point directed at the object of attention. If, simultaneously as you direct your attention at an outer or inner object, you direct your attention at yourself, then you have doubly-directed attention. Then you “remember yourself”, then you become self-conscious. This can be represented graphically by an arrow that is pointed at both ends.

It has to be emphasized that in all essentials man, both in his outer and in his inner life, is a machine, that things “just happen to him” without his willing or controlling it. Mechanicalness thus is his *being*. An equally important truth is that mechanicalness and consciousness are mutually exclusive states: when he remembers himself, when he is conscious, he is not a machine. And conversely: when he is mechanical, acts like a robot on impulses not his own, then he is not conscious. Therefore, man can reduce his mechanicalness by striving to be conscious, as often as possible, even if it will be only for brief moments, at least in the beginning.

Actually, it is most amazing that the teaching of self-remembering, which has such an important place in the fourth way, has escaped the learned people of the West almost completely. Probably, this is due to the fact that in the West we have an unreal division of all kinds of studies and training into theoretical and practical subjects, a division in which theoretical studies and those pursuing them are considered to be better. Self-remembering is a practical thing, which you can understand only if you who have some practical experience of it, and the better the more extensive your practice is. You must have experienced it, not just once, but many times in different connections, various situations, so that you have a sufficiently large material of experience of it. Only then will you appreciate, in a deep way, beyond a mere shallow fascination, its immense significance. People who are too theoretical in their ways of looking at things cannot take any interest in it. Just a few half-hearted attempts will not lead you anywhere. But even the serious efforts you make at the beginning are necessarily weak, quite simply because you are a beginner and have too little experience to do it right. Precisely because intentional self-remembering often yields such small and feeble results in the beginning – actually just the realization, “I do not remember myself” –

makes it quite improbable that some lone individual, in a grey distant past would have discovered, by accident, self-remembering as a path to higher consciousness. Only people who have reached the higher two states – self-consciousness and objective consciousness – can understand the vital importance of self-remembering as method. It is from such individuals – teachers of esoteric schools, Ouspensky's hidden schools – that self-remembering as an idea and as a method has come. It has not arisen through the ordinary turnover of ideas in human philosophical speculation.

As you make the effort of remembering yourself, many times a day, not just in quiet moments but above all in all situations of everyday life, you will find, with time, that it will be an increasingly deeper perception, that it will be possible to retain it longer, that you will be able to possess the perception of "I am" in connection with more functions. It is important to stress that self-remembering, if real, does not in any way hinder or impair your ordinary intellectual, emotional, instinctive, and moving functions. Whatever hinders a function can only be another function: thinking of remembering yourself is not remembering yourself, no more than thinking of eating is eating. Functions are one thing, states of consciousness are another. You convince yourself of this fact by observing yourself.

Under certain circumstances, self-remembering can lead you further, into higher states of consciousness that in some respects correspond to "union with God" as described by mystics, or to what some people have called "cosmic consciousness", actually a misnomer. Descriptions and designations are unessential, however. The only essential thing is the fact that it is quite possible for man to reach such higher states. But, as said, it is possible only by making many strenuous efforts with your consciousness. Consciousness can grow only from consciousness, never from some mechanical function.

#### OUR MOST MECHANICAL FUNCTION: NEGATIVE EMOTIONS

It is very interesting to observe how our functions express themselves in states of self-remembering, self-consciousness. Because what we find is that certain functions quite simply fail to appear. It stands to reason that some moving functions presuppose mechanicalness or robot-like sleep. We mislay things such as keys or spectacles, for example, only in mechanical states, never consciously. But states of self-consciousness and self-remembering excludes also some emotional functions, that is to say: *negative emotions*.

By "negative emotions" we understand all depressive, violent, or aggressive feelings, such as hatred, anger, fear, bitterness, lust for revenge, malicious joy (what Germans call *Schadenfreude*), feeling hurt, irritation, and so on. These emotions are the most mechanical functions we have, and cannot possibly occur in conscious states. No normal human being wants to have negative emotions; no normal human being feels anything negative intentionally. It is obvious, then, that negative emotions come about mechanically, without our will, or even against our will.

