

SECOND LECTURE

Continuing our study of man, we must now speak with more detail about the different states of consciousness.

As I have already said, there are four states of consciousness possible for man: Sleep, “waking consciousness,” self-consciousness and “objective consciousness”; but he lives only in two: partly in sleep and partly in what is sometimes called “waking consciousness.” It is as though he had a four-storied house, but lived only in the two lower stories.

The first, or the lowest state of consciousness, is *sleep*. This is a purely subjective and passive state. Man is surrounded by dreams. All his psychic functions work without any direction. There is no logic, no sequence, no cause and no result in dreams. Purely subjective pictures – either reflections of former experiences or reflections of vague perceptions of the moment, such as sounds reaching the sleeping man, sensations coming from body, slight pains, sensations of muscular tension – fly through the mind, leaving only a very slight trace on the memory and more often, leaving no trace at all.

The second degree of consciousness comes when man awakes. This second state, the state in which we are now, that is, in which we work, talk, imagine ourselves conscious beings, and so forth, we often call “*waking consciousness*” or “*clear consciousness*” but really it should be called “waking sleep” or “relative consciousness.” This last term will be explained later.

It is necessary to understand here that the first state of consciousness, that is, sleep, does not disappear when the second state arrives, that is, when man awakes. Sleep remains there, with all its dreams and impressions, only a more critical attitude towards one’s own impressions, more connected thoughts, more disciplined actions become added to it, and because of the vividness of sense impressions, desires and feelings – particularly the feeling of *contradiction* or *impossibility*, which is entirely absent in sleep – dreams become invisible exactly as the stars and moon become invisible in the glare of the sun. But they are all there, and they often influence all our thoughts, feelings and actions – sometimes even more than the actual perceptions of the moment.

In connection with this I must say at once that I do not mean what is called in modern psychology “the subconscious” or the “subconscious mind.” These are simply wrong expressions, wrong terms, which mean nothing and do not refer to any real facts. There is nothing permanently subconscious in us because there is nothing permanently conscious; and there is no “subconscious mind” for the very reason that there is no “conscious mind.” Later you will see how this mistake occurred and how this wrong terminology came into being and became almost generally accepted.

But let us return to the states of consciousness which really exist. The first is sleep. The second is “waking sleep” or “relative consciousness.”

The first, as I have said, is a purely subjective state. The second is less subjective; man already distinguishes “I” and “not I” in the sense of his body and objects different from his body, and he can, to a certain extent, orientate among them and know their position and qualities. But it cannot be said that man is awake in this state, because he is very strongly influenced by dreams, and really lives more in dreams than in fact. All the absurdities and all the contradictions of people, and of human life in general, become explained when we realise that people *live in sleep*, do everything in sleep, and do not know that they *are asleep*.

It is useful to remember that this is the inner meaning of many ancient doctrines. The best known to us is Christianity, or the *Gospel teaching*, in which the idea that men live in sleep and must first of all awake, is the basis of all the explanations of human life, although it is very rarely understood as it should be understood, in this case literally.

But the question is, *how* can a man awake?

The Gospel teaching demands awakening, but does not say how to awaken.

But the psychological study of consciousness shows that only when a man realises that he is asleep, is it possible to say that he is on the way to awakening. He never can awaken without first realising his sleep.

These two states, sleep and waking sleep, are the only two states of consciousness in which man lives. Besides them there are two states of consciousness possible for man, but they become accessible to a man only after a hard and prolonged struggle.

These two higher states of consciousness are called “self-consciousness” and “objective consciousness.”

We generally think that we possess self-consciousness, that is, that we are conscious of ourselves, or in any case that we can be conscious of ourselves, at any moment we wish, but in truth “self-consciousness” is a state which we *ascribe to ourselves without any right*. “Objective consciousness” is a state about which we know nothing.

Self-consciousness is a state in which man becomes objective towards himself, and objective consciousness is a state in which he comes into contact with the real, or objective world from which he is now shut off by the senses, dreams and subjective states of consciousness.

Another definition of the four states of consciousness can be made from the point of view of the possible *cognition of truth*.

In the first state of consciousness, that is, in sleep, we cannot know anything of the truth. Even if some real perceptions or feelings come to us, they become mixed with dreams, and in the state of sleep we cannot distinguish between dreams and reality.

