

3 THINKING

3.1 Introduction

¹What is thought? Only esoterics can explain what thought is. Thought is a function of mental consciousness. And mentality is in essence as different from emotionality as emotionality is different from physical consciousness. Pure mentality is rare in mankind. Most of what people call thinking is a mixture of emotionality and mentality: imagination, emotional and wishful thinking.

²“Thoughts” are not necessarily thinking, if by “thinking” you mean purposeful, expedient mental activity. The degree of mechanicalness versus the degree of intentionality, the degree of quality (higher or lower activated molecular kinds), the degree of knowledge, the degree of understanding – all of this must be considered. Most simply put: does “it” think in me, or do I think myself?

³Using thought man can develop his consciousness. Emotion cannot do it, at least not without the control of thought. Emotion can have an expedient significance for consciousness development only after thought has been educated and developed.

⁴Many people confuse intelligence and judgement. They are two quite different faculties, however. Judgement presupposes knowledge of facts and experience (a working-up of facts done previously).

⁵The lowest mental, inference thinking (47:7), is attracted to physical life, the lowest but one, principle thinking (47:6), is attracted to emotionality.

⁶Only perspective thinking (47:5) can assert itself as thinking independent of emotionality and come under the influence of causal consciousness (from 47:3). Perspective thinking (47:5) has the advantage that the totally misconstrued mental systems in the two lowest mental regions (47:6,7) are dropped and that common sense, critical reason, does not so easily fall a victim to the constructive urge.

⁷The highest kind of mental consciousness, system thinking (47:4), is strongly influenced by causal consciousness (47:3 and 47:2); working, when fully developed, as a down-scaler of causal ideas. System thinking could also be termed “symbol thinking”. A symbol is a summary of a whole view. Symbol thinking is the mental basic structure of our conception of reality.

⁸When thought is developed, it is gradually transformed into something else, a faculty of a higher kind: causal intuition. Correspondingly, desire is transformed into feeling, and feeling into imagination: they are mentalized. The transformation of thought into causal intuition is done with the participation of the next higher kind of atomic consciousness: 46. In an analogous manner the transformation of desire into imagination is done with the participation of the next higher higher kind of atomic consciousness: 47.

⁹Thought is closest to self-consciousness: thought is mental, and self-consciousness is causal.

¹⁰The individual must have a motivation, a driving force, to develop his consciousness. This motivation is supplied by momentary experiences of “higher states of consciousness”, actually states of self-consciousness, presence. They are called self-remembrance also because they are unforgettable. Only when he has achieved a contact with a kind of consciousness higher than thought does the individual have a driving force to develop his consciousness and his thought beyond their present limitation.

¹¹The idea of consciousness development: the change of essence, just as in the world of plants a seed changes into an embryo, which in its turn grows into a complete individual. The seed is not, does not even resemble, the fully developed individual, but has nevertheless developed out of it, has been transformed from it.

¹²The development of thought, the transformation of its essence, must have esoterics as its working material, for as thought improves and sharpens, it sees through the ordinary exoteric views, regards them as narrow, seeks something else and higher. The progressive develop-

ment of thought requires increasingly better material to work at. This process cannot run idle.

¹³Pursued in the right manner, esoteric study develops thought. The right development of thought presupposes esoteric study.

¹⁴For anyone skilled in thinking it is pleasurable to develop his thinking further. To sense how his capability grows in a meaningful way makes him long for more of it. It is the same kind of pleasurable feeling as accompanies the growth of ability in every field: music, sports, learning of handicrafts, etc. Pleasure is a source of energy as long as one does not identify oneself with it.

¹⁵Man's mental consciousness has but two reality functions: to scale down causal ideas and, as for the rest, to explode the fictions by analysis. Reason cannot produce knowledge. Sense ascertains facts, and reason can only work up the facts ascertained by sense. Sense is an objective consciousness function, reason is a subjective consciousness function.

