

14 INTELLIGENCE

14.1 Intelligence Considered Esoterically

¹The first self (the human being) acquires intelligence; the second self, unity as his essential capacity.

²The three main kinds of second triad consciousness have been called “intelligence” (47:1-3), “love” (46:1-7), and “will” (45:4-7). These terms are analogies with human faculties and are misleading if taken literally. Generally comprehensible terms are still lacking, since those kinds of consciousness and energy are beyond human experience. In its highest potency, “intelligence” (47:1) implies sovereign understanding of all objective material phenomena in the three worlds of man (47–49).

³The fact that it is possible to perceive intelligence in the lowest two worlds depends on the presence of mental atoms even in the lowest kind of matter (the physical atom).

⁴The third department is the department of intelligence. It has the purpose of developing human mental consciousness into independent thinking and common sense. That is why it divides itself into the four departments 4–7, which have the same purpose: to help the different types in the human kingdom to advance in the manner that is the easiest for them.

⁵In esoterics, intelligence is studied according to that basic esoteric principle which says that we should always look at things from above rather than from below, from the higher rather than from the lower, from the goal rather than from the start, and value the lower as interesting only in its capacity of being that contrast to the higher which can help us better understand this higher. The term “higher intelligence”, as used in this study, can only have reference to that higher mentality which can function freely also from the higher emotionality (48:3 and 48:2), thus perspective thinking (47:5) and system thinking (47:4). It is this higher intelligence which is able to understand esoterics, because it achieves a contact, even if a faint one, with causal consciousness. A still higher intelligence is of course the causal one (from 47:3 to 47:2 and from 47:2 to 47:1).

14.2 The Tools of Intelligence Briefly Described

¹Comprehension is the result of reflection. Understanding is immediate perception as a result of remembrance anew on completed working up of a certain subject-matter. The simplest mind can conclude from cause to effect. The ability to conclude from effect to cause calls for judgement. Judgement presupposes experience and knowledge of facts, the ability of analysis and synthesis, and is limited to a certain sphere of knowledge. Judgement in one sphere of knowledge does not automatically entail judgement in another one. In its sphere of knowledge, good judgement can judge facts correctly, put facts in their correct contexts, distinguish between fact and fiction, between blind belief and that critical view which asks whether sufficient facts are available for an assumption to be made for the time being. Ignorance is lack of knowledge of facts. Analysis is the study of details, of individual facts, and the assessment of them on the basis of their relative importance. Upon the conclusion of analysis synthesis ensues, which is the combination of details, facts, into principles and system. “Synthesis” without a previous analysis is the most common of common things and can be made by the most ignorant, but then the quality and usefulness of such a “synthesis” will reflect that ignorance. Facts, concepts, and principles are absolute, taken separately. But they acquire a relative significance when put into relations to others in their correct system. Concepts are necessary to comprehension. Principles are necessary to survey concepts, being summaries of concepts. A principle is a generalization of clear-cut cases that seldom occur in reality. Generally speaking, many mutually modifying principles are required for a correct statement.

14.3 *Thinking and Intelligence*

¹Like all other capacities, the capacity for thinking must be acquired. At home and at school we learn how to think within certain limited spheres of experience. When we move out of those spheres, however, we practically always think wrong. If we do not have all the facts for a final judgement of a particular case, we think wrong. The history of philosophy should have taught us how hard it is to think and even harder to think right. It should have taught at least the philosophers that thinking requires knowledge. Without knowledge you merely indulge in fancies, which are phenomena in your emotional envelope. Mentality requires exactitude.

²Intelligence, learning, knowledge, and wisdom must be distinguished. Intelligence is mental faculties: inference thinking, principle thinking, perspective thinking, system thinking, and causal idea thinking. Learning is the gathering of data in some certain field, data that need not all be true, but may be facts and fictions. Knowledge is esoterically nothing but facts agreeing with reality. Wisdom is capacity for application, skill in action.

³What is usually meant by intelligence is not pure mental thinking but imagination, a union of emotionality and mentality, the kama-manas of the Indians. Intelligent people fancy they have a capacity for judgement, which always has been the enormous error of mankind. Actually, they are sovereign only in the lowest mentality (47:7), for mental consciousness is so little developed that rapid activity in this, its lowest sphere is regarded as “talent”. The grotesque feature of this is that the lowest kind of capacity for reflection (the ability to “think” at all) is perceived as correct or infallible. Whenever someone raises his head above the crowd, he is a “genius”. Mankind has come to its senses when it realizes its enormous mental limitation and its inability to make correct statements about reality.

