

17 SELF-OBSERVATION

17.1 Introduction

¹All inner work for consciousness starts with self-observation. And self-observation starts with noticing bad states in oneself, with not saying “I” to them, and so separating oneself from them. In this way our inner life is purified. Since our inner life attracts a corresponding outer life, we can with time change, not only our attitude to this outer life, but also the events themselves. In most cases we cannot change them directly, but indirectly by changing our attitude. And all this starts with self-observation.

²If 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 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.

³The 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.

⁴Now I want you who are reading this to stop and to ponder the most important thing you have learnt so far about self-observation, 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!”

⁵The 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 apparent “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.

⁶The fact that we are split into many apparent “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.

⁷As long as man perceives himself as one and single, says “I” to everything that happens in his inner life, he cannot be transformed. As long, too, he will live in a false perception of himself. It is the aim of self-observation to break down this fictitious perception. It is only on its ruins that man can build knowledge of himself. This knowledge cannot be built on a mere theory, on an acceptance of what others people assert, but it must, if it is to transform him, be the fruit of his own experience gained through self-observation.

17.2 *The Division of Man and the Purpose of Self-Observation*

¹In the fourth way, it is emphasized that you must know what is the purpose of self-observation and you must, when observing yourself, know something of how man is divided.

²What 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.

³Very often, when trying to observe ourselves, we confuse intellectual and emotional functions. When we really feel, we often call it thinking, and when we think we call it feeling. But with time, with right knowledge and instruction, we 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.

⁴Then 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 are moving functions. Moving functions also include dreams – both dreams during sleep and day-dreams – imagination, and imitation.

⁵When observing oneself, 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 to 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.

⁶From 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 has no consciousness, no will. If we human beings had consciousness and will, then 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.

⁷What 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 if we

understand this can we have the motivation to make efforts at trying to become something else than machines.

⁸If we want to cease being machines, we must try to do such things as a machine cannot do. A machine cannot observe itself. Even if a machine had psychic functions such as man has, it would not be able to observe them. Therefore, every time we observe ourselves we are no longer machines. From such a state of self-observation we can proceed to create also a state of self-consciousness, the genuinely human state of being.

⁹At 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 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 self-consciousness and will.

17.3 Happiness is not in Outer Events but in Self-Control

¹A man's ability to lead a happy life depends on his ability to develop consciousness, and his ability to develop consciousness depends on his ability to use certain instruments for living. One of these instruments for living is self-observation.

²A man who does not observe himself, who does not know that it is possible for him to observe himself, or who thinks that he is observing himself constantly and automatically, must remain dependent on outer circumstances to lead what he calls a good and happy life. But any time, all of a sudden, these outer factors may change without his being able to do anything about it. In contrast, he is able to control that good and happy life which can become his lot, if he enriches his inner life, develops his consciousness.

³A man who was born into great wealth can do everything he desires without material hindrances, for example live all his life travelling in exotic countries. But if his inner life is filled with anguish and torment, worry, self-contempt, or self-pity, he may still, with all his wealth, be the unhappiest man alive. If then the insight dawns upon him that he can start developing his consciousness, which in his case means first of all to see the causes of suffering within himself, through self-observation, he can attain peace of mind, happiness, and joy.

⁴Anyone who complains that life is dull, meaningless, a bad deal, and on the whole not worth living may be informed that none of these qualities exist in life itself but all of them are projections onto neutral life by his own inner states and that he can see for himself that this is so by beginning to observe himself. But this will require hard work done during a long time, with knowledge and understanding of the necessary procedures, methods. Without such a work one cannot expect any result. Mere desire for development or enthusiasm for the idea of development cannot achieve anything. It would be like sitting down in a car without turning the key and stepping on the gas, only feeling desire or enthusiasm about the car starting.