¹⁶There is physical, emotional, mental, etc. sense. The normal individual has only physical sense. The emotional sense (clairvoyance) of certain people affords them no knowledge of reality, for if that were the case, there would be no need for esoterics, no need for teachers from the fifth natural kingdom. Only causal sense affords a knowledge of that part of reality which is called the three worlds of man, 47–49, and actually only knowledge of the matter aspect of those worlds. Knowledge of the consciousness aspect in 47–49 requires essential (46) sense; and knowledge of the will aspect, superessential (45) sense.

3.2 *Facts and Fictions*

¹We study facts in four types of contexts: historical, logical, psychological, causal. 1) By a historical context is meant the succession of events in time (but therefore not necessarily their causal connections). 2) A logical context shows how ideas and statements depend on each other. 3) Psychological contexts: actions depend on their motives. 4) Causal contexts show how material effects depend on their causes. The ground–consequence context is a logical one, the cause–effect context a causal one. Only 4) is cause in a material sense. There is very often a mix-up in people's minds about cause–effect and ground–consequence. (As you see, I avoid the word “reason” here precisely because it is part and parcel of this mix-up.) For instance, if I am out walking in the woods and see smoke rising somewhere far away, I conclude that there must be a fire. My conclusion is a logical context, a connection of the two ideas of “smoke” and “fire”, where “smoke” is the ground and “fire” is the consequence of my reasoning. In the physical world, however, fire is the cause and smoke is the effect. So we see that cause and ground should not be confused. Reasoning, proceeding from ground to consequence, can work both ways: inferring causes from effects or effects from causes. Or, expressed differently: the ground of my reasoning could be a cause or an effect. Physical world causal action, however, is always a one-way process, proceeding only from cause to effect.

²It is not possible to think anything that does not exist. Even a fiction is made up of elements that exist in some kind of reality. A conception is erroneous because it, in whole or in part, reflects other parts of reality than what is assumed. The parts are individually correct, but their union is false, and their combination erroneous. Making this combination, fiction-creating thinking has caused a disharmony in mental matter. Something analogous is not possible for causal thinking, since it mirrors the reality sought for exactly, does not admit of any disharmony. Therefore, an important feature of the work at conquering causal consciousness consists in seeing through, discarding, fictions. Motto: “Let truth and reality rule in my life.”

3.3 *Associative Thinking*

¹Associations are needed as materials for thinking and as a driving force in thinking.

²In hylozoics, associations are explained by the mechanical work constantly going on in the subconscious, a work in which impressions received are processed and combined into larger

units, complexes. A new impression, which is still present in the waking consciousness, can rouse an older impression, which has sunk down into the subconscious, and so bring up into the waking consciousness not only the old impression but also complexes linked with it. The association need not be rational or expedient. The work of complexes is mechanical; they work at whatever they receive.

³It is largely true that the more associations you have, the richer your intellectual life is.

⁴However, mere association is not sufficient for thinking. Uncritical associative thinking, typically proceeding in chains of comparisons or of identifications, is the most common. Real thinking, however, begins only with discrimination: the ability to pick and choose among associations. Real thinking consists in a system of refutation of false and useless associations. In this work, the negative judgement most often proves to be more important than the positive judgement: to establish what a thing is not is more important than to establish what it is.

⁵The whole of this activity, the critical work at associations, is more and more clearly apprehended as a never-ending process, approaching truth rather than attaining it.

3.4 The Relation of Thinking to Language

¹It is easy to forget that vocabulary – the repertory of words – and the repertory of ideas, or of concepts, are two different things. If you do not consider this fact, you will easily, when talking to other people, presuppose that they possess the same concepts as yourself merely because they use the same words as you do. The student of esoterics gives a special import also to words in general use, such as “development”, “mental”, “sense”, “reason”, “spiritual”, “soul”, “realize”, “humanist”, etc. The word “development”, for instance, when used in esoterics has a qualitative meaning, indicates a qualitative change, an improvement that does not involve the matter aspect, but the consciousness aspect, whereas the same word in general usage practically always means a change pure and simple, not a qualitative change, and in addition purely mechanical events in the matter aspect of the physical world. There are, for instance, such expressions in use as “development of disease” and “development of crime”, etc. In the community at large, the word “mental” does not have exactly the same meaning as the one esotericians put into it, but refers to the psyche in a more general sense, as is clear from such words as “mental hospital”, “mental disturbance”, etc. In the esoteric sense, “humanist” means an individual who has attained the humanist or mental stage, whereas in the community at large it has quite another meaning, in the matter of life view: an agnostic, or skeptic, or anti-metaphysician.