⁴Generalization, the summing up of many similar things, is one of the first instances of how the individual’s incipient capacity for reflection utilizes experience. Life-ignorant man finds it too easy to draw such conclusions, a fact to which familiar sayings and traditional proverbs bear witness. They very easily are made absolute and so have an idiotizing effect.

⁵The acuity produced by the philosophical giants’ mills of logic overwhelms those comprehending it, so that it is not to be wondered at that their disciples give in to the effects of that machinery. The esoterician can seldom match those mental razors in acuity. The esoterician is not acute or, in any case, need not be acute for acuity is sovereignty in principle thinking. He does not solve the problems, but is given the solution through new facts that he receives. Acuity does not find the path leading to perspective consciousness the condition of which is the application of common sense and the demand for a larger horizon and survey. It is essential not to get stuck in anything, never consider anything final, never accept dogmas, but always move on. Acuity fixes and locks up. Perspective goes round, finding more and more viewpoints. Acuity is a typical ability in fifth department consciousness. Perspective is the most easily acquired in the third department.

⁶Esoteric logic teaches that analysis never yields any synthesis. The learned may in however many conferences analyse a thing “endlessly” not getting anywhere. And so it is because synthesis esoterically belongs on a higher mental level, and such a level you reach only through an idea from the world of ideas. A true, esoteric synthesis is either a causal (47:1-3) or an essential (46) intuition. Ordinary so-called syntheses either are obtained through elimination or are old “wisdom” latent in the subconscious and so do not live up to their name.

⁷You can effectuate something resembling a synthesis by raising the whole problem on to a higher level, up into perspective consciousness.

⁸The most superior intelligence and capacity for judgement to be found in the exoterist appear in the interest he takes in problems of reality of all kinds while understanding that all exoteric solutions are suppositions and can never afford absolute certainty, however ingenious they may appear. The knowledge of reality (except that of the physical world) remains in-

accessible to exoterists. Superphysical problems of course are no problems to the individuals of the fifth natural kingdom, and their basic view was taught by Pythagoras in the secret knowledge order instituted by him.

⁹The superphysical problems include the three aspects of reality and the nature of matter, motion, and consciousness. Those are problems that science will never be able to solve. Their solution requires the capacity for consciousness of unity (46 and higher), a capacity that is not acquired in the fourth natural kingdom.

14.4 Lower Intelligence (47:7 and 47:6)

¹At lower stages or as the result of deficient education, human intelligence consists in attempts at grasping what others have said to be able to parrot it. More than 99 per cent of prevalent views are more or less deficient due to the scarcity of facts.

²The lower intelligence used by the intelligentsia of the stage of civilization is 47:6, principle thinking. This thinking is not rational but rather rationalizing, intellectualizing emotional assurances. This intelligentsia, which the civilizational individual looks up to as his authority, is characterized by its hostility to superphysical knowledge and experience in general and esoterics in particular. It is also characterized by its “lunacy” (in the esoteric sense), thus its propensity to hunting for, collecting, formatory “ideas”. Intellectuals of this category generally are committed to some idiology (not ideology) which is replete with such formatory “ideas” of scant reality value. Such an idiology typically conflicts with common sense, objective findings, and traditional human experience and therefore cannot be defended with ordinary, rational arguments. Too often its protagonists resort to means of compulsion against dissenters.

³Marxism was such a compulsive idiology which now seems to be on its way out of history. In its stead we have got others, such as for example propaganda for the belief in the so-called Holocaust, gender theory (the allegation that sex, or “gender”, is a social construction), and the presentation of homosexuality as a normal phenomenon (with or without so-called queer theory). The governments of many western countries have lent support to these ideologies, funding them through the public education system, forcing through various sanctions dissidents to submit and researchers to produce “findings” that “scientifically confirm” the “truths” politically decreed and to be silent about facts that refute them. Such compulsive ideologies are part of that cultural radicalism which the planetary hierarchy considers to be one of the most serious hindrances to its planned reappearance.

⁴The traditional religions, such as Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, are not indicated as problems in this respect, since they represent a general human normalcy based upon experience of life gathered by mankind, afford people some ideas of a higher reality and the continuation of life, and also are compatible with some kind of esotericism and even contain such traditions (although Christianity does it the least).

