

MY THEORY OF CONSCIOUSNESS.

CHAPTER 5.

Aristotle does not offer the sceptic the exterior, Platonic, certainty, which he wants, again according to Martha Nussbaum at page 253. Neither do I, in my book. I say in terms that there is no insight into eternity, if it exists outside space and time, and can be none; or it becomes hell, see page 224. So we reached the same conclusion, by different means; because I have never read any Aristotle. I once tried to read his Rhetoric, because being an advocate I reckoned I knew about that; but I concluded that he had nothing to teach me about advocacy, whereas I had a good deal to teach him, so I continued no further. All I offer the sceptic is the perfectly relaxed consciousness, which I suggest is the same as or very similar to the consciousness of God, and the exhortation to view things through the eyes of the Creator.

No-one can satisfy the sceptic's demand for external purity; we can only offer him our fellowship, which is internal purity. In my Introduction page viii, I state categorically that I believe the supreme reality is a sense of communion between two persons or two souls, even if nine tenths of it is imagination. If I am right, and this is reality, and I think any soldier would agree with me that comradeship is all; then to seek reality in the purity of external forms, is fantasy. You will never find it, any more than you will find the rainbow's end. Newton explained the physics of rainbows; but merely because you understand his explanation, does not mean you will reach the rainbow's end. It means actually that you will not. And I infer in my book, that there is nothing you can do to persuade the sceptic to accept your communion, if he does not want it. But anyone who rejects communion with his fellow-man is ruled out of the Kingdom of Heaven, if such a place exists; because in Heaven there is nothing else. Aristotle grounded his principle of the relevance of experience, on the utter loss of community if you were unwise enough to reject it. We are saying the same thing in

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different language. And he was right. The only difference which I think I have with Aristotle, is that he never aimed for the stars; and I did!

Nevertheless Aristotle's insistence on reliance on experience is absolutely crucial; he was setting out where he believed knowledge ended. It has to end somewhere, or man turns himself into a god, which is a dangerous thing to do as it may not have the Divine blessing; and then it is likely to be termed "pride", "arrogance", or "blasphemy". I gather that the philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre made "self" into his god; and that the result was nemesis, probably for himself, certainly for the community in which he lived. Better to accept that there are limits to human knowledge. In my opinion, experience of God is still experience. Religious people talk about "revelation", as though it is superior to experience; but if you think God speaks to you, as He spoke to Moses at the burning bush, then that is an experience you have had, although a highly subjective one. Even if it is all imagination, it remains a vivid imaginative experience. And I was most interested to read the opinion of Field Marshall von Manstein in his book *Lost Victories*, that inner knowledge was the most sure knowledge, even when deciding whether to place a Panzer Army here or there. As he is generally considered the best brain in the Wehrmacht in the Second World War, his opinion is worth quite a lot, as he probably knew what he was talking about. I found the same, when I was cross-examining men whom I considered dishonest, that inner knowledge was the most sure knowledge. We may both have been echoing the language of the Medieval mystic; but perhaps he knew a thing or two as well.

So we need a theory of consciousness, and here it is. The basis is the "perfectly relaxed consciousness", or if you like the "consciousness of God". Superimposed on this are all the other frames of mind, with which we are very familiar: the legal, the military, the theological and so on. Each frame of mind is brought into being by a certain type of nervous tension in the body, which presupposes certain unspoken assumptions on which any

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particular frame of mind is based. Only what I call the “perfectly relaxed consciousness” is free from nervous tension, and in this frame of mind “thought” as we normally understand it is not possible. Countless times, when prosecuting, I have put myself into the shoes of an accused to try to see how things looked through his eyes, and very interesting it is; but you cannot work out your cross-examination in this way. To do that requires thought; and that means an attitude of mind under tension.