17.4 Distinguish Between Outer Events and Inner States

¹When observing oneself it is important to be able to see the difference between one's own inner life and life in general, outer life. Most people cannot do this. When such a person looks back at his own life and says that it was a happy life or an unhappy life, he means outer life. If he mentions his inner life at all, his attitude to it is probably that outer events made his inner life either happy or unhappy. If so, he is far from the understanding that the very events do not determine whether we shall be happy or unhappy, but our attitude to them, how we take them, determines it. Life does not consist only of outer events but also of inner states. We are

machines to the extent that we allow those outer events determine our inner life. A machine or a robot is defined as an organisation that is controlled by outer impulses, not by a consciousness and will of its own.

²Try, then, as a first exercise in leading a more conscious life, to distinguish between outer events and inner states: Someone spoke to you harshly, spitefully, injuriously. That is an outer event which is not in your power to change. However, you have the power to decide whether those puffs of hot air coming out of biggest hole of some other person's head will determine your inner state now and perhaps many hours or days to come.

³And if you nevertheless allow yourself to be influenced negatively by that outer event, then say to yourself soon afterwards: "This is being sad... irritated... upset..." or "This is going around fretting... feeling sorry for yourself... harping on wrongs... blaming people for their imperfections..." Observing oneself means precisely observing one's own mechanical reactions as events separate from oneself.

⁴The very act of observation separates these mechanical psychic states from yourself, so that you will find it much more difficult so say "I" to them. Consequently henceforth not "I was angry", but "a feeling of anger arose", not "I was irritated", but "a feeling of irritation arose". Later, with effort, exercise, experience, understanding: "a feeling of anger tried to get the better of me but failed," "a feeling of irritation arose but I observed it, laughed at it, and it went away."

17.5 To Observe Oneself is to Divide Oneself

¹To physicalist man there is no other reality than the physical one. He can hardly take an interest in some "inner life", since he does not recognize any human qualities or functions beyond those of the organism. Organism, objective man, is unitary – one single body, working as one. But also the man who has accepted some theory saying that he is more than the organism, that he has a "soul" or even is a "soul", nevertheless in practice has concurred in the physicalist belief in man as a unitary being. If he observed his inner life, his "soul", his "psyche", honestly, methodically, and persistently, he would rather soon see that there is nothing permanent in it, that his inner life is made up of a constant, continuous flow of impermanent perceiving units that succeed one another.

²When self-observation is done correctly, man's apparent inner unity, the apparent unity of his psyche, is temporarily suspended, since the individual divides himself into two parts: the *observing self* and observed *apparent selves*. This process creates a new inner life and also a new outer life. The new inner life, the observing self, is a more conscious inner life, and this new outer life is everything else in man's psyche, all that which man mechanically and unreflectingly took to be his inner life and to which he said "I" but which he now understands to be a "not-self", separate from the self and thus part of his outer life. We could also describe this new state by saying that the dividing line between outer and inner has been moved inwards. Actually, however, it is only now, in self-observation, that an inner life has come about at all, inner life in the sense of the presence of the self. When the self does not exercise self-observation, it is basically absent. Then the self is not present. In the allegorical language of the schools this condition is likened to a house in disorder. It is a house where neither the master, nor the steward, nor even the deputy steward is present, and so the servants do just as they like, acting the master by turns; this rotation of the servants is of course an image of the constantly changing and transient power wielded by the apparent selves. When temporarily an observing self arises, it is as if the deputy steward suddenly appeared and put the house in order – for the time being.

³A man studies esoterics and tries to arrange his life in accordance with it. Then some day a negative thought about the knowledge arises in him. And at once the opposite thought comes:

“I really must not think like this!” Even if this is a right attitude that wants to correct an erroneous one, an attitude which in itself is laudable and necessary, he makes an error – he says “I” to this thought: “I think this.” That is taking oneself as one. Then he does not observe himself, for observing oneself means observing this thought, looking at it as an external thing, separate from the observing self.

⁴However, if after having the thought “I must not think like this” he realizes that he did not observe himself, then he can correct himself and truly observe himself: “That was not observing oneself. That was taking oneself as one.”

17.6 From False Unity to True Unity

¹Man can become unitary; he can attain a state where his being is one. But he will attain that state only when all that happens in him is self-determined. The unity of his being cannot be built on the basis of that chaos of mechanical associations and reactions which now makes him up. Then it would be a false unity that could be maintained only through ignorance, inability to see, inability to observe himself, imagination.