⁵Intelligence of a lower kind is limited to, or perceives almost exclusively, quantitative conditions, judges things according to them and orients itself by them. In contrast, intelligence of a higher kind observes especially qualitative conditions. Therefore, assessments of the influence of various human groups, for instance, may be quite different according to what kind of intelligence made the assessment. Quantitative intelligence seems to have difficulty in seeing that also relatively small groups belonging to a much larger collective may express the qualities of the collective in a very active, unitary, and purposive way, whereas the collective itself is largely passive or divided. Quantitative intelligence has difficulty in perceiving the qualitative connections between the small groups and the larger collective. This is true in particular if the small groups manifest qualities of the larger collective in a new way, in a more developed or more intensive fashion.

⁶When intelligence reaches the limit of principle thinking (47:6) but is not able to pass

beyond it, imagination prevails over thought. Then the thinker will drift into mysticism and subjectivism, since the lower mentality cannot control the higher emotionality (48:3 and 48:2), which are the regions of mysticism. We find instances of this transition of principle thinking into mysticism in certain modern physicists, who have launched hypotheses of reality that conflict with common sense and the principle of objectivity and also are markedly subjectivist in the manner of Kant's "reality adapts to our concepts".

14.5 Emotionalization of Concepts

¹A great problem is the emotionalization of concepts. When a concept is emotionalized it means that the individual or collective has not been able to conceive the mental content belonging to a certain word but has replaced this with a predominantly positive or negative emotion that he or it 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 word "democracy" may serve as an example. Originally and properly it meant just people power, the choice of the majority expressed in representative assemblies. Nowadays in the Western world there is an increasing tendency to emotionalize and subjectivize the pertaining concept, so that they do not any longer consider it determined by the objective criterion of popular power but rather by certain "values" that are selected subjectively and arbitrarily and then called "democratic". Subsequently they can as arbitrarily reject election results obtained by clear majorities in general elections that have been held in an exemplary fashion. Thus the people were "undemocratic" and "voted wrong". In such cases, the power élite, knowing everything better, would rather have another people.

²The emotionalization of many important concepts is so powerful because it is a collective process in large masses of people at the emotional stage who are easily manipulated by cunning opinion makers who are at a slightly higher level of intelligence. The process has a great suggestive power, so that also the mentalist or anyone who strives to be one will often need to put up an active resistance to those "bad suggestions of public opinion" in his own thinking. In all issues where we have not actively examined the matter ourselves and formed an independent opinion we run a risk of being members of the unthinking, easily controlled, easily manipulated masses.

³It is better to self-actively refrain from having any opinion at all on a certain issue than to accept, without examination, the view of public opinion or, rather, the view of its leaders. Otherwise a good beginning of a more critical attitude is to ask yourself, as did Roman Lucius Cassius, "cui bono?", that is: who benefits from our taking sides against or with a certain cause?

⁴At the emotional stage there is no difference between analysis and criticism. Emotionalism is either attractive or repulsive making impersonal analysis impossible. Such an activity is possible only at the mental stage. It is easy to ascertain that mental analysis is always perceived emotionally by emotionalists and that this perception of theirs is submerged in general injudiciousness.

⁵The emancipation of concepts and ideas from emotionalization, as seen esoterically (from the objective point of view), is connected with the emancipation of the mental envelope from its coalescence with the emotional envelope and the resulting process of the closer attachment of the mental envelope to the causal envelope, a process that is contained in what is called the "building of the antahkarana".

14.6 The Development of Intelligence

¹Scientific discoveries and technological progress are often mistaken for intellectual development. But the former have nothing in common with the latter. The innumerable discoveries that natural science and its technological offshoots have made ever since Galilei united natural research (ascertainment of facts) with experimentation and the mathematical method, have continuously increased our knowledge of physical material reality. Gradually, research has liberated us from the fictions and superstitions handed down from our fathers; it has expanded our horizon, and developed our sense of reality. But the ability of inference and conceptual comprehension are the same. People do not comprehend better, although in a totally different way, namely in accordance with the things explored. An ever deeper comprehension of the absolute conformity to law of existence begins to make itself felt. Without conformity to law research would be utter nonsense. They begin to see that ignorance depends on ignorance of the laws, or of the constant relations.