Within any frame of mind under tension, it is possible to think a large number of thoughts; but it is not possible to think thoughts that belong to another frame of mind. It is possible in two frames of mind to think thoughts about the same subject matter; but they will not be the same thoughts, because they take place in different frames of mind. They may appear to be the same, because they are about the same subject matter; and very often the thoughts in one frame of mind will contradict the thoughts on the same subject matter in a different frame of mind, and an argument ensues. But what the disputants are really arguing about is the relative merits of their respective frames of mind, although they may think they are arguing about the merits of the subject matter. It is seldom that they are truly arguing about the relative validity of the thoughts viewed in the same frame of mind.

The assumptions, on which any attitude of mind is based, are very much like the a priori facts on which Kant based his Critique of Pure Reason; and these were the instinctive knowledge of space and time which Kant felt we all had. And Kant elaborated in great detail how he believed these assumptions were valid, and how his Critique was based on them. Unfortunately Kant lived before 19th and 20th century scientific research, which showed almost conclusively that our ideas of space and time are not intuitive, but are born of experience, like almost everything else! So his philosophy is flawed from the start; as indeed are so many attitudes of mind flawed. But my theory of consciousness accepts that these assumptions may be flawed, with the result that the working out of conclusions in that frame

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of mind may also be flawed to some extent; whereas Kant's Critique was based, and avowedly based, on the validity of the assumptions which he made, in retrospect somewhat unwisely. For practical purposes Kant's idea of space was Euclid's three dimensional space, and it is true that this is most people's idea of space. And furthermore it has to be admitted that the system of geometry that Euclid built on his axioms is the most marvellous system; and the most controversial of his axioms is simply that two parallel lines meet at infinity, which some people might say was obvious. But "infinity" is a very elusive concept, and the more one thinks about it, the less obvious it is. Nevertheless this concept of space is quite satisfactory for many everyday affairs. It is not satisfactory however for spherical geometry, and its conclusions are invalid there; for example in spherical geometry the angles of a triangle do not add up to 180 degrees. Now aerial-navigation depends of spherical geometry; and it would be a pity in these days of popular travel by air, if most airliners got lost, and crashed through lack of fuel, because their navigation was confined to the propositions of three dimensional space. So Kant's philosophy may still be valid in the humdrum life round Konigsberg; but its conclusions are likely to be flawed if applied to a wider environment. Logic or reason is no magic talisman, and is only a tool for working out in any given attitude of mind what conclusions are sound, if certain given premises are sound.

The same objection applies to Kant intuitive idea of time. With the discovery that light has a limited, but absolute velocity, any idea of simultaneous events, when those events are far apart, vanishes. For when you have to admit that two events may appear in the order A-B to an observer on one side of them, and in the order B-A to an observer on the other side of them, because light takes time to travel, most people would say that any idea of simultaneity vanished. And as between our galaxy, the Milky Way, and the furthest galaxy we know, who can say whether they are receding from us with a velocity approaching that of light, or whether we are receding from them. Absolute space and time vanish in astronomy;

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and one has to be very careful in rediscovering absolutes in moral conduct, when all ideas of the permanence of substance, either in astronomy or nuclear physics, appear to be illusory. Hence my preference for the “perfectly relaxed consciousness” as the foundation of my theory of consciousness, and my analysis of conduct; in this way I keep clear of matter, and the illusion of permanence which its solidity conceals. I attempt to keep my feet on the ground of experience! Kant’s misfortune was to be born before his time, and before the scientific research of the 19th and 20th centuries showed the fallacies in his assumptions.

It must also be remembered, that as any attitude of mind is brought into being by a particular type of nervous tension in the body, every lawyer’s attitude of mind will be slightly different from every other lawyer’s, and its assumptions ever so slightly different too. This is entirely consistent with Einstein’s Relativity, in which he postulated that each one of us has a unique frame of reference in space and time, however little it may differ from everyone else’s. In fact there are as many attitudes of mind as there are stars in the heavens, or as the tunes you can compose from the 12 notes on the piano that go to make up an octave, or as there are persons who actually think. And the great function of professional discipline is to try to ensure that the differences between the various attitudes of mind of lawyers, or between those of staff officers in the Army, are sufficiently small that in practice they can usually be ignored. But misunderstandings are still possible, despite the best professional training, if only because some people are public spirited and others are out for themselves, with the result that their thinking is based on different assumptions.