²Man’s process of unity, process of becoming one, runs through three stages: First there is that false unity in which the man who does not reflect, does not observe himself, can believe. Then the man who works on his consciousness begins to divide himself into the observing self and the observed apparent selves. Finally the individual obtains true unity through his complete work on consciousness, a work where self-observation is one of many intentional processes.

17.7 Imagination Regarding Self-Observation

¹Man cannot make efforts to acquire something he believes that he has already. If he believes that he is one, as unitary in his psyche as in his organism, then he is the victim of his own imagination. It is the purpose of self-observation to dispel this imagination like so many other fancies of similar kinds.

²“The work at developing consciousness begins by observing oneself.” Some people who hear this say: “Oh yes, that is nothing new to me. I have always observed myself.” And yet they remain as they are. They imagine that they already know all about themselves, imagine that they observe themselves. It is the same kind of people who at once having heard about self-remembrance say that they know what it is and that they always remember themselves. This is imagination. It is possible to imagine just anything, particularly about one’s own capacity. People’s imagination generally is a serious hindrance to consciousness development, and in the case of certain people it is their most serious hindrance. Imagination is one of the forces that keep mankind asleep. To wake up we must observe our imagination so that we are able to separate ourselves from it and so weaken it.

³Imagination is emotionally controlled thinking that is a substitute for reality. It has the same kind of relation to reality as lie has to truth. If man wants to attain truth, he must separate himself from lies, and if he wants to attain reality, he must separate himself from imagination, set himself free from it. This is a very long process, however, running into many stages. It also presents many obstacles; for example, it is very easy to imagine that one is free from imagination, imagine that one “is very advanced and almost at the goal” merely because one has acquired a preliminary, primitive understanding of the need of this liberation. In order to take the first steps in separating yourself from imagination you must do what imagination cannot do: use directed attention. Observing your own imagination is an important and indispensable part of self-observation. However, this is something that you ordinarily cannot do in the beginning of your work, but only after long time. Also, there many difficulties involved in observing your own imagination. There are strong opposing forces such as self-love and

self-justification. There is also the difficulty that imagination ceases whenever you try to observe it; that is to say: when you exercise directed attention, imagination ceases functioning. Imagination belongs to lower, more mechanical parts of centres, thus is connected with inattentiveness, wandering attention or, at the most, attention attracted by the object, emotional fascination.

⁴Imagination cannot teach us anything either of ourselves, of other people, or of reality at large. In self-observation everything is about what we can learn of ourselves, what facts about ourselves we are able to verify. Imagination in combination with excuses and self-justifications suggests to us the illusions that please “us” (the false personality), and this is what affords it power.

17.8 What Should I Observe?

¹The question is often asked: “What should I observe?” What you should observe in the beginning is only simple functions: this is thought, this is emotion, this is emotional reaction to sense impression, etc. Once you have learnt how to distinguish the functions, you proceed to fuller observation lasting through great parts of a day, and then you see yourself as an outside person. In all this self-observation it is important not to say “I” to anything. Thus you should not say: “What am I doing?” but “What is it doing?” You then see now these fragmented, chaotic thoughts, now these easily stirred emotions, now these little dramatic scenes, now these more or less elaborate lies, now these speeches, excuses, and inventions. Next moment you fall asleep, so that you fully take part in those states, are those states again. And you remain asleep until you wake up and start to observe yourself anew.

²Self-observation should be applied especially to talking. Most rules in schools are about talking and about how to deal with wrong talking. It is necessary to observe inner talking, or rather inner babble, and from where it is coming. Wrong inner talking is the breeding-ground not only of many future unpleasant states but also of wrong outer talking. The exercise called “inner silence” is a force to be applied against wrong inner talking. You cannot usually practise such an inner silence in any indefinite, general way. But you can practise it very consistently in regard to some distinct and definite thing, something you know and see quite clearly. Someone asked: “Is practising inner silence the same as not letting something come into your mind?” The answer is: “No. What you are practising inner silence about is already in the mind and you must be aware of it, but you must not touch it with your inner speech.” If there is something particularly negative, bad, or destructive in your mind, then this will manifest itself as inner talking when you are in a negative state, and from there it easily flows into outer talking. In your work it is necessary to be careful about wrong outer talking at first, and, later on, about wrong inner talking. In this case, as in so many other cases, the cause of the outer is in the inner, and therefore the aim of the exercise is to abolish this inner cause. Such inner talking as one can free oneself from in this manner is always untrue: downright lies, half-truths, or truths connected in the wrong order or with something added or left out. This includes slander and gossip.