²It is worthwhile to consider the fact that the vocabulary, or repertory of words, is always very limited, whereas the possible repertory of ideas or concepts is unlimited, and also that the meaning of many words changes with time on account of universal and seemingly un-stoppable abuse of words.

³Precision of thinking requires precision of expression. “One should tell the truth, but one should not tell all truths.” “Every man can develop, but not all men develop.” (Similar to “Anyone can die tomorrow, but not everyone will die tomorrow.”) “The future can be somewhat predicted, but the future is not predetermined.” “Everybody has a right to his view, but everybody is not right in his view.”

⁴The inversion is also true, with some modification: The endeavour to be precise in your expression helps you to acquire the precision of thought.

3.5 Formatory Thinking

¹Formatory thinking is thinking of a very low quality. If our thinking is very often formatory, we cannot think in a flexible way, in a manner adapted to reality; we cannot see more sides of a matter or a problem, we cannot understand esoteric ideas, we cannot progress. Formatory thinking is a serious obstacle to our development, and in some of us it is the most difficult obstacle.

²Formatory thinking is like just having a glance at something and immediately giving one's opinion on it. The opposite, which can be called formulating thinking, consists in the slower process of collecting all sorts of things that can be known about something, ranking facts and data according to their importance and probability, weighing arguments against one another, and then building the thought form with a certain care, formulating the expression with a certain precision. Of course there are many different degrees of perfection in formulating thinking, but its most important characteristic is the intentionality of its endeavour.

³Therefore, all who desire to work on themselves should get a clear understanding of what formatory thinking is, not so much through definitions (by intension) as through examples (by extension). You should collect a number of concrete, representative examples of formatory thinking, your own and that of other people.

⁴Among general characteristics of formatory thinking the following three should primarily be mentioned: thinking in absolute opposites (absolutizing thinking), exaggerated belief in definition, simplification of arguments to distortion.

⁵Thinking in absolute opposites, either – or, may sometimes be justified, but mostly is not. Formatory thinking takes a particular delight in finding contradictions in terms of absolute opposites. Formatory thinking starts from that superstition in logic which says that because concepts are absolute, the real things, events, and processes to which the concepts refer must be absolute as well. In real life, however, such conceived absolutes seldom occur, but usually relatives; not warm and cold as absolutes, but warmer and colder, etc.

⁶Typical examples of formatory thinking are seen in objections that beginners may raise to “contradictions” they think they find in school principles: 1) “Are we supposed to remember ourselves or are we supposed to forget ourselves? We are told to do both!?” 2) “We should not do anything until we have understood why, but we should obey rules without understanding why!?” The answers that dissolve formatory thinking are: 1) We *are* supposed to remember ourselves and we *are* supposed to forget ourselves. The “self” intended is not the same in the two cases. The permanent self is not the same as the false apparent selves emanating from the mechanical work of centres. And: 2) There are many different degrees of understanding, and we should have some understanding of rules before we obey them; yet we must obey them before we have fully understood them, and we cannot in fact understand them deeply, their necessity and purpose, until we have obeyed them for quite a long time. It is exactly the same case as with the laws of life: to discover them we must first apply them.

⁷Formatory thinking is keen on establishing connections or identities between things on the basis of similarities which this thinking observes. Differences are at least as important, however, and often more important. Moreover, similarities and differences should not just be counted, but also weighed: some of them are more weighty, others are quite unimportant.

⁸Formatory assurances are such automatically and mechanically accepted assumptions as characterize man's “thought” and action in unthinking states. “Good will is enough” or “If only the intention is good, the result will be good.” Such assurances must be cherished by those who do not heed resistance, or the second force. However, even students of esoterics, who have some theoretical knowledge of triune forces, forget every now and then to apply their knowledge of them.

⁹The work at raising one's thinking from the formatory level is performed in many different ways and with many different procedures. In the following, some such ways and procedures will be described.