In the second state of consciousness, that is, in waking sleep, we can only know *relative truth*, and from this comes the term relative consciousness.

In the third state of consciousness, that is, the state of self-consciousness, we can know the full truth *about ourselves*.

In the fourth state of consciousness, that is, in the state of *objective consciousness*, we are supposed to be able to know the full truth *about everything*: we can study “things in themselves,” “the world as it is.”

This is so far from us that we cannot even think about it in the right way, and we must try to understand that even glimpses of objective consciousness can only come in the fully developed state of self-consciousness.

In the state of sleep we can have glimpses of relative consciousness. In the state of relative consciousness we can have glimpses of self-consciousness. But if we want to have more prolonged periods of self-consciousness and not merely glimpses, we must understand that they cannot come by themselves, they need *will action*. This means that frequency and duration of moments of self-consciousness depend on the command one has over oneself. So it means that consciousness and will are almost one and the same thing, or, in any case aspects of the same thing.

At this point, it must be understood that the first obstacle in the way of the development of self-consciousness in man is his conviction that he already possesses self-consciousness or at any rate, that he can have it at any time he likes. It is very difficult to persuade a man that he is not conscious and cannot be conscious at will. It is particularly difficult because here nature plays a very funny trick.

If you ask a man if he is conscious or if you say to him that he is not conscious, he will answer that he is conscious and that it is absurd to say that he is not, because he hears and understands you.

And he will be quite right, although at the same time quite wrong. This is nature’s trick. He will be right because your question or your remark has made him vaguely conscious for a moment. Next moment consciousness will disappear. But he will remember what you said and what he answered, and he will certainly consider himself conscious.

In reality, acquiring self-consciousness means long and hard work. How can a man agree to this work if he thinks he already possesses the very thing which is promised him as the result of long and hard work? Naturally a man will not begin this work and will not consider it necessary until he becomes convinced that he possesses *neither* self-consciousness *nor* all that is connected with it, that is, unity or individuality, permanent “I” and will.

This brings us to the question of schools, because methods for the development of *self-consciousness, unity, permanent “I” and will* can be given only by special schools. That must be clearly understood. *Men on the level of relative consciousness cannot find these methods by themselves*; and these methods cannot be described in books or taught in ordinary schools for the very simple reason that they are different for different people, and there is no universal method equally applicable to all.

In other words, this means that men who want to change their state of consciousness need a school. But first, they must realise their need. As long as they think they can do something by themselves they will not be able to make any use of a school, even if they find it. Schools exist only for those who need them, and who know that they need them.

The idea of schools – the study of the kinds of schools that may exist, the study of school principles and school methods – occupies a very important place in the study of that psychology which is connected with the idea of evolution; because without a school there can be no evolution. One cannot even start, because one does not know how to start: still less can one continue or attain anything.

This means that having got rid of the first illusion, that one already has everything one can have, one must get rid of the second illusion that one can get anything by oneself; because by oneself one can get nothing.

These lectures are not a school – not even the beginning of a school. A school requires a much higher pressure of work. But in these lectures I can give to those who wish to listen some ideas as to how schools work and how they can be found.

I gave before two definitions of psychology.

First I said that psychology is the study of the possible evolution of man, and second, that psychology is the study of oneself.

I meant that only a psychology which investigates the evolution of man is worth studying and that a psychology which is occupied with only one phase of man, without knowing anything about his other phases, is obviously not complete, and cannot have any value, even in a purely scientific sense, that is, from the point of view of experiment and observation. For the present phase, as studied by ordinary psychology, in reality does not exist as something separate and consists of many sub-divisions which lead from lower phases to higher phases. Moreover, the same experiment and observation show that one cannot study psychology as one can study any other science not directly connected with oneself. One has to begin the study of psychology with oneself.

Putting together, first what we may know about the next phase in the evolution of man, that is, that it will mean acquiring consciousness, inner unity, permanent ego and will, and second, certain material that we can get by self-observation, that is, realisation of the absence in us of many powers and faculties which we ascribe to ourselves, we come to new difficulty in understanding the meaning of psychology, and to the necessity for a new definition.