³Observe anxiety! Notice how it manifests itself physiologically: in your stomach, muscles, nerves, your whole body. You are the observer, the one who intentionally, consciously separates himself from this: “I am not my stomach, I am the one observing my stomach. I am not my muscles, I am the one observing my muscles. I am not my nerves, I am the one observing my nerves.” Notice how anxiety manifests itself psychologically. Observe the state of anxiety as something separate from you being the observer: “It is anxious, I am the one observing anxiety.” Widen the difference between the observer and the things observed by perceiving your own presence in the observer, create self-remembrance: “This anxiety is not me, I am the observer of this anxiety.” Perceive the calm, peace, freedom from anxiety that

are in the observer, the conscious self: “Where anxiety is I am not. Where I am anxiety is not.”

⁴Observe laziness! There is laziness in all the centres: the laziness of the moving centre, the laziness of the instinctual centre (inattentiveness of seeing and hearing), the laziness of the emotional centre, the laziness of the intellectual centre. Separate yourself from laziness in some centre by intentionally wanting the opposite and doing the opposite: “It wants to be lazy, but I want to be active.” This exercise is called “occultation”.

17.9 It is Necessary to Have a Better Understanding of Self-Observation

¹A pupil told his teacher that he disliked a third person intensely. The teacher said: “Try to observe it.” He replied: “Why should I observe it? I don’t need to. I know it already.” He confused knowing with observing. This is a common error and revealed that the individual in question had not understood what self-observation is and moreover had not realized that self-observation is active and can be used as an instrument for self-transformation, whereas mere knowledge is passive and cannot be used in that way. Knowing something is not necessarily directing one’s attention to it, observing it. Knowing something can be very mechanical, but directing one’s attention is an intentional act and is closer to self-consciousness.

²People also confuse thinking with self-observation. Thinking about oneself is not observing oneself. A man may think about himself all day and never observe himself even once. Thinking about oneself is among the most mechanical and most ordinary activities in people’s lives. If it were an instrument for consciousness development, then we would all have reached higher kingdoms long ago. On the contrary, man should learn how to stop thinking about himself.

³When hearing about self-observation many people think that it consists merely in noticing that one feels moody, unwell, bored, agitated, eager, curious, and so on. This is not self-observation. Self-observation begins with the establishing of an observing self in one’s own inner world. If you say “I feel gloomy”, you are not observing yourself, you are not observing this state, but you *are* this state, are identified with it. In that case there is nothing distinct in you that is standing outside your state, something that is independent of it and is looking at it, something that has a feeling and thought quite different from that state. And this identification is confirmed by the word “I”. It is useless to say, “I wish I were not in a bad temper,” for then you still take yourself as one and single. To observe yourself you must divide yourself into two: the observing self and all that it observes.

⁴In ordinary human social life, too, there are situations where individuals exercise a sort of self-observation. Such activity may make you more successful in social intercourse, business and professional life, etc., such as behaving impeccably when invited to a fashionable dinner party, or making the best impression during an employment interview. However, this is quite different from self-observation in an esoteric sense, since the understanding of the higher aim, consciousness development, is absent and therefore the right method as well. Self-observation without definite knowledge of what you should observe and why you should observe it leads nowhere in the work on one’s own consciousness.

17.10 Insights to be Reached in Self-Observation

¹In regard to very many events one has to learn to be “passive”, that is, not react at all, not to do anything about them. Actually, “passive” is not the right word here, for doing this requires a great inner activity, activity of consciousness, to prevent the mechanical event producing an equally mechanical reaction in one, a reaction to which one may say “I” only in a state of ignorance and non-discrimination. Rather, “passive” here means that the personality is passive while the observing self, the more conscious self, is the more active.