3.6 Erroneous and Primitive Thinking

¹Erroneous conclusions, incorrect jumps in one's argument, of course are very common in uneducated and undeveloped thinking. Examining it more closely, one will find that rather few typical and recurring structural errors in mental construction are involved. When refuting

these errors in thinking, the corresponding scheme of fault-tracing or model for refutation can be applied, and these schemes, or models, thus are as many as the rather few types of errors in thinking. Independent thinkers, reflective people, will eventually “discover” and apply these models of refutation by themselves, but generally without having names for them. Such a work can be observed in intelligent and independent-minded children as well.

²The expression, known from the Vedas, *parokshapriyā iva hi devāh*, is usually translated “for the gods seem to love the subtle”. But you could as well translate it “for the gods seem to love what is out of sight”, since *paroksha* literally means “what is beyond the range of one’s eyes”, the opposite of *pratyaksha*, “what is before one’s eyes”. There is something here of general applicability, namely the importance of exercising the opposite of that kind of superficial thinking which can grasp only what is presented to it by sensual direct confrontation. A whole world is upset when in dramatic film sequences is shown how two passenger planes are being crashed into skyscrapers in New York, so that about three thousand people are killed. In another part of the world, namely Iraq, five thousand children, from newborn to five-year-olds, are killed every month through the United Nations sanctions put into effect mainly at the behest of the government of the United States, a merciless and relentless mass murder of innocents that lasted twelve long years.

³It is as important to refute erroneous views as to acquire correct views. You cannot add the new, the correct, you learn to the old, erroneous, and expect the result of this amalgamation to be correct. Newcomers into hylozoics from less exact teachings are, therefore, enjoined to be especially attentive to such things in hylozoics as definitely diverge from what they may have learnt previously. One instance is the definite statement of hylozoics that time and space exist in all worlds, quite contrary to the arbitrary assertion of quasi-occultists to the effect that time and space exist in the physical world only.

⁴The criticism of erroneous conceptions voiced by esoteric teachers and writers in any event is intended only for those who need it in their work at eliminating erroneous “ideas”, for those who appreciate the criticism as a valuable and necessary tool. Those who get irritated about the criticism demonstrate thereby that they are unable to use it and that it is not intended for them. They need not get irritated, no more than when trying clothes they happen to put on a size too large. Moreover, the criticism of esotericians is impersonal: they are interested in the views as such, not in the persons temporarily holding them. The misapprehension of for whom criticism is intended appears to be due to the democratism prevailing with its two basic axioms: 1) everything must exist for everybody or not exist at all, 2) there is nothing beyond what I and my fellows can grasp and accept.

⁵It is interesting to study in other people and also in oneself – afterwards – how the individual rids himself of a misconception that has been firmly established in him. In the beginning, this almost always meets with a strong resistance. The erroneous view is like a parasite in the system of the individual, an alien organism that refuses to go or die. It defends itself, and the individual easily identifies himself with this defence. He may make certain admissions, but yet explain them away as though they were minor errors or mistakes in what is on the whole a correct view. “Only the façade, no supporting pillars. The building stands on a firm foundation.” Then one supporting pillar after the other topples over, and the foundation cracks. The defence turns desperate, pathetic. At last comes the insight, and there is a polar shift, as it were: recently almost everything was correct, the errors were small and few. Now almost everything is wrong, and the right things are unimportant. After this, however, the individual should make an effort not to fall asleep with a new belief that is only a reverse image of the one just abandoned. Therefore, it is important that the individual’s understanding grows in the process, and it is essential to study the mental and emotional mechanisms that made the individual embrace the misconception and defend it for so long.

⁶Using an exclusively numerical or quantitative method one can “establish” countless quite

unessential “connections”, for instance that redheads to a lesser extent than dark-haired or blondes study at the university.

⁷It is always a proof of a low degree of intelligence, if you lose sight of the original, prime purpose of an activity. In the worlds of men we often see how this happens to the richest and mightiest organizations.