If we do not want to have negative emotions, what do we do then? As long as we manage to keep ourselves conscious, we will be out of reach of our own negativity and that of other people as well. In such a state you may feel the presence of negative emotions, but you are hardly affected by them, let alone make them your own. We are seldom conscious, however, and when we become conscious, it is for such short moments that it is practically without significance, we perhaps think. "We'll have to put up with our negative emotions; it can't be that bad, can it?" If we think so, we are wrong because we have immensely much to gain by struggling with our negative emotions.

The fourth way teaches us that as long as we have negative emotions to any significant extent, we cannot develop our consciousness either. There are several reasons for this. Development means that everything in us that can develop, all our good qualities and abilities, grow approximately to the same degree. Otherwise we would become too unbalanced. But negative emotions belong to a category of qualities that cannot develop, and it would do us much harm if they could develop. If negative emotions cannot develop, they can on the other

hand prevent our development. And the further we advance, the bigger obstacles our negative emotions present, also such emotions as we consider pretty innocent. This is connected with what is called “personalities” and, in particular, with what is called “false personality”. A few words on personalities to begin with.

“I” am not unitary, “I” am not one, but many; the countless, short-lived “I”s constantly appearing and disappearing, being replaced by others in never-ending turnover. We all of us have such intellectual “I”s, emotional “I”s, instinctive “I”s, and movement “I”s. One of your intellectual “I”s resolves that your body should lose some weight, but at the next moment there appears an instinctive “I”, which feels that a sandwich would be just fine, two hours before dinner, takes command of a movement “I” directing your steps towards the refrigerator. Our “I”s are organized into large groups called “personalities”. These personalities can be distinguished after a long time of self-observation. They are usually connected with things we like. Every human being has a number of personalities that are more or less different from each other. Each personality is made up of qualities and abilities that can be developed. Where personalities are concerned, consciousness development implies a process towards increasing unity in man; the different personalities will in time become united.

Beside personalities capable of development man has a false personality. False personality is the sum total of everything in us that cannot develop, everything that cannot be part of the development of our consciousness, that which is the most deeply asleep and wants to drag along with itself everything that is more awake. Every human being has a false personality. Most people never become aware of it, however. This is so because most people make no effort to develop their consciousness; most of them probably have not even heard that there is such a thing as consciousness development. As long as a man does not care about developing his consciousness, his false personality keeps calm. It quite simply is there and more or less sets its mark on the man.

But as soon as a man awakens to the need for developing consciousness and begins to make efforts to that end, false personality becomes more active. It starts to defend itself, for it knows instinctively that to the extent the man has success in his work at developing, to the same extent false personality must grow weaker. As the man becomes more and more conscious, he becomes less and less mechanical, and the space that is left for everything making up false personality will be more and more narrow. As he remembers himself more and more, false personality will grow thinner and thinner. And negative emotions are the most important elements of false personality. If man is to reach the third state of consciousness, if it is to become stable in him just as the second state – relative consciousness – is stable in him now, then this can only mean that false personality has to go. It is easy to understand that a human being who is always self-conscious cannot have any negative emotions. How is it possible that anyone could intentionally, consciously choose to feel anger, fear, or irritation?

There is also another reason why negative emotions have to be eliminated, if man is to develop. This is connected with the fact that man is an energy system. All development of consciousness involves constant work, never-ending effort. All work requires energy. From where does man draw this energy? Do we have too little energy at our disposal, this being the reason why we find it so difficult to develop? The answer is: No. Such as man is made, he has sufficient energy for his development. The supply of energy is not the problem, but the leaks are. And we leak huge amounts of energy, in fact such immense quantities that we are like big sieves that can keep nothing. This is the main reason why, even if we want to develop consciousness, we find it so difficult to do so. We do not have force or energy enough to do it. And as long as we are leaking so profusely as we do, it is pointless to try and increase the supply of energy. Not even the biggest taps are of any use for the bath tub, if it has a big hole in its bottom.