²Observation and self-observation are two different activities. The former is about observing outer or objective events, the latter is about observing inner or subjective events. What is common to both is that they require attention. And the attention that is to be applied must be of a higher kind qualitatively speaking. The lower two kinds that we ordinarily use, thus (1) wandering, shifting, or transient attention and (2) attracted attention, respectively, do not suffice here. Only the third kind, self-initiated attention or attention directed from within, can be used for this work.

³It is easier to observe outer events than inner events, for we have senses for the former that usually work in a reliable fashion. However, we have no such senses for observation of inner events but our intellectual function and its ability of directed attention. The intellectual function can be improved for this purpose by our knowledge and understanding being increased. This knowledge and understanding reach us through our observation of outer events, namely our being attentive to the teaching we receive through teachers and writings. Thus the quality of self-observation depends on the quality of our attention, and this attention we must cultivate in regard to both inner and outer events. If we are not sufficiently attentive to the teaching we receive, then we shall misunderstand it, and without having a correct conception of the teaching we cannot practise it correctly; then self-observation and other exercises cannot have the effect intended.

⁴If you observe yourself over some time and then end up in an unpleasant inner state, for example a state where you easily identify yourself with negative emotions – such as “I am” a failure, treated unjustly, misunderstood, disdained, etc. – then you will notice that all sorts of negative apparent selves try to deal with this state in succession and make something out of it. This is because negative apparent selves live by these negative energies and so must be negative. Their life consists in supplying us with destructive thoughts and negative feelings, and they cannot do otherwise. If self-observation is to be sincere work, you must sincerely observe how these negative apparent selves thrive in yourself, that there is a side of yourself that enjoys them. This self-observation is important, for if man enjoys having destructive thoughts and negative feelings, he cannot separate himself from them. If he delights in them, he cannot become clear about it through this self-observation. The secret of their power is the force of identification. As long as man identifies himself with them, they remain strong. But to the extent that he can observe them, he also weakens identification.

⁵The aim of self-observation is above all the purification, the ennoblement of emotional life. The method consists in separating “myself”, the observing self, from what is impure and less pure, what is ignoble and mean. Mechanical man, who does not observe himself, is full of self-love, vanity, self-aggrandizement, self-absorption, self-justification. If he says: “I always think of others”, he is lying, which he can see in a moment of conscience. Self-observation makes him see these truths about himself.

⁶Moreover, self-observation helps us see the motives of our actions. “If two people do the same thing, it is not the same thing.” One person does a thing out of fear (fear of punishment, of loss of reputation: “what will people say?”), another person does the same thing for the sense of justice and the love of good. Motives are not discovered by the observation of outer actions, and confessions are often deceptive. Only self-observation may reveal it, but seldom at once, often only after long work.

⁷Self-observation is incomplete without self-remembrance. Why? Because self-remembrance is the aim of self-observation. Self-observation is only one of many exercises all aimed at producing moments of self-consciousness through self-remembrance. The aim of man is to become a conscious being. He must not forget that. To practise and yet while practising forget the ultimate aim of the practice is not to practise; it is to be identified with practising – a quite different thing. Self-observation can be raised to self-remembrance with comparative ease, for

being a more conscious state it is close to self-remembrance. Try to become aware of yourself at the precise point where you receive impressions, try to become aware of yourself as an observing self.

17.11 Some Particular Advice and Instructions

¹It is important to inculcate that self-observation must not be criticism, analysis, or valuation. The very observation has the effect that man divides himself into two: the observing self and the things observed. You cannot be what you observe: as soon as you observe it you are separated from it, you weaken your identification with it. This is the favourable force that helps man to set himself free from the power of undesirable feelings and thoughts. On the other hand it is useless or detrimental to fight undesirable thoughts and feelings with identifications such as negative emotions; this is only mechanical manifestations of one kind fighting another kind.