²Just as the stage of civilization brings with it an intellectualization of barbaric emotionality, so the stage of humanity entails the same as regards cultural emotionality. Intellectualization implies that feeling, poor in intelligence, becomes increasingly more rational, and gradually passes into, or is replaced by, imagination, and the latter in its turn is superseded by clear ideas. Intellectualization occurs at the same time as mental consciousness becomes self-active and the mental envelope emancipates itself from its dependence on and coalescence with the emotional envelope. The process begins with the activation of the fifth molecular kind (47:5). When the higher layers in this matter are activated, then also the mental envelope can assist in activating the causal envelope. Until then, the contribution to this by the mental was limited to the faint impulses at the end of the existence of the personality in the mental world “after death”, when the experiences of the life just concluded were sublimated into causal ideas that the causal was able to assimilate. The now double influence soon makes consciousness self-active. A consequence of this is that causal ideas become increasingly easily accessible to mental consciousness; inspiration and vision, to emotional consciousness.

³If the higher emotionality is developed exclusively by cultivating devotional intense longing for, aspiration towards merging in, essential unity (46), then the mental activation is neglected. The mystic remains mentally undeveloped. This is the cause of the infantile, rationally helpless trait of most mystics. They appear undeveloped, and are therefore totally misjudged by always presumptuous ignorance. The mystic who has succeeded in his efforts, however, has developed an understanding that has no need for comprehension, that in respect of life is incomparably superior to the greatest mental ingenuity. The higher remains “esoteric” to the lower. Understanding presupposes both the activation of the requisite sphere of consciousness and the corresponding latent experience, qualitatively and quantitatively. If understanding is lacking, there is always a risk of misunderstanding even by those who have comprehended clearly.

14.7 Higher Intelligence (47:5 and Higher)

¹The step from principle thinking (47:6) to perspective thinking (47:5) is much bigger than that from inference thinking (47:7) to principle thinking, since the lower two kinds of thinking both are part of emotional mentality, whereas perspective thinking is part of higher mentality the conquest of which presupposes control also of higher emotionality.

²Different levels of intelligence, so to speak, can be distinguished in the acceptance of truths, from the level characterized by the uncritical acceptance of everything said up to the level where the greatest critical ability is displayed. Criticism in this connection means judgement, ability to judge.

³Higher intelligence strives after and achieves clarity of concepts. It has realized that “if

each concept is a little cloud, then thinking with these concepts will just be a bigger cloud.” An important feature of this work is also the insight that “clarity is not all”. The thinkers of old viewed clarity as an evidence of truth. Esoteric logic, however, teaches that clarity in itself has nothing to do with truth or reality. Fictions can be formulated with thoughts of great clarity and so mislead many intellectuals. Conversely, reality ideas may at first be grasped obscurely and be given a vague formulation. Nevertheless it is true that human thinking, when fully developed, can clearly comprehend any kind of reality in the worlds of man (47–49) and therefore should render this reality with clearly formulated concepts, also to counteract the spread of fictions and illusions.

⁴Higher intelligence is creative thought power, the ability to think new thoughts, think the thoughts of the future, formulate truths that only an esoteric intellectual élite can grasp yet. Lower intelligence repeats the old, untenable, already refuted, only presenting it in new forms.

⁵Where lower intelligence is most often attached to the form, the matter aspect, and the physical expression, higher intelligence is able to see beyond the form, to notice the consciousness and motion aspects. In so doing it can ask questions – perhaps answer them, too – about motives, intentions, ends, goals, functions rather than forms. There is in this the understanding that individuals and groups do not have unchanging “essences”, but rather express more or less changeable qualities. The confusion of objectively existing individuals and groups with subjective concepts of unchanging “essences” is a particular instance of the general subjectivism that is seen in the mix-up of objective reality with subjective concepts.

⁶The higher the intelligence, the deeper the interest in, and understanding of, the motion or will aspect. There is in this a deepening understanding of how the law of change rules all reality. This understanding also counteracts the subjectivist belief of lower intelligence in unchanging “essences”. The static concepts, rigid in their timelessness, of lower intelligence are supplanted by dynamic ones, accompanied by at least some idea of change, its direction and strength. This time aspect should also be present in what is perceived as momentary, just as every point of a graph has a derivative (indicating the direction of change in that very point), this in its turn has a derivative of the second degree (the rate of change of the change, the inclination of the whole graph), and so forth.

⁷One of the most important functions of a developed intelligence is being an instrument that a more conscious self uses to eliminate limitations of its own thinking, that is to say self-criticism directed to erroneous conclusions, primitive constructions, formatory thinking. In so doing the more conscious self distinguishes the less conscious self, practises non-identification in relation to it, separates itself from it as being a not-self. This is the same kind of function as the more conscious self uses when disidentifying from negative emotions. Here it is rather the matter of disidentifying from lower, unnecessarily limiting thoughts.