Our most serious leak, the one draining the most of our energy, is negative emotion. Perhaps we wake up in the morning in very good spirits, feeling filled with the energy that our



body has stored during the night's sleep. This energy is quite sufficient for all our mechanical functions in the daytime and, of course, also for our very short spells of work at and for our consciousness. But something happens. Our boss at the workplace gives us a scolding, or we get a parking fine, or something else occurs that provokes a strong negative emotion of anger or disappointment to which we feel we must give vent. And instantly all the positive energy we had up to then has vanished into thin air. What took a whole night of sound sleep to build up is consumed in five seconds. And we feel drained, empty of all force. Is it possible to develop consciousness when things like that "just happen"? No. That is why we must take up the fight against our negative emotions.

In the beginning, however, we cannot fight them head-on, directly. This is connected with the fact that we have very little control of our emotional functions. We cannot fight negative emotions in advance, before they appear. And while they are raging it is impossible to control them; then we cannot even observe ourselves. So we cannot fight them directly, but we must apply some indirect method. This involves the use of intellectual functions, because it is much easier to control those. By being taught, being guided, and mustering our own understanding we can learn how to *think right* about negative emotions. So using intellectual functions we can master negative emotional functions.

Right thinking (it, too, being an element of the noble eightfold path of the Buddha) about negative emotions means that we see through ourselves: how we allow, justify, cultivate, and enjoy certain negative emotions. What is interesting in this is that, mostly, these negative emotions are precisely the ones we dislike or condemn in other people. Other people are hard, callous, and have no heart; we are firm and just. Other people are irritable and unbearable hotheads; we have a strong temperament. Other people are rude and aggressive; we just give our honest, well-founded opinion on other people, are guided by firm principles, and do not let ourselves be put upon. And so on. There is no negative emotion that cannot be glorified in some way or other.

The task lying before us is *to refrain from expressing or showing negative emotions*. It is not a matter of suppressing them, but of choosing other ways. If we painstakingly observe ourselves, we shall with time be able to discover our own specialties as for negative emotions, our own varieties of this dubious enjoyment. Moreover, we shall be able to clarify our own mechanical path into our negative emotions, because it is always the same process, the same preliminary stages we pass through. And when we know ourselves better on the point of negative emotions, we shall with time be able to stop ourselves, catch ourselves, just before we indulge in them. However, this presupposes, as said, that we have worked at our thinking about negative emotions, so that we have realized that they are completely useless and harmful to us, so that we do not in any way cherish or defend them.

If we can reduce the existence and power of negative emotions in us, we shall be able to develop our consciousness. And if we can eliminate them completely, we shall have the possibility of becoming permanently self-conscious; otherwise it will be impossible. That is the simple truth. We have a very long way to go, however, and before we have learnt not to even have negative emotions, we must have learnt not to express them to other people. And we can learn that. It is part of our upbringing not always to show negative emotions. We know that in certain circumstances it is extremely unsuitable, harmful, or even dangerous to express negative emotions, and then we do not do so. If we can refrain from expressing them in certain circumstances, then we of course can do so in other circumstances as well.

When we no longer have negative emotions, we shall be able to acquire truly positive emotions. We do not have them yet. By truly positive emotions are meant such feelings as cannot pass into their opposites, such emotions as cannot become negative: love that can never turn into hatred, faith that can never change into distrust, admiration that can never pass into contempt, compassion that can never change into indifference or coldness. Such immutably positive feelings are the strongest forces for our development we can ever possess. They are carriers of energy that appear exhaustless.

## KNOWLEDGE AND BEING

The fourth way stresses the importance of developing both knowledge and being. This concerns one of man's most basic divisions. Knowledge is all that we know, being is all that we are. We cannot progress towards self-consciousness by developing one at the expense of the other. This is connected with our level. At any given moment, our knowledge is on a certain level, and our being is on another level. We can acquire new knowledge, grow in knowledge, but not indefinitely. We reach a certain limit and cannot go any further. Beyond this limit, the additional knowledge we seek to acquire becomes incomprehensible to us. It turns into mere words that say nothing to us. This is so because our being is too small, undeveloped, or weak in relation to our knowledge. But if then we can grow in our being, develop qualities and abilities, this means that our knowledge can increase as well.

In life we can observe that a knowledge, which at a certain time was incomprehensible to us, later in life becomes comprehensible at once. This is so because in the meantime our being has grown. We have acquired qualities, have had experiences that have developed our being.