The two definitions given in the previous lecture are not sufficient because man by himself does not know what evolution is possible for him, does not see where he stands at present and ascribes to himself features belonging to higher phases of evolution. In fact, he cannot study himself, being unable to distinguish the imaginary and real in himself.

What is lying?

As it is understood in ordinary language, lying means distorting or in some cases, hiding the truth, or what people believe to be the truth. This lying plays a very important part in life,

but there are much worse forms of lying, when people do not know that they lie. I said in the last lecture that we cannot know the truth in our present state, and can only know the truth in the state of objective consciousness. How then can we lie? There seems to be a contradiction here, but in reality there is none. We cannot know the truth but we can pretend that we know. *And this is lying.* Lying fills all our life. People pretend that they know all sorts of things: about God, about future life, about the universe, about the origin of man, about evolution, about everything; but in reality they do not know anything, even about themselves. And every time they speak about something they do not know *as though they knew it, they lie.* Consequently the study of lying becomes of the first importance in psychology.

And it may lead even to the third definition of psychology which is: the study of lying.

Psychology is particularly concerned with the lies a man says and thinks about himself. These lies make the study of man very difficult. Man, as he is, is not a genuine article. He is an imitation of something, and a very bad imitation.

Imagine a scientist on some remote planet who has received from the earth specimens of artificial flowers, *without knowing anything about real flowers.* It will be extremely difficult for him to define them – to explain their shape, their colour, the material from which they are made, that is, wire, cotton-wool and coloured paper – and to classify them in any way.

Psychology stands in a very similar position in relation to man. It has to study an artificial man, without knowing the real man.

Obviously, it cannot be easy to study a being such as man, who does not himself know what is real and what is imaginary in him. So psychology must begin with a division between the real and the imaginary in man.

It is impossible to study man as a whole, because man is divided into two parts: one part which, in some cases, can be almost *all real*, and the other part which, in some cases, can be almost *all imaginary*. In the majority of ordinary men these two parts are intermixed, and cannot be easily distinguished, although they are both there, and both have their own particular meaning and effect.

In the system we are studying, these two parts are called *essence* and *personality*.

Essence is what is *born* in man.

Personality is what is *acquired*. Essence is what is his own. Personality is what is *not* his own. Essence cannot be lost, cannot be changed or injured as easily as personality. Personality can be changed almost completely with the change of circumstances; it can be lost or easily injured.

If I try to describe what essence is, I must, first of all, say that it is the basis of man's physical and mental make-up. For instance, one man is naturally what is called a good sailor, another is a bad sailor; one has a musical ear, another has not. This is essence.

Personality is all that is *learned* in one or another way, in ordinary language, "consciously" or "unconsciously." In most cases "unconsciously" means by imitation which, as a matter of fact, plays a very important part in the building of personality. Even in instinctive functions, which naturally should be free from personality, there are usually many so-called "acquired tastes," that is, all sorts of artificial likes and dislikes, all of which are acquired by imitation and imagination. These artificial likes and dislikes play a very important and very disastrous part in man's life. By nature, man should like what is good for him and dislike what is bad for him. But this is so only as long as essence dominates personality, as it should dominate it, in other words, when man is healthy and normal. When personality begins to dominate essence and when man becomes less healthy, he begins to like what is bad for him and to dislike what is good for him.

This is connected with the chief thing that can be wrong in the mutual relations of essence and personality.

Normally, essence must dominate personality and then personality can be quite useful. But

if personality dominates essence, this produces wrong results of many kinds.

It must be understood that personality is also necessary for man; one cannot live without personality and only with essence. But essence and personality must grow parallel, and the one must not outgrow the other.

Cases of essence outgrowing personality may occur among uneducated people. These so-called simple people may be very good, and even clever, but they are incapable of development in the same way as people with more developed personality.

Cases of personality outgrowing essence are often to be found among more cultured people, and in such cases, essence remains in a half-grown or half-developed state.

This means that with a quick and early growth of personality, growth of essence can practically stop at a very early age, and as a result we see men and women externally quite grown-up, but whose essence remains at the age of ten or twelve.

There are many conditions in modern life which greatly favour this under-development of essence. For instance, the infatuation with sport, *particularly with games*, can very effectively stop the development of essence, and sometimes at such an early age that essence is never fully able to recover later.