⁸In contrast, undeveloped intelligence is identified with its erroneous conclusions, primitive constructions, formatory thinking, and this identification appears in its unwillingness to acknowledge the errors, even in justifying and excusing them. All this stems from the control that emotional consciousness wields over the lower mental and the absence of contact between the lower mental and the causal consciousness. The personal prestige that may also appear in this is just another manifestation of strong identifications which, in their turn, demonstrate that thought has not set itself free from its attachment to emotionality.

⁹“The negative judgement is the peak of mentality.” It is important for us to be able to say what a thing is not, because we are human beings, first selves, and as such seldom possess a certain, positive truth, or real knowledge. There is abundant positive truth, knowledge, only in the second self. For the first self it is in most cases very difficult to arrive at the truth, but much easier to discern and separate lies. It is a natural, human urge in us that makes us more willing to seek positive certitude than to ponder negative doubt. However, “by doubting we arrive at the truth.” By eliminating what is untenable methodically and systematically we pre-

pare ourselves step by step to receive the tenable. Esoterics really should be the last thing you examine, after you have scrutinized and discarded all the rest. The procedure is similar to the technician's systematic troubleshooting. "Intellectual troubleshooting" could be the name for the fifth department's special path to the truth or the knowledge of reality.

14.8 Conscience of Logic

¹In the mentalist there is something that might be called the "conscience of logic". This prevents him from accepting anything that he cannot support with his power of reflection, his common sense, and his knowledge of facts. For anyone walking the esoteric way it is of the utmost importance to cultivate and tend this conscience of logic, not to accept anything that he realizes to be a lie. Aspirants and disciples seek to attain the truth or the knowledge of reality, and how can they be successful in this endeavour, if they simultaneously accept lies? It is important to realize that by accepting lies you make it more difficult, or impossible altogether, to contact causal and essential consciousness. Your outer life must correspond to your inner life, and that is why it will not do to just make an inner reservation while you lend your external support to the "powers that be". Also in this matter the would-be disciple or the accepted disciple must cultivate the virtue of courage: to speak out and save his soul or, if necessary, be silent, but never ever speak against his own better judgement only to please unjust power and be spared temporary trouble.

14.9 Self-Observation, Self-Criticism, Self-Consciousness

¹One important aspect of higher intelligence is the ability of self-observation and self-criticism. There is a fairly general understanding of this. People who happily chatter away about themselves and their dealings, without a thought of how they reveal their stupidity, tactlessness, bad qualities, are often seen as embarrassing by people around them; for example by intelligent children who are ashamed of their parents' "howlers".

²Put simply: Anyone who sometimes observes himself is more intelligent than anyone who never observes himself. Anyone who often observes himself is more intelligent than anyone who seldom observes himself. Anyone who always observes himself intentionally, expeditiously, is more intelligent than anyone who observes himself in a haphazard way.

³Being intentional in one's self-observation means, first and foremost, that one is always aware, never forgets, that one makes impressions on other people in everything one says and does, everything one does not say and does not do; secondly that certain opportunities or meetings are much more important than others and that one should then make the best possible impression. Being expedient in one's self-observation means that one really observes oneself when this is necessary and important, and is able to use this higher degree of attention and consciousness to achieve the aim one has set up for oneself.

⁴Self-criticism is a natural result of self-observation. For to the extent that one observes one's behaviour one is liberated from identification with it. The explanation is that you cannot be what you observe, cannot be identified with what you observe, for what you observe becomes an external or internal object, and observer and object cannot be identical. This brings about the possibility of judging, assessing, and criticizing these internal objects which the person who does not self-observe must identify with and in so doing use such expressions as "I was angry", "I am irritated", "I cannot stand him", etc. When judging, assessing, and criticizing things the individual sorts them into better and worse in relation to the aim he is striving for: "Does it benefit my individual aims, the aims of my group, the group of the school, if I yield to this impulse, identify with that feeling?"

⁵All this inner activity of self-reflection, self-observation may, if the individual proceeds on the basis of knowledge and understanding, be made to pass into states of self-consciousness. The understanding of the nature of self-consciousness and its immense significance for in-

dividual and group consciousness development is due to intelligence of a particular kind which is close to causal consciousness. There are highly intelligent people who do not possess this understanding and cannot even acquire it. Those who possess it, however, evince it in higher and lower degrees, which depend on this particular intelligence, which actually is the first condition of causal consciousness.