3.7 Intensional and Extensional Attitudes

¹A better understanding of the difference between intensional and extensional attitudes is desirable. When thinking takes the intensional attitude, it is strongly attached to its previously formed concepts, categories, views, opinions, “ideas”, prejudice, etc., and is disinclined or unable to put these aside to observe reality as it is. Then thinking largely lacks the ability to assimilate new knowledge. New impressions are reinterpreted so that they can be incorporated with old views without disturbance. The opposite, or extensional attitude, when at its best, is characterized by its ability to check subjective reactions while observing reality, trying to form a clear conception of the new factual condition, the new person, etc. If reality is the territory and our imperfect attempts at perceiving this reality are maps of the territory, then it can be said that the intensional attitude tends to assert the authority of the map against the territory, whereas the extensional attitude is constantly prepared to redraw the map as the knowledge of the territory increases.

²The intensional attitude is particularly prominent in individuals whose principle thinking is overdeveloped at the expense of their common sense and interest in objective reality. Idiologues of all sorts are included here: scientific, philosophical, theological, and political dogmatists. Scientists who reject phenomena that are incompatible with their theories because they “conflict with the laws of nature”. Marxists who assert: “There can be no oppression of people under Socialism, because Socialism is the first and only social system that guarantees man his complete dignity.” In such individuals thinking finally turns into a closed system that has nothing to do with objective reality.

³Things can be explained and defined by intension or by extension. By intension, we seek to find the most exact definition possible, and then we blithely believe that it holds water for all individual cases. By extension, we refrain from attempts at too strong definition, apply more force to description, using examples of what it is about, points to objects, etc. There are many things we can understand excellently by extension, but worse or not at all by intension. Three examples of this are the three aspects of reality: matter, consciousness, and motion. They can be experienced directly, but cannot be defined. It appears that many of our most fundamental concepts are among a category non-definables: matter, motion, change, distance, space, time, segment, number, etc. If we nevertheless try to define, we shall soon end up in intensional circles: “1) What is segment? 2) Segment is distance. 3) But what, then, is distance? 4) ...Umm! Segment...” But it is very easy to draw some segments on a paper and show: “These are segments. This segment is 5 cm, and that one is 10 cm.” The overly logical person has difficulty in digesting the fact that people understand by this method. He appears to believe that the territory cannot possibly be perceived except through a map.

3.8 Common Sense

¹Another name of the two higher kinds of mental consciousness (47:4 and 5) is “common sense”. Common sense means not to believe anything or not to believe one knows anything, but to accept only what is part of one’s own experience or, in things that are outside of one’s experience, what one comprehends and understands, what is not in conflict with definitively established facts, what agrees with the system of orientation one has critically accepted pending future direct experience. Of course, causal consciousness is “common sense” of an even higher kind than the two kinds of mental consciousness just mentioned.

²The first rule of common sense: Accept nothing without sufficient grounds! If this rule were observed, more than 90 per cent of what mankind has accepted as truth could be eliminated.

³Common sense is what is universal in the experience of all beings in all natural kingdoms. The domain of reality of our experience is widened in every higher world and higher kingdom. However, there is nothing in the higher that can ever controvert what is universal in the lower. The universal is what is common to all in the entire cosmos.

⁴Objective reality, the three aspects of reality, or of life, cannot be explained away by any philosophy, and it is the basis of the universal. What has been constructed on this objective basis through objectively and definitively established facts is universal as well. Subjective consciousness is objectively correct when it is in agreement with objective reality and this in each world separately.

3.9 Perspective

¹What was yesterday a ruling dogma, today is an exploded error. This truth is understood by most people. But why do they not draw the conclusion from it that what is today a ruling dogma will tomorrow be an exploded error? They do not draw that conclusion because they do not think in a perspectivist way.

²One of the particular methods used by perspective thinking is the active work at the multi-valuedness of words, thus the fact that “one and the same word” has many meanings. One example is such work at the word “money” expressing at least four different concepts.

³Consider the following statements: 1) “I want this money paid into my account.” 2) “I always have money on me when going out.” 3) “A surplus of money causes inflation.” 4) “Money is the root of all evil.”