²As long as the exercise goes on, the observing self shall be connected with the perception of self as much as possible: "I am seeing." Therefore you should make the effort of adding self-remembrance to self-observation. It is easier to do so from this relatively conscious state. The states observed, the apparent selves observed, should of course be connected with the perception of not-self as much as possible. Thus you do not say "I" to them, but "it".

³It is necessary to write down important self-observations. Why? Because in each moment we live in a very small part of ourselves, so that an insight had by a better apparent self is very soon forgotten or distorted by worse apparent selves. A person may be in the habit of constantly, in his inner babble, criticizing other people: their behaviour, their speech, appearance, dress, hairstyle, etc. How will it be possible for him to overcome this negative trait if he has a buffer that assures him that he "loves people"? Mere self-observation is not sufficient, for he may make the same observation over and over again and still forget them all in succession. Then his daily notes will be his only remedy. When reading them he sees that the same criticism and blame recur constantly with small variations, he perhaps finally sees that this fault lies with him and not with other people.

⁴Self-observation, when done daily and hourly, supplies man with a material of seemingly disconnected parts; momentary pictures of himself. Two factors bring those parts together to form a complete picture of his inner and outer being: understanding and valuation. Understanding and valuation must always have a material of knowledge and of experience to work on. They cannot work with no corn to grind. The better and the more often we observe ourselves and write down important observations, the better our understanding will become, too.

17.12 Laurency on Self-Observation

¹There are two methods of counteracting this state of split consciousness, lack of will power. The one is to occupy consciousness by letting attention be absorbed by some interest. The other method is to pay constant attention to the content of consciousness.

²This unceasing watchfulness would be tiring or unbearable if it implied any sort of supervision, effort, or strain. It can preferably be accompanied by some simple relaxation exercise now and then. You observe as though unintentionally how your thinking picks up and drops the one line of thought after the other in an endless succession. The unconstrained attention with which you follow the restless flight of thought is not perceived as any fetter, which else would cause a reaction. Soon you have imperceptibly slipped into an unintentional control, as it were. You learn to distinguish between thoughts from the unconscious and thoughts from without. The entire procedure should be regarded as an amusing play of thought. Of course you relax attention at the first feeling of strain, fatigue, or discomfort. You soon find that the very attentiveness alone automatically results in a rejection of undesirable thoughts. Being

observed, attention is prevented from strengthening unserviceable impressions, thoughts, emotions, etc. The control of consciousness results in calm, quiets anxiety, makes the content of consciousness clearer.

From *The Philosopher's Stone*

³Sense perceptions, emotions, thoughts, causal and essential (46) ideas make up the totality of the subjective consciousness possible for man. By observing all kinds of impulses and ideas – from the subconscious, from the environment, from the superconscious – the individual eventually learns how to distinguish the different kinds of vibrations pouring through his envelopes and brain, he learns how to separate these different kinds of consciousness expressions. In so doing he eventually acquires the ability to decide at once from which envelopes and worlds they come. Causal ideas from the world of ideas afford knowledge of material reality. Essential (46) ideas afford understanding of life and understanding of the various consciousness expressions of our fellow human beings.

⁴By constantly paying attention to these subjective consciousness expressions we learn to live in consciousness and to activate the kinds of consciousness belonging to our superconscious; we develop our consciousness, which is the meaning of life.

⁵The emotional thinking of universal life ignorance, going on day and night without rest, produces in the lower regions of the emotional world a continuous flow of vibrations pervading the emotional envelopes of all people and influencing their subconscious (being unconsciously picked up by the solar plexus centre). The esoterician who has learnt how to consciously apprehend them can also ascertain that those who try to acquire a correct view of reality must wage an unceasing defence battle against those idiotizing thought-forms (or depressing moods), until they have liberated their emotional envelopes from at least the lower three emotional molecular kinds (48:5-7).

⁶Those emotional vibrations should not be confused with vibrations issuing from the planets, so manifestly reflected in man's states of mind, changing constantly from hour to hour day and night. The Jupiter, Saturn, Venus, and Mars vibrations are the most easily ascertainable.

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