14.10 Intelligence in Understanding Esoterics

¹The conquest of new domains for higher intelligence is a process that runs through many steps. Generally, seven steps can be distinguished: 1) The disciple deems something “higher” (part of esoteric reality) incomprehensible or misunderstands it. 2) He can with effort comprehend the simpler aspects of this higher temporarily, when the teacher demonstrates it to him with graphic examples. Afterwards, however, when the teacher’s magnetic influence has ceased, this comprehension has vanished. 3) He can, thanks to the teacher’s repetition and his own reflection, learn these simpler aspects, so that he remembers them also in the absence of the teacher and his magnetic stimulation. However, it is still comprehension without the deeper understanding. 4) He can learn how to comprehend some other, more extensive aspects of the higher and by reflecting upon them remember them. 5) He can, at first under the guidance of the teacher and later by his own reflection, draw general conclusions and see overall patterns. Now he has entered the stage of self-activity in a real sense. 6) During this process, understanding awakens, but not before. 7) He can make his own observations and draw correct conclusions from them. The domain of higher intelligence is now fully self-active where this particular theme is concerned. The process just described needs to be repeated with other themes, but with time the process is more rapid and simpler, as general understanding awakens more and more.

²The simplest, most immediate, actually self-evident fact is the most difficult to find. They still have not understood that. You may hear from those who have been told that matter, motion, and consciousness are the basic factors of existence: “But that is so self-evident it need not even be said!” Such a statement shows that the person in question has no idea of how seriously deficient the intellect is in its perception of reality. The esoterician is taught that all knowledge is self-evident, is the simplest of all simple things, but that it is utterly impossible for our intellect to discover it without preparation. This should give the mystics food for thought as well, those who think that truth is inconceivable. It is quite the opposite. The truth is the most self-evident, and that is precisely why it is inaccessible to reason of lower kinds.

³Intelligence is not sufficient to understand esoterics, if the individual does not have a latent understanding of it, because the knowledge is remembrance, as Platon pointed out, Even as an exoteric phenomenon esoterics will remain esoteric for those who have not once been initiates. If it is accepted by others, which will probably be the case to an increasing extent, then it will turn into a new form of superstition. It is necessary to realize that what determines whether it is esoteric or not is not the object of the study or understanding but the quality of the consciousness manifested in the study or understanding. If that were not the case, then the fancies of an average new age person – for example that he is now living his last incarnation in the human kingdom and, consequently, possesses not only full causal consciousness but also incipient 46-consciousness – would be esoteric understanding as well. Self-deception in esoteric studies is more self-deception than esoterics. Uncritical belief has nothing to do with esoterics, and least of all belief in one’s own eminence.

14.11 Intelligence in Seeking the Meaning of Life

¹Most seekers are emotional and not mental. They decide on a teaching or system that appeals to emotional and wishful thinking, not to reason and intelligence. Often this teaching is the first one they came across in their seeking, the one that satisfied them, and subsequently

they are stuck in it on sentimental grounds. If intelligence were dominant in them, they would proceed in a quite different manner: starting by examining all extant teachings, not getting stuck in any one of them, comparing them as for inner qualities: how badly or well they explain the problems of life, how many facts they contain and how important those facts are, and to what extent the teachings examined display inner contradictions. As for contradictions, however, one should proceed carefully: there are contradictions and “contradictions”. The latter are not contradictions but can be explained by deficiencies in the terminology used, incompleteness or lack of skill in formulations, etc. The understanding and knowledgeable person repairs such defects when reading, helps the writer to formulate his thought better, as it were. (This procedure should not be confused with the attempt made by some historians of philosophy to explain away the errors of “great thinkers” by allegations about “what they actually intended to say”.)

²Only after such a thorough examination should they select a teaching to study in depth, dedicating themselves to it. It is certainly to a great extent the business of intelligence to choose between different teachings on the superphysical. This is not to say that intelligence alone would be sufficient for the final choice. But it may eliminate many unworthy candidates that should have been weeded out at the first scrutiny. Those are such systems as are too primitive because they do not afford the requisite clarity, do not explain the problems of life in a satisfactory manner, do not supply the tools for deciding whether alleged facts are real facts.