⁴Does the word “money” mean the same in the four statements? In examples 1–3, there is reference to money on three increasingly higher levels of abstraction: Money₁ is a definite, concrete cash amount in a certain concrete situation (a definite time and place, etc.). Money₂ is an indefinite cash amount in a recurrent typical situation. Money₃ is all money used in society, cash, credits, debts, etc. In its turn, money₃ is multivalued, for it is uncertain whether what is meant is the totality of means of payment, or their purchasing power, or both. Money₄ is not money at all in any of the senses 1–3, but is a metaphor of the desire for everything that money can buy.

⁵It is part of discrimination to keep apart: 1) the thing, 2) the word or words denoting it, 3) the concept (thought content) of the word. The thing is not the word, the word is not the concept, the concept is not the thing. But all three have a mutual relation.

3.10 To Overcome Thinking in Opposites

¹Two-valued thinking views everything in terms of contradictory, absolute, opposites: non-identity – identity. Many-valued thinking applies the gamut: contradictory opposite – contrary opposite – complementarity – unity – identity. Contrary opposites are such opposites as appear absolute on a small scale, but enter (are subsumed) into a common concept on a larger scale (have a common ground): for example, the concepts of white and black are both subsumed into the concept of colour.

²Two or more mutually contradictory statements can both or all be right, each one within its sphere of application, but not outside of it. It may be a case of different statements limiting or determining each other, describing different aspects of one and the same thing, describing different functions of one and the same thing, different actors with different functions in one and the same group. Everything must be seen in its context, in its relations with other things, in its relativity. This is the meaning of relative thinking, also called perspective thinking.

³Apparently or nominally opposite things may work together. An author writes a book that

critically examines how power is wielded in society. A psychiatrist is interested and wants to order the book from a certain bookseller supplying “alternative literature”. He refuses to order the book, however, and as she asks in astonishment “why?”, he answers: “You don’t need that book.” He also refuses to give her the publisher’s phone number. This really sparks her interest, and of course she obtains the book in another way, reads it, and contacts the author. A life-long friendship with a fruitful co-operation ensues between them. The bookseller (now deceased) was, of course, a third part in their co-operation, although he never knew it.

⁴“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you”, words that are attributed to Jesus of the Gospels, therefore should not be thought of as mere expressive of a noble feeling that makes you a better person, but as an exhortation describing a deeper reality that already exists in the relations between people.

⁵A higher kind of thinking is characterized, among other things, by combining “contradictions” into a higher unity, or, put more exactly: the contradictions which the lower thinking believed it found were seen as mere apparent by the higher thinking.

⁶One example: esoterics teaches us that we should forget ourselves and remember ourselves. To a lower kind of thinking this implies an insoluble contradiction, until the insight will dawn that the “self” spoken of is not one and the same: mechanical consciousness functions (“I am angry”, “I am sad”, “I am upset”) and the self-consciousness of the permanent self.

⁷Another example: esoterics rejects the common belief in god – the belief in the angry, vengeful, and jealous god of the Old Testament – and therefore ignorant critics call esoterics atheist. Instead, esoterics teaches that every living creature is divine, potentially or actually, and so it is really more theistic than the ordinary belief in god.

⁸A third example: we are enjoined to help spreading esoterics, and at the same time we are given various warnings and dissuasions invoking the immaturity of people, the risk of abuse and distortion. Both standpoints are simultaneously right and afford each other a limited applicability: Spread, but discriminately! Hold back, but discriminately! In this case discrimination holds the key to the paradox.

⁹A fourth example, also concerning the spread of esoterics: It is said that every disciple who has reached beyond the beginner’s stage must help in the work of spreading the knowledge. At the same time it is said that very few people are ripe for receiving the knowledge. The contradiction that some people believe they find in these two statements is dissolved applying the following insight: It is indeed true that the knowledge cannot be the possession of everybody, cannot even be the possession of many. But we must make every effort to give it to as many people as possible. The spread of esoteric ideas is limited by the nature of the ideas themselves and by people’s inertia and inability to understand these ideas. But it must not be limited by *our* inertia.