This shows that essence cannot be regarded as connected only with the physical constitution, in the simple meaning of the idea. In order to explain more clearly what essence means, I must again return to the study of functions.

I said in the last lecture that the study of man begins with the study of four functions: intellectual, emotional, moving and instinctive. From ordinary psychology, and from ordinary thinking, we know that the intellectual functions, thoughts, and so on, are controlled or produced by a certain *centre* which we call “mind” or “intellect,” or the “brain.” And this is quite right. Only, to be fully right, we must understand that other functions are also controlled each by its own mind or centre. Thus, from the point of view of the system, there are four minds or centres which control our ordinary actions: intellectual mind, emotional mind, moving mind and instinctive mind. In further references to them we shall call them *centres*. Each centre is quite independent of the others, has its own sphere of action, its own powers, and its own ways of development.

Centres, that is, their structure, capacities, strong sides and defects, belong to essence. Their *contents*, that is, all that a centre acquires, belong to personality. The contents of the centres will be explained later.

As I have already said, personality is as equally necessary for the development of man as is essence, only it must stand in its right place. This is hardly possible, because personality is full of wrong ideas about itself. It does not wish to stand in its right place, because its right place is secondary and subordinate; and it does not wish to know the truth about itself, for to know the truth will mean abandoning its falsely dominant position, and occupying the inferior position which rightly belongs to it.

The wrong relative positions of essence and personality determine the present disharmonious state of man. And the only way to get out of this disharmonious state is by self-knowledge.

To know oneself – this was the first principle and the first demand of old psychological schools. We still remember these words, but have lost their meaning. We think that *to know ourselves*, means to know our peculiarities, our desires, our tastes, our capacities and our intentions, when in reality it means to know ourselves as machines, that is, to know the *structure* of one’s machine, its *parts*, functions of different parts, the conditions governing their work and so on. We realise in a general way that we cannot know any machine without studying it. We must remember this in relation to ourselves and must study our own machines as machines. The means of study is *self-observation*. There is no other way and no one can do

this work for us. We must do it ourselves. But before this we must learn *how* to observe. I mean, we must understand the technical side of observation; we must know that it is necessary to observe *different functions* and distinguish between them, remembering, at the same time, about *different states of consciousness*, about *our sleep*, and about the *many "I"s in us*.

Such observations will very soon give results. First of all a man will notice that he cannot observe everything he finds in himself *impartially*. Some things may please him, other things will annoy him, irritate him, even horrify him. And it cannot be otherwise. Man cannot study himself as a remote star, or as a curious fossil. Quite naturally he will like in himself what helps his development and dislike what makes his development more difficult, or even impossible. This means that very soon after starting to observe himself, he will begin to distinguish *useful* features and harmful features in himself, that is, useful or harmful from the point of view of his possible self-knowledge, his possible awakening, his possible development. He will see sides of himself which *can* become conscious, and sides which *cannot* become conscious *and must be eliminated*. In observing himself, he must always remember that his self-study is the first step towards his possible evolution.

Now we must see what are those harmful features that man finds in himself.

Speaking in general they are all mechanical manifestations. The first as has already been said, is *lying*. Lying is unavoidable in mechanical life. No one can escape it and the more one thinks that one is free from lying, the more one is in it. Life, *as it is* could not exist without lying. But from the psychological side, lying has a different meaning. *It means speaking about things one does not know, and even cannot know, as though one knows and can know*.

You must understand that I do not speak from any moral point of view. We have not yet come to the questions of what is good, and what is bad, by itself. I speak only from a practical point of view, of what is useful and what is harmful to self-study and self-development.

Starting in this way, man very soon learns to discover signs by which he can know harmful manifestations in himself. He discovers that *the more he can control a manifestation, the less harmful it can be*, and that the less he can control it, that is, the more mechanical it is, the more harmful it can become.

When man understands this he becomes afraid of lying, again not on moral grounds, but on the grounds that he cannot control his lying, and that lying controls him, that is, his other functions.