14.12 Intelligence in Approaching the School

¹Just as there are four degrees of the quality of attention – attention of the lowest degree (mechanically shifting or non-existent); attention attracted by its object (in emotional fascination); self-determined and directed attention (in mental concentration); and attention of the highest degree, which is simultaneously self-determined, directed, and self-conscious (in contact with causal consciousness) – so individuals approaching the school display the corresponding degrees of the quality of their interest and dedication. Those corresponding to the lowest degree can be left out of account; they ended up in the school through some chance event and were made to leave it through some other chance event. The next degree is represented by the majority of aspirants at the beginning; they are driven by their “spiritual hunger” and by being stimulated by the teaching and the friendship of fellow students but may “feel full” for a short or long time and so slacken in their interest, which then apparently is egocentric. The individuals representing the higher two degrees are the strenuous, disciplined, dependable, and responsible. They have prospects of being successful on the esoteric way. What is important here, however, is not which category you belong to from the beginning, but how seriously you work to reach the next higher one. In all this we may see different degrees of the quality of intelligence at work, and these qualitative degrees imply degrees of mental independence of emotionality, mental contact with causality, and emotional contact with essentiality.

²A note of warning should be sounded against a stereotyped assessment of individuals, since intelligence finds different expressions in the different types. In types 1 and 7, intelligence is more oriented towards will and physical realization; in types 2 and 6, it is more emotionally coloured; and in types 3 and 5, more theoretical and technical. Type 4 shares to some extent in all the modes of manifestation. You can be intelligent without being very intellectual, and you can be an intellectual without being intelligent in the esoteric sense (have some consciousness connection with the causal envelope).

14.13 The Process of Abstraction

¹The importance of language for consciousness, thinking, and intelligence can hardly be overestimated. Language is a system of signs or symbols that human beings use for mutual communication. Without language no knowledge or experience can be transferred from the one individual or group to the other or be handed down from the one generation to the other. Language is not used only for the exchange of thoughts between people, however, but also within one and the same individual: language is a tool for the individual's reflection.

²The purpose of language – any language – is to supply words and a system of rules for their use. Concepts are attached to words. Words fixate concepts, anchor them in physical existence, and thanks to the fact that words mutually differ man is able to differentiate concepts (distinguish between them). Differentiation is comprehension, and comprehension is differentiation. Comprehension of what words and concepts are begins with the differentiation of the two: words are not concepts, concepts are not words – but there is, as said, a relation between words and concepts. The word is the phenomenon: the physical manifestation (sound vibrations, a group of letters, etc.). The concept (the idea) is the noumenon: the mental manifestation, the mental content, the meaning, attached to the word. It is by using concepts that man conceives, comprehends. The more and the better the concepts of an individual and the clearer his conception of them, the better his comprehension. An undeveloped person does not possess many concepts. He may, however, use many words that he does not understand right and so must abuse. Conversely, a developed individual has more concepts than he has words, since he has made many observations in mental reality but nevertheless is reduced to the poor vocabulary of the current language to express these observations, so that he must often use one and the same word for several concepts (meanings). Therefore, groups of more developed people, who have a common and shared deeper experience of mental and higher reality, create a language of their own, a terminology of their own.

³From the viewpoint of consciousness, the ability to abstract is the most important faculty connected with language. The word “abstract” is derived from the Latin *abstraho*, which literally means “I drag away, I draw away” but in this connection is best translated by “I disregard”. What is meant by this is the faculty generally present in consciousness functions – in sensory, emotional, and intellectual functions – of disregarding almost all details when observing the elements of reality (external and internal “things”), of concentrating instead on a few important characteristics.

⁴It is essential to understand that abstraction is done in a process that occurs in many orders or comprises many levels. For instance, sensory functions make a first abstraction of, say, a particular coffee cup, that is to say: Charlie's coffee cup in the dining-room. Our consciousness disregards almost all of the countless details that characterize this coffee cup when stating, “Charlie's coffee cup”, and in so doing distinguishing it from Katie's coffee cup which is nearby. Our consciousness distinguishes only such details as are interesting to us when we are to decide which coffee cup of several possible ones it is about. We call this an “abstraction of the first order” or an “abstraction of the lowest level”. This is a concept formed on the basis of a concrete reality experienced; therefore it is called a “concrete concept”. Abstractions of the second order are abstractions of abstractions of the first order. Such abstractions are again produced by disregarding details, namely such details as make Charlie's coffee cup different from Katie's. “Coffee cup” pure and simple thus is an abstraction of the second order. Even on this level, the second one, consciousness is somewhat removed from physical reality and approaches mental reality. The concept of “coffee cup” thus is more abstract than the concept of “Charlie's coffee cup”. “Drinking-vessel” would be an abstraction of the third order, for in order to form this concept it is necessary to disregard also such details as all coffee cups have in common, such as for example a certain form or approximate size, to exclusively concentrate on their function. It is