Nor does the attitude of mind of a man or woman remain the same throughout the year, or the day, or the moment. It is one of the first cardinal assertions in my book, which I illustrate by two legal examples, that a human being can alter his or her attitude of mind by an effort of will, to a limited extent, at least momentarily; and that this ability is an essential part of making up one’s mind about anything. In particular, cross-examination is a waste of

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time, unless one can see things through the eyes of others. So all that I have said so far about attitudes of mind takes place in the world of human relationships. It is useless trying to conduct a legal case, or any part of it, in a cold detached way; and I would have thought pretty useless doing anything in a cold detached way, without considering the likely reaction of other human beings, either from sympathy or from Machiavellian cynicism.

So my experience is that there are laws in the spiritual world governing human conduct, which run parallel with the laws in Natural Science. And I would have thought that there has been a fair degree of unanimity about this, from the poet who wrote the 119th psalm to Henry Drummond, a lecturer in biology and geology and a prophet of the Free Church of Scotland in the late 19th century. But in my experience laws in the spiritual world are often laws of trust and confidence; and I think it is a misuse of language to describe these as laws of cause and effect, which is how most people regard the laws of Natural Science. My view is that one should just accept consciousness as one of the realities of life; and use the theory of consciousness to explore the spiritual world, which is fragmented and appears largely disorganized without it. But if you are so daring as to try to look for the origin of consciousness, and try to underpin the laws of human conduct with mathematics, I think you would need more than the 4 dimensions of space-time to produce a coherent picture. More even than the 5 dimensions, which when I was an undergraduate we heard that Herman Bondi at St. John's was playing with in his study of mathematics and maybe of particle physics.

Teilhard de Chardin agreed with him about the 5th dimension; biologist, palaeontologist and Jesuit priest, he wrote and argued that it was absurd to assume that the biophysics and biochemistry of the brain would necessarily be the same as the physics and chemistry of astronomy or of the hydrogen & helium atoms; and he postulated that there was a 5th dimension, which he called "complexity", and which he certainly thought applied to the

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physical workings of the brain. He was writing in the 1940s, although his works were only published in 1956 after his death. I agree, but think that his views are not the end of the story.

I would argue similarly that the workings of the mind and consciousness are so immeasurably more complicated even than the physical workings of the brain, that it is not wise to think they are governed by the same laws as govern the brain. When you consider the mind or consciousness, you must enter a world of relationships if you mean to keep in touch with ordinary experience; and in this world I doubt if objective truth has any meaning, unless one person is trying to communicate it to another. It may exist, but it has no meaning. Just as when two lovers fall out and go their separate ways, their relationship still exists in the sense that they do not revert to their position before they fell in love; but the relationship has no meaning now, because they are out of love. Truth, relative or absolute, only comes alive in the world of relationships; and that means it only comes alive in an attitude of mind, which may well be flawed. Hence the well known view that the only knowledge which does not depend on experience is the theory of numbers, and possibly of kindred subjects! This was the thesis of Bertrand Russell and Whitehead's book, *Principles of Mathematics*.

All this is implicit in my book, *Man's Relationship with God*; but much of it is not explicit. This is the very basis of my theory of consciousness; and on this basis I develop the theory by showing that conduct moulds consciousness, and consciousness moulds conduct, until there is formed an equilibrium system in the mind and spirit of each person, which carries that person through the everyday world of conventional habit and fashion. I attempt to show how membership of a team, or of a community which is a loosely knit team, affects the workings of the individual mind, and in particular the individual's confidence, because nobody wants to outrage other members of the community in which he lives gratuitously. So his conduct is inhibited or moulded by his relationship with the rest of the team. To break out of this system you need either a carefully thought out decision, or the interpenetration of two

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minds or spirits which introduces a new dimension into the world of human relationships. In fact it opens up the world of human and divine love; but the sad truth of my experience is that it is in the Army that you most readily find two minds thinking as one. And from my reading, it is only in War that you find the brotherhood of man truly practised. Would that it were different; but it looks as if it were true. My adventure ended in failure, not success.