The second dangerous feature he finds in himself is *imagination*. Very soon after starting his observation of himself he comes to the conclusion that the chief obstacle to observation is imagination. He wishes to observe something, but instead of that, imagination starts in him on the same subject, and he forgets about observation. Very soon he realises that people ascribe to the word imagination a quite artificial and quite undeserved meaning in the sense of *creative or selective faculty*. He realises that imagination is a *destructive faculty*, that he can *never* control it and that it *always* carries him away from his more conscious decisions in a direction in which he had no intention of going. Imagination is almost as bad as lying, it is, in fact, lying to oneself. Man starts to imagine something in order to please himself, and very soon he begins to believe what he imagines, or at least some of it.

Further, or even before that, one finds many very dangerous effects in the *expression of negative emotions*. The term "negative emotions" means all emotions of violence or depression: self-pity, anger, suspicion, fear, annoyance, boredom, mistrust, jealousy and so on. Ordinarily, one accepts this expression of negative emotions as quite natural and even necessary. Very often people call it "sincerity". Of course it has nothing to do with sincerity; it is simply a sign of weakness in man, a sign of bad temper and of incapacity to keep his grievances to himself. Man realises this when he tries to oppose it. And by this he learns another lesson. He realises that in relation to mechanical manifestations it is not enough to observe them, it is necessary to resist them, because without resisting them one cannot

observe them. They happen so quickly, so habitually and so imperceptibly, that one cannot notice them if one does not make sufficient efforts to create obstacles for them.

After the *expression of negative emotions* one notices in oneself or in other people another curious mechanical feature. This is talking. There is no harm in talking by itself. But with some people, especially with those who notice it least, it really becomes a vice. They talk all the time, everywhere they happen to be, while working, while travelling, even while sleeping. They never stop talking to someone if there is someone to talk to, and if there is no one, they talk to themselves.

This too must not only be observed, but resisted as much as possible. With unresisted talking one cannot observe anything, and all the results of a man's observations will immediately evaporate in talking.

The difficulties he has in observing these four manifestations – lying, imagination, the expression of negative emotions and unnecessary talking – will show man his utter mechanicalness, and the impossibility even of struggling against this mechanicalness without help, that is, without new knowledge and without actual assistance. For even if a man has received certain material, he forgets to use it, forgets to observe himself; in other words, he falls asleep again and must always be awakened.

This “falling asleep” has certain definite features of its own, unknown, or at least unregistered and unnamed, in ordinary psychology. These features need special study.

There are two of them. The first is called *identification*.

“Identifying” or “identification” is a curious state in which man passes more than half of his life. He “identifies” with everything: with what he says, what he feels, what he believes, what he does not believe, what he wishes, what he does not wish, what attracts him, what repels him. Everything absorbs him, and he cannot separate himself from the idea, the feeling or the object that absorbed him. This means that in the state of identification man is incapable of looking impartially on the object of his identification. It is difficult to find the smallest thing with which man is unable to “identify.”

At the same time, in a state of identification, man has even less control over his mechanical reactions than at any other time. Such manifestations as lying, imagination, the expression of negative emotions and constant talking *need identification*. They cannot exist without identification. If man *could* get rid of identification, he could get rid of many useless and foolish manifestations.

Identification, its meaning, causes and results, is extremely well described in the *Philokalia* which was mentioned in the first lecture. But no trace of understanding it can be found in modern psychology. It is a quite forgotten “psychological discovery.”

The second sleep-producing state, akin to identification, is *considering*. Actually, “considering” is identification with people. It is a state in which man constantly worries about what other people think of him; whether they give him his due, whether they admire him enough and so on, and so on. “Considering” plays a very important part in everyone's life, but in some people it becomes an obsession. All their lives are filled with considering, that is, worry, doubt and suspicion, and there remains no place for anything else.

The myth of the “inferiority complex” and other “complexes” is created by the vaguely realised but not understood phenomenon of “identification” and “considering.”

Both “identifying” and “considering” must be observed most seriously. Only full knowledge of them can diminish them. If one cannot see them in oneself, one can easily see them in other people. But one must remember that one in no way differs from others. In this sense all people are equal.

Returning now to what was said before, we must try to understand more clearly how the development of man must begin, and in what way self-study can help this beginning.