¹⁰We should try to raise our thinking from the level where it automatically views things in terms of 0 or 100 per cent, black or white, identity or non-identity, to that higher level where thinking observes relations. A typical question of the level of thinking in identity and non-identity: “Is the consciousness of the heart centre the same as essential (46) consciousness?” The answer might be: “All centres in man’s envelopes of incarnation have in themselves only mechanical consciousness, not self-consciousness. Essential (46) consciousness is constant self-consciousness with simultaneous group consciousness. Thus the consciousness of the heart centre is not the same as essential consciousness. When the monad has once acquired essential consciousness, however, this will find expression through the heart centre. Therefore, there is a definite relation between the heart centre and essential consciousness. But note this: relation, not identity.”

¹¹In esoterics there is much talk about the importance of being flexible in one’s thinking, of reaching higher levels of thinking, etc. Even merely thinking the thought that there are more

flexible ways of thinking, that there are kinds of thinking that are qualitatively higher, makes it easier to acquire this higher kind of thinking.

¹²Something that is at first seen as being absolutely opposed to something else sometimes is later seen as being the former's greater or essential context. For instance, representatives of religion are sometimes hostile to esoterics. With time, they will see that what is essential in religions is contained in esoterics. If the *Bhagavadgītā* expresses the heart and essence of Hinduism (which no Hindu will contest), then the esoterician, too, will agree that this book contains many important esoteric truths and on no single point is at variance with esoterics. All esoteric students are exhorted to make a close study of the *Bhagavadgītā*, for there is much to be learnt from it, such as: "To action alone hast thou a right and never at all to its fruits; let not the fruits of action be thy motive; neither let there be in thee any attachment to inaction." The *Bhagavadgītā*, II:47 (Prof. Radhakrishnan's translation).

3.11 Reflection

¹Reflection is a real penetration of the object. This requires time, quiet, the suppression of superficial associations, energy. This is actually nothing less than "meditation".

²To live reflectingly means to initiate thinking on certain questions oneself, the opposite of being forced to think through circumstances; to draw thinking away from certain things and to bring it close to other things, to raise the level in the direction of the more general; to draw conclusions about important things one has learnt, not to complain that esoteric teaching is too abstract.

³To live reflectingly means, among other things, that you are so prepared in your thought that you will never be surprised by anything. So it will be because you have already contemplated all contingencies. Then you will never take the future for granted. The ancients always said of the future: "God willing." They were prepared to die at any moment. They had no fear of death, for they knew: "Where I am, death is not; where death is, I am not." The man who does not often reflect on his own death is already dead. Every day you should live in the awareness that this day could be your last. To live reflectingly is to live constantly with the seriousness of life before your eyes.

⁴By our mechanical, non-reflecting thinking, we constantly make lots of assumptions. Then we base our actions on our assumption that those assumptions are correct, are reality, and we are astonished when reality proves to be quite different. Observe your unconscious assumptions! Then the assumptions behind the assumptions!

⁵Very often we take unchangingness for granted, assuming that conditions are always the same, that things and states will last. The law of change rules everything in our world, however.

⁶Always beneficial exercises include: distinguishing between what you know and what you do not know, things necessary and unnecessary, essential and unessential, fruitful and fruitless, harmless and harmful, imperishable and perishable.

⁷It is a good rule saying that for every idea you receive from another think one yourself.

3.12 Hindrances are in Habit and Forgetfulness

¹When those who have studied esoterics for a long time do not use perspective thinking or formulating thinking, they certainly cannot blame it on inability or deficient consciousness development. Because if they understand esoterics at all, they must have activated this kind of thinking to some degree, and have used it in their study. No, in their case it is less a matter of inability and more one of the power of habit and of forgetfulness. Habit, mechanicality, certainly is expedient where activity in physical (black) centres is concerned; it is hardly possible, for instance, when driving a car to perform all motions intentionally, as functions of the king of spades. In emotional and mental centres (red centres), however, habits, mechanical

patterns are just obstructive and destructive. Formatory thinking thus is allowing mechanical habit patterns in the thinking function – which can never benefit us. Formulating thinking is to take part in the thinking function with a higher degree of presence, with intentionality – which must always benefit us.

²Forgetfulness is connected with the general level of our being. If we are too often in too low parts of centres, too small parts of ourselves, then we simply do not remember any important esoteric fact, any fact essential to our work on ourselves. Then large parts of our day may roll on while we live in forgetfulness. Forgetfulness is an aspect of our sleep. In a certain school they made no difference between forgetfulness and sleep, but used one and the same word for these two related states.