In my book I begin first of all with religious beliefs, because I know about them, and they are easiest to analyse; but because orthodox beliefs are dead though they ought to be alive, I quickly move on to the Law. And I try to open up the world of relationships within the drama of Court proceedings, because only a hack tries to conduct his cases in a detached stereotyped way, and this approach is more likely to appeal to the reader. And the study of relationships, whether in the Law or any other discipline, culminates in the idea of the interpenetration of two minds, which means the instinctive understanding between two people, who can read each others' thoughts without difficulty. And if the reader thinks this is a romantic idea, which ought to be confined to lovers, he is wrong. The German General Staff have believed in this for a long time, and considered such a marriage of minds to be necessary for the proper and effective conduct of War; and they knew about War, if anyone did! And I think you found the same thing in our own Army, when we started winning. It is not something you find readily in the Law, as we are much too much individualists; and this shows itself when cooperation is forced on us by the circumstances of a particular case. This world of interpenetrating minds is unbelievably more complicated than the world of relationships, which itself is unbelievably more complicated than the mere workings of the brain. It is a world beyond that of everyday experience; and for all I know, there are worlds beyond worlds beyond this; for example in the experiences Jesus must have had before he took his disciples up the mountain for the Transfiguration. But my knowledge largely ends with the world of relationships.

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So for me the world of the Spirit consists of endless frames of reference or attitudes of mind, each based on its own unspoken and usually unconscious assumptions, and all interrelated by means of the kind of nervous tension to which it is necessary to subject the body, to produce any given attitude in the mind. These unspoken assumptions mould the envelope of consciousness which controls all thought in that frame of mind, just as science is based on its assumptions, and mathematics on its axioms. Abstract reasoning, without reference to its assumptions, only gets you to the absurdity of Achilles and the Tortoise. Only what I call the “perfectly relaxed consciousness” is free from nervous tension, and in this frame of mind “thought” as we normally understand it is not possible; and which is probably free of assumptions as well. Learning to maintain a professional frame of mind for long hours without undue fatigue imposes great strains on the nervous system; and unless you also learn to relax from time to time, it is likely to lead to serious permanent damage to the body. Of these attitudes of mind, mathematics represents only a few chapters in the world of thought.

And the contents of any attitude of mind are true, and its reasoning valid, if its axioms conform truly with experience; and the contents of any attitude of mind are flawed, and its reasoning flawed, if its axioms do not entirely conform with experience. And of course the overwhelming probability is that the axioms of any given attitude of mind are false or inaccurate to some degree; they will usually be partly true and partly false. This is particularly so for the advocate in Court, as there is no time to have a philosophical self-examination before replying to an argument; you have to do it off the cuff, and hope for the best. So he will be almost completely ignorant of what assumptions he is making. With science it is different, because scientists have been thinking about their assumptions for centuries. Max Plank in his little book, *The Universe in the Light of Modern Physics*, said that in science there are two basic assumptions: that cause and effect is the rule over the whole of creation, and that there is in Nature a plan, or plan of growth, which never

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contradicts itself. These were just assumptions; they were incapable of proof. The first is based on the logical fallacy of “post hoc, propter hoc”, as David Hume pointed out; and indeed it gets into trouble with radio-activity and the quantum theory. The second gets into serious trouble when you get involved in freewill, which if it exists, can change the potential for growth, and therefore change the plan. In addition investigating small amounts of matter is difficult when the very fact of observation changes what is happening, until one reaches Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle. And there is a respectable body of scientific opinion that Lord Rutherford created the nucleus of the atom, which he thought he was discovering! So these assumptions may appear a trifle naïve. Nevertheless they have to be made, or science is impossible. So if the basis of science appears somewhat dubious, the justification of science seems to be that it usually works. Yet War usually works, when conducted by those who know what they are about; and War is not causal, because morale is supreme. But science is based on its assumptions, even though they may be flawed. Other frames of mind similarly involve other assumptions; and so thought is possible in those frames of mind, even if flawed.