an even more abstract concept, which also affords us an example of the character of higher abstractions of increasingly disregarding the form in favour of function and purpose. In fact, ever higher abstractions make it possible to think of, and understand, questions of “how?” and “why?” and so pave the way for higher consciousness and insight. However, also lower levels of abstraction enable us to recognize things and to form general concepts.

⁵Animals abstract, too. However, processes of abstraction by animals are characterized by the fact that they pursue only a few steps. A dog recognizes its mistress among all other women. Then it abstracts from “Mistress” to “food”, “tenderness”, and perhaps some level beyond those, but not further. The dog also recognizes “Little Master” among all other boys. From this abstraction it proceeds to “funny games”, etc., and perhaps some level beyond, but then the process ceases.

⁶In contrast, the most important feature of man’s abstracting is his ability to proceed to ever higher abstractions without limit: from “table” to “furniture”, from “furniture” to “household goods”, from “household goods” to “possessions”, and subsequently abstractions of ever higher orders. Higher order abstractions can be made in many different directions according to the individual’s interest, knowledge, and understanding. Here follows just one example starting from “possessions”. The next higher abstraction may be attachment to possessions, from there to attachment in general, then identification as a hindrance to consciousness, from there to general hindrances to the acquisition of consciousness, then the whole purpose of one’s consciousness development, the development of human monads, the manifestation of the cosmos.

⁷By allowing himself to be controlled by the activity of his emotional envelope, an individual may end up in a pretty permanent state of contempt, hatred, or doubt, and get stuck in it. This may destroy his peace of mind, impair his relations with other people or his prospects of developing consciousness. However, it is not necessary to get stuck in this way. It is possible to move on, to abstract. A higher abstraction demonstrates the limitation of the lower abstraction. The higher includes the lower and so implicitly shows its subordinate position in the greater whole. Suddenly this contempt, hatred, or doubt no longer is “everything”, but there is something greater, something beyond it, something capable of watching it, reflecting upon it, valuing it, criticizing it, laughing at it. Even whatever was a negative and degrading state – stuck in hatred or doubt – may, when abstracted to the next higher level, have a liberating effect. To hate one’s own hatred means to get rid of the first, more harmful hatred. To doubt one’s own doubt starts a process of seeking after truth which may lead to certainty.

⁸Here follow some more examples of how higher order abstractions bring about a widening, a deepening, an intensification of consciousness. Starting from concepts or conditions that in themselves are positive, such as “culture”, “knowledge”, “attention”, “consideration”, “love”, or “trust”, we find that on the next higher level of abstraction they receive new potentials that are very interesting to consciousness: “culture of culture” intimates a more intentional cultivation of positive values, “knowledge of knowledge” indicates a deeper and more conscious reflection on the nature and purpose of knowledge, “attention to attention” leads us to the study of methods of developing self-consciousness, “consideration of consideration” is a more active way of refining and ennobling ourselves, “love of love” and “trust of trust” summarize what is best in human aspiration. Anyone who has understood this basic idea can expand on it with other examples from various spheres.

⁹In a sharp contrast to the conditions just mentioned there are others which are negative and cannot teach us anything; worry and fear, for example. If we abstract such ones to the next level – worry of worry, fear of fear – we end up in near-pathological states. Pity of pity is dangerously close to self-pity. Belief in belief yields fanaticism. Ignorance of ignorance is of an even more difficult kind. Thus what is important here is to distinguish which concepts or conditions may take us further to higher abstractions that liberate us and create consciousness,

and which lead us in the opposite direction.

¹⁰Abstraction thus means that the observation of something is observed, this second observation is in its turn observed, etc. When man directs this multi-levelled observation to himself, to his external activity (motion and sensory functions) and to his consciousness functions, internal feelings and thoughts, then the possibility of self-consciousness arises in him. Thanks to his faculty of unlimited abstraction to higher levels man can reach states of self-consciousness. Esoterically, this fact is the most important reason why it is essential to understand the process of abstraction and become more aware of it.