The corresponding is true of being in relation to knowledge: it cannot develop beyond a certain point if knowledge does not grow simultaneously. Extreme imbalance in the development of knowledge and being can be illustrated by two examples. If knowledge develops far beyond being, the result will be a "weak yogi" – a man who knows everything but can do nothing. If being develops far beyond knowledge, the result will be a "stupid saint" – a man who can do everything, has overcome all his weaknesses, but does not know what to do.

No development or strengthening of our being can increase our knowledge. And no increase, growth of knowledge can strengthen our being in any way. The two must have an equal development because they are equally important. From the viewpoint of the fourth way, it is very easy to see how most systems of education fail: they overemphasize knowledge at the expense of being. In the West, too much stress has been laid on growth of knowledge. Being has been almost totally neglected. Our mismanaged school system suffers from this more than from any other factor. If school work attached greater weight to developing the inner qualities of children, they would be able to make great progress in relatively short time, both in their personal development and in their acquisition of knowledge. Much of the suffering that poisons people's lives later in life could be eliminated by right upbringing in childhood, particularly where negative emotions are concerned.

Religions have not understood knowledge and being, but have emphasized right conduct in external life. This has been of some importance, it is true, as counteracting recklessness and exploitation of people, but the inner man has nevertheless been set aside, which has bolstered hypocrisy. The lack of knowledge, particularly the knowledge of man and his possibility of consciousness, has led to the wrong things being emphasized. Belief has replaced understanding. Acceptance of theological fictions has replaced knowledge. Observance of external commandments has replaced internal transformation. Growing numbers of people have realized this, which is one of the reasons why religions are now dying.

Being cannot replace knowledge or vice versa. There is, however, a link connecting them, a domain of life in which they have an equal share: understanding. Understanding has an equal share in knowledge and being, and this explains why neither knowledge nor being can grow separately. A great knowledge with a weak being nevertheless equals a small understanding. Such a knowledge must largely be wrongly directed, unessential, or useless in practice. The corresponding is true of a great being with a small knowledge. Visualize knowledge and being as two areas partially cutting into each other. The common area in the middle is understanding. For the area of understanding to be reasonably large, both the area of knowledge and the area of being must be large.

In the fourth way, the ideas of knowledge and being take a very great importance. Here, knowledge means above all such knowledge of the world and of man as is necessary for the

work at acquiring consciousness. A man lacking such knowledge cannot develop. Having right knowledge and sufficient knowledge man can go far provided he makes the right efforts at developing his being. Correspondingly, being, in the fourth way sense, means all such qualities and abilities as promote your work at developing consciousness. In the fourth way, understanding means all understanding of the need for working at yourself, understanding of the fact that you are not conscious, that you are a machine, that you are not one but many, etc.

Observe your own being and that of other people! One person says he does not understand self-remembering after he has had it explained to him; that is one being. Another person says that he understands it fully and alleges that he can always remember himself; that is another being. A third person says he is beginning to understand what self-remembering is and realizes that he cannot remember himself except very briefly; that is yet another being. Three different kinds of being, representing three different levels. Observing and comparing in this way you can increase your understanding.

### ESSENCE AND PERSONALITY

We have seen that in the fourth way teaching, man has different divisions. We have, first of all, the division into hundreds upon hundreds of different “I”s grouped into a small number of personalities. Then we have the division into conscious and mechanic, two mutually exclusive states: what is mechanical cannot be conscious, and vice versa: what is conscious cannot be mechanic. Moreover the division into four functions: intellectual, emotional, instinctive, and moving functions. Then the division into knowledge and being. All these divisions are necessary for our understanding of our possibilities of development. They are like a series of maps of one and the same city. One map shows buildings, roads and streets, communications, etc. Another map shows where the different economic, industrial, and social activities are localized. A third map shows where various categories of the inhabitants live, etc. It is not possible to put all of this information into one single map, several maps are needed. The corresponding is true of our maps of man.