One of the most interesting phenomenon you have to deal with in Court is the relationships that exist between people. It is quite hopeless trying to conduct a case, or any part of it, in a detached analytical way. It cuts no ice with anybody and gets you nowhere. This is so even in an abstract legal argument; you must still present it in a form that is attractive to the Judge, unless the Law is overwhelmingly in your client’s favour. You have to relate to the judge, the jury, and above all the witness. Indeed you try to relate to them all at the same time; with the possible exception that when you are seeking to destroy a witnesses’ credibility, you may well concentrate on him alone. And what is more, you are engaged on two levels in cross-examining a witness; one level is concentrating on the witnesses’ answers, which are probably not quite what you hoped for, and on continuing the cross-examination; the other level is concentrating on how to steer his answers towards the

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proof of your case or the destruction of the opposing case. You might say it is the difference between strategy and tactics. I would doubt if relationships play much part in either theoretical or experimental science, though they may play a part in discussing results.

Of course Plato was right in one sense; we all hanker after certainty, even if not quite in the way he did. And I have only indirectly touched on the Greek pursuit of *techne* or science and their desire to eliminate contingency from life. To them it may have appeared that science would reduce the ability of chance to wreck human life; but this is only true of science in its infancy. And it is a fallacy to think that science and technology eliminate luck, except in its rudimentary forms. No amount of science can take account of chance meetings, or a person being present when opportunity presents itself; yet these things may change one's life. What matters to the modern mind is how you respond, how you cope with luck. Clausewitz sums it up. "Luck is inseparable from War. And you should try to plan so as to be able to take advantage of good luck if it comes your way, and not be thrown off balance by bad luck. Even acts of faith should be intelligent acts of faith", a sentiment with which I heartily agree. One should not go further, and seek to be wiser than Providence.

Jung in the last chapter of *Psychological Types* defines at length many of the terms he uses, including the word "attitude"; and he says this concept is of particular importance for the psychology of complex psychic processes. Indeed were it not for the absolutely fundamental importance of attitude, the existence of an individual psychology would be out of the question. He calls it an **a priori** orientation to a definite thing, either conscious or not; and says that at bottom it is an individual phenomenon that eludes scientific investigation, although he recognises there are social attitudes, to which the bulk of a community subscribe. He was not apparently able to postulate the "Perfectly relaxed consciousness" as the one universal attitude, in which "thought" as we normally understand it is not possible; and that attitudes in which you can think are all based on unspoken and usually unconscious

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assumptions, and are all ephemeral, because the body cannot maintain the necessary nervous tension to sustain them for long, without doing serious damage to itself. I suppose he was unable to stand back sufficiently from his work, and abstract from it its coherence. His thought was too attached to the impression that his clinical work had left on his mind, because Psychological Types is essentially a work of classification based on his clinical experience. However my concept provides the key-stone of the arch, which Jung was trying to create; or provides at least the abstract concepts that give coherence to what he was trying to say. One generation cannot anticipate the imaginative creations of another.

So what are the assumptions I am making, in order to rewrite religion? They are that scientific knowledge, even though it only skims the surface of reality, and a familiarity with the rules of conflict, even if it is only of a small chapter and only for a limited time, are truths of equal validity to the truth of religion. In other words, one tries to see creation as a whole, and then examines what is left of religion. That is exactly what I have done in this book. It is not necessary to master the mathematics of the wave-mechanics. It is sufficient to know that it is the basis of computer science, and that there is such a similarity between complicated computers and the human brain that some people say, falsely I believe, that they are identical. It is false, in my opinion, because it leaves out of account the murky depths of the Psyche that Jung revealed. It assumes falsely that the world of rational thought is the whole of thought. In rewriting religion, I reject the concept that God and the human soul, infinite though they both appear to be, are the whole subject matter of one's enquiry. The tangible and intangible worlds are both parts of reality, and always inter-relate. This is so, even supposing that the tangible world has only a temporary and ephemeral existence. It is real enough while it does exist! It is never a good idea to be satisfied with a partial view of any problem, because you will come up with the wrong solutions. For instance: you may think "love" solves the problem of War, which is so crazy as to be almost certifiable.

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