From the very start we meet with difficulty in our language. For instance, we want to speak

about man from the point of view of evolution. But the word “man” in ordinary language does not admit of any variation or any gradation. Man who is never conscious and never suspects it, man who is struggling to become conscious, man who is fully conscious – it is all the same for our language. It is always “man” in every case. In order to avoid this difficulty and to help the student in classifying his new ideas, the system divides man into *seven categories*.

The first three categories are practically on the same level.

Man No. 1, a man in whom the moving or instinctive centres predominate over the intellectual and emotional, that is, Physical Man.

Man No. 2, a man in whom the emotional centre predominates over the intellectual, moving and instinctive. Emotional man.

Man No. 3, a man in whom the intellectual centre predominates over the emotional, moving and instinctive. Intellectual man.

In ordinary life we meet only these three categories of man. Each one of us and everyone we know is either No. 1, No. 2, or No. 3. There are higher categories of man, but men are not born already belonging to these higher categories. They are all born No.1, No. 2, No. 3 and can reach higher categories. They are all born No. 1, No. 2, No. 3 and can reach higher categories only through schools.

Man No. 4 is not born as such. He is a product of school culture. He differs from man No. 1, No. 2, and No. 3 by his knowledge of himself, by his understanding of his position and, as it is expressed technically, by his having acquired a permanent centre of gravity. This last means that the ideas of acquiring unity, consciousness, permanent “I” and will, that is, the idea of his development has already become for him more important than his other interests.

It must be added to the characteristics of man No. 4, that his functions and centres are more balanced, in a way in which they could not be balanced without work on himself, according to school principles and methods.

Man No. 5 is a man who has acquired *unity* and *self-consciousness*. He is different from ordinary man, because, in him, one of the higher centres already works, and he has many functions and powers that an ordinary man, that is, man No. 1, 2 and 3 does not possess.

Man No. 6 is a man who has acquired *objective consciousness*. Another higher centre works in him. He possesses many more new faculties and powers, beyond the understanding of an ordinary man.

Man No. 7 is a man who has attained all that a man can attain. He has *permanent “I”* and *free will*. He can control all the states of consciousness in himself and he already cannot lose anything he has acquired. According to another description, *he is immortal within the limits of the solar system*.

Understanding of this division of man into seven categories is very important, for the division has many applications in all possible ways of studying human activity. It gives, in the hands of those who understand it, a very strong and very fine instrument or tool for the definition of manifestations which, without it, are impossible to define.

Take, for instance, the general concepts of religion, art, science and philosophy. Beginning with religion we can see at once that there must be a religion of man No. 1, that is, all forms of fetishism, no matter how they are called; a religion of man No. 2, that is, emotional, sentimental religion, passing sometimes into fanaticism, the crudest forms of intolerance, persecution of heretics and so on; a religion of man No. 3, that is theoretical, scholastic religion, full of arguments about words, forms, rituals, which become more important than anything else; a religion of man No. 4, that is, the religion of a man who works for self-development; religion of man No. 5, that is, the religion of a man who has attained unity and can see and know many things that man No. 1, 2, and 3 can neither see nor know; then a religion of man No. 6 and a religion of man No. 7, about neither of which can we know anything.

The same division applies to art, science and philosophy. There must be an art of man No.

1, an art of man No. 2, an art of man No. 3; science of man No. 1, science of man No. 2, science of man No. 3, science of man No. 4 and so on. You must try to find examples of these for yourselves.

This expansion of concepts greatly enlarges our possibility of finding right solutions to many of our problems.

And this means that the system gives us the possibility of studying *a new language*, that is, new for us, which will connect for us ideas of different categories which are, in reality, united, and divide ideas of seemingly the same categories which are, in reality, different. The division of the word “man” into seven words: Man No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7, with all that follows, is an example of this new language.

This gives us the fourth definition of psychology *as the study of a new language*. And this new language is a *universal language*, which people sometimes try to find or invent.

The expression, “a universal language” or “philosophical language,” must not be taken in a metaphorical sense. The language is universal in the same sense as mathematical symbols are universal. And besides that it includes in itself all that people can think about. Even the few words of this language which have been explained give you the possibility of thinking and speaking with more precision than is possible in ordinary language, using any of the existing scientific or philosophical terminologies and nomenclatures.

The above is the text of the second lecture of six printed in the book *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution* by P. D. Ouspensky.