Our new division of man concerns essence and personality. This division does not dovetail with any of the ones earlier described. Essence means everything inherent in you, personality is the sum of everything acquired since you were born. Essence is your own. Personality is not your own. The whole of man’s inner life, all his perceptions and reactions, are divided into these two parts. There are certain things which are born in you, such as some physical features, state of health, certain predispositions, inclinations, tendencies, and so on. They belong to essence. Personality is what you acquire during our life: views, opinions, knowledge, words. In life, essence and personality are always mixed, but through diligent observation one can learn how to differentiate personality and essence somewhat, because personality changes very often with circumstances, whereas essence remains the same. It is usually easier to distinguish essence and personality in other people than in oneself. This division is very important to understand, because many things which we speak about in man refer to essence, while others refer to personality.

You can develop essence, make it grow, but only if personality is educated so that it ceases to press upon essence. Personality is too heavy, too strong; it surrounds essence like a shell, so that nothing can reach it directly and everything has to pass through personality. As long as these conditions prevail, essence cannot grow, but if personality becomes more transparent, impressions and external influences will penetrate through it and reach essence, and then essence will begin to grow.

Moreover, personality is often wrong. (In relation to essence “personality” is spoken of in the singular, but actually there are several personalities – four, five, up to ten different personalities in one person. Essence, however, is just one.) Among the personalities, false personality has too great a power. This has the result that “personality” is characterized by negative emotions, lying, self-deception, imagination – the most serious hindrances to the development of consciousness. Usually there are too many such things in our personality. All

of this must be put straight, and until this is done, personality is more or less abnormal.

A strong personality means a strong influence of what is not your own, of what you have acquired – other people's words, other people's views and theories. They can form such a thick crust round essence that nothing can penetrate it to reach *you*, to reach what you are.

However, this shell forms a defence against many influences, which are very difficult to control. If personality is weakened, you come under many influences, which before then could not reach you. Atmospheric changes and the passing of the seasons are examples of things that affect essence very much. People whose essence is more receptive to influences or whose personality does not weigh heavily upon their essence can feel such changes very strongly. Thus the opening up of essence is accompanied by many dangers, although such an opening up is good in itself.

With time and as you work, you gradually begin to see that some things are more ingrained, go deeper than others. In this way, little by little, you can see essence. When personality is educated and becomes less heavy, many qualities pass into essence and become permanent. This is how essence develops. In personality things appear and disappear, but what passes into essence remains.

You must not take this to imply that essence is all good and personality is all bad. In essence there is much that is primitive, savage, and useless for the development of consciousness. And in personality there is much that is reliable and useful: knowledge, qualities, and experience. The work for waking up must start from personality. This means cultivating personality, weakening and gradually eliminating what is worthless in it, strengthening what is of great worth in it.

In fourth way work, essence must be more important than personality, because real development is in essence. There must, from the beginning, be a certain quality in essence, for if this quality does not exist, nothing is possible. In personality, too, there must be a certain material, certain acquisitions. If personality is too strong, heavy, and abnormal, so that it oppresses essence, the individual in question will not be able to develop.

Among the many abnormal traits to be found in personality, one is particularly prominent: its suggestibility. Individuals having this abnormal trait in their personality, and they seem to be in a majority, very easily, unresistingly, submit to a foreign will, and act, think, and believe as suggested to them. This trait is reinforced in collective formations into some kind of trance, which Charles Tart has called "consensus trance". Tart is an American professor of psychology who has received deep impressions from the teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky. Consensus means a view of reality that is common to a majority of people. Consensus trance means that we have accepted a certain view of reality not through a rational elaboration of facts but through collective suggestion. Consensus trance has the effect that we instinctively defend ourselves against disturbing facts that threaten to shake our world view and so wake us up from our trance. An interesting example of consensus trance was given by Swedish theorist of science Johan Lindström, citing the diary that Charles Darwin wrote while participating in the expedition of the Beagle. The diary entry in question is about a short visit on the coast of Patagonia, an area in South America where the natives had had almost no contact with white people. The Patagonians meeting the party set ashore from the Beagle quite simply could not see the ship, because big vessels had no place in their experience up to then.

Originally published in Swedish Edition of *NEXUS New Times* magazine, issue No. 1, 2000. Translated from the Swedish by Lars Adelskog.