3.13 Some Examples of Tools of Thinking

¹Let a statement have the general form $A = B$. A may be a certain person or group, B = some characteristic of the person or group; his or their profession, for instance. $A = B$. “K. is a therapist.” Unproblematic? Perhaps not. What must be heeded here, where formatory thinking is concerned, is that it has a strong, mechanical, and unconscious tendency to make everything it “processes” absolute. A equals “K. and no one but K. B equals therapist and nothing but therapist”. You may believe that such “thinking” does not occur in yourself merely because you see its limitation once your attention has been directed to it. But the point is not how clearly and precisely you are thinking once your attention has been directed to the process, but the interesting question is: how often do you think with attention and how often does it just roll on unconsciously, mechanically, and in a formatory way?

²Nāgārjuna’s four categories save us from compulsory thinking in “either yes or no”: 1) Yes. 2) No. 3) Both yes and no. 4) Neither yes nor no. The fourth category may mean: “I do not commit myself to this question”, “the question is irrelevant to me”, “the question is wrongly put”, “the question starts from a wrong assumption”. Examples of questions to which 4) is the answer: “Have you stopped beating your wife/taking bribes/boozing?”

³A tool of thinking that helps us to abandon a useless thinking in two absolute opposites is “discerning the third pole”. For example, in the middle ages the Church introduced the doctrine of purgatory as a “third pole” between the two absolutes of heaven and hell. Likewise you always need to find the third force dissolving the deadlock between two mutually opposed forces. Pythagoras introduced the teaching of the three aspects of reality, so doing away with the absolute opposition of “spirit and matter”.

⁴Another tool of thinking is understanding of gradients. By gradient is meant a phenomenon or a process which increases or decreases according to some definite scale, in time, etc. Our very understanding is an example of a gradient. One really cannot speak of “real understanding”, only of increasingly better understanding on increasingly higher levels, thus the gradient of understanding. The corresponding can be said of such realities as consciousness, the work on three lines, the study of the knowledge, the improvement of being.

⁵Asymmetrical relations must be noticed wherever they occur. Such relations can be expressed in the general form: “If A is contained in (or follows from) B, it does not necessarily mean that B is contained in (or follows from) A.” For instance, this obtains in many causal relations: Suppose that from cause A necessarily follows effect B. It does not follow from this, however, that effect B always must have cause A, for it may have another cause. Therefore: If cause A always yields effect B, this nevertheless does not exclude the possibility of cause C yielding effect B. The concrete example given in the book *The Explanation* was the following: A very delicate piece of china unfailingly cracks if you wash it up in too hot water. But if the china lies there cracked, it does not necessarily mean that someone has washed it up in too hot water.

3.14 Causal Consciousness

¹Causal consciousness exists, albeit in small doses, also at lower stages, the stage of culture being the lowest. Understanding of esoterics presupposes some causal consciousness. Thus it is not a matter of some “all-or-nothing-condition”, as if all causal consciousness were acquired at the causal stage and there were no causal consciousness at all before that. Thus one should strive to enhance the degree of causal consciousness in one’s everyday life. Causal of course means “being connected with causes”. Anyone who strives to apprehend causes, grounds, and purposes approaches causal consciousness more than the one who does not strive in this manner. One seeks to make clear: How did this view arise? etc.

²The most important work for the acquisition of causal consciousness is the effort to be self-conscious as often as possible and to endeavour to activate higher emotional consciousness through meditation on the essential qualities and unselfish service, and to activate higher mental consciousness through one’s study of esoterics and one’s effort to grasp the esoteric teaching as exactly as possible.

³For those at lower stages and those walking the slog jog-trot through millions of years towards higher states, the exactness of their views is not very important. That is why they can learn something also through illusions and fictions, those “false gods” without which men cannot live. However, for those who have tired of following along with the large, grey mass, for those choosing the path of rapid evolution, exactness in details is of the utmost importance, and they are particularly keen on eliminating illusions and fictions. And that is the quickest path to causal consciousness.