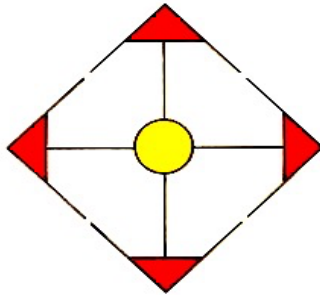


THE POWER OF HOW

And

THE WAY OF INSPIRED EGOISM



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*Peace to all who peruse these pages
And to those who do not*

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Special Thanks to my beautiful Partner, Sarah Paice, without whose understanding and loving support, this book would never have been written.

*“The highest goal of the quest
is not illumination
gained by destruction of the ego
but rather by perfection of the ego.
It is the function of egoism
Which is to be destroyed,
Not that which functions.
The ego’s rulership is to go, not the ego itself.”*

*Paul Brunton
NOTEBOOKS, volume 1
Perspectives, page 96*

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PART 1

INTRODUCTION

My first Book, “CONSTRUCTIVE **Awareness**, ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE and the Spiritual Quest” was published in 1997 by my great friends at LARSON PUBLICATIONS for the PAUL BRUNTON PHILOSOPHIC FOUNDATION. Since then I have deepened my knowledge and widened my learning, teaching and research into combining the Quest of the Overself with the use and functioning of the Underself – the Ego – in the practical everyday acts of life in the body as it interacts with the environment, and people and things in it. My understanding of this dynamic combination has also had a further 17 years to ripen and mature, guided by the most authentic teacher that exists on life’s long and rocky road – EXPERIENCE. To put this experience into context I am obligated to write some history about myself and certain events along the way. This does not come easily because I am a very private person. In my other books I wrote little about myself, but if I am to convey accurately and clearly to the reader the thrust – that is the principal purpose of my line of reasoning and course of action during my lifelong quest – a little autobiographic writing is necessary. My aim here is to show the “**Power of How and the Way of Inspired Egoism.**”

.....

Because there is much confusion between egotism and egoism, I wish to make it clear what I mean by these words.

Egotism: a negative state of being excessively conceited or absorbed in oneself, arrogant, ignorant, cruel, cunning, disrespectful etc.

Egoism: the natural role of the ego in the constitution and functioning of the human entity.

.....

“Psycho-physical” – For reasons given in Part 5, I have written this word in parenthesis throughout this book.

PART 2

POWER OF HOW HISTORY A SHORT TALE OF A QUESTER'S LONG AND LONESOME ODYSSEY

It was 1946 and, at three years old, I was standing by a pair of huge wooden green factory gates across the street from my little tenement flat in my home town of Glasgow, Scotland. These gates seemed to tower right up into the clear blue sky and to me as a 3-year old they were gigantic. Suddenly a strange feeling came over me and I realised I was a human being on planet Earth. I realised also that this experience was my sense of 'I' coming in. I had a feeling of "I-ness", of individuality, of being me, of being able to separate the 'I' from the not-'I'. I forgot about this event until I was in my late thirties when it came back to me very vividly. I am now 70 years old and can still remember it very clearly. I have asked several friends if they have had a similar experience, but none of them could recall it. Some said they vaguely remember some kind of realisation that they had become aware of themselves in that way, but so far nobody has been able to say exactly when it happened. I am intrigued by this realisation, because all of us at some point must have had a "switch-over" from being in a "baby-mind" state, in which we were caught up in all the stimuli from our environment coming at us, but unaware of ourselves as a separate 'I' – that is, separate from our environment and people and things in it. When does the child become aware of being 'I'? Is this realisation a repetition of the evolutionary process? At what stage in human development did it occur for us all?

Years later, at 25 years old I woke up in the night feeling very strange and felt the urge to go and pee. On my way back to the bedroom I was suddenly hit by a tremendous force that surged up my spine and very strongly pulled my head back. At the same instant all my energy drained away and I collapsed on the floor,

but did not lose consciousness. My ex-wife called the doctor and I was taken to the hospital.

Numerous tests were carried out on me, lights shone into my eyes etc. but the doctors could find nothing wrong. I was discharged the next day feeling tired, but well enough. Up to this point – without going into detail – I had been overworking in the belief that I was some kind of superman and because I was so fit I didn't dream that any harm could come to me.

I did not, however, learn from this experience and continued to overwork, doing long hours at the office. Then, about a year later in 1969, I woke up in the middle of the night feeling very drained. Suddenly, I felt a severe pain in my anus, as if someone was running a red-hot poker around it. My body shook violently. The next morning I went to get out of bed only to discover I could not move. I was so exhausted I could not raise a finger. Strangely, I had no fear despite the fact I could not get up. My ex-wife called the doctor, who examined me, but could find nothing wrong. She eventually resorted to shouting at me to get up, as if I was some kind of malingerer, but I could not. She then decided to move me to the hospital, where I remained about a week, undergoing pathological as well as psychological tests. They offered me pills, including sleeping pills. I refused all medication and again they could find nothing wrong with me. The doctors were baffled and could not help me.

I had about 4 weeks off work after coming out of hospital and spent much time lying around trying to conserve my energy. I had a number of experiences where I started to shake vigorously. The shaking would last about 10 minutes and usually I would clasp my hands on the back of my head. I had no pain and no fear; in fact, part of me would really enjoy it because I knew that when it ended I would have no tension in my body and would fall into a deep sleep. Another outstanding feature of these shaking bouts was that although everything in my body was in turmoil, I could feel my heart like the size of a small marble: it was perfectly still and peaceful and, as I said, I felt no fear. Deep sleep was something

I had not enjoyed for a long time. Now - being back at work – I had to go to bed every night at 8 hoping I would get at least 2 hours sleep out of the 11 hours I spent in bed.

This sorry state of affairs went on for about a year or more with no great improvement. The most striking symptoms were the extreme lack of energy and the heaviness of my limbs, and bones, especially my collarbones which seemed to weigh a ton. I could not overstate how strong these feelings were. To walk up a hill took a colossal effort and yet I never felt breathless.

Then in 1971, when I was 28, my ex-wife found Dr. Robin Gibson, a homeopathic doctor and the man to whom I am eternally grateful for setting me on the road back to health.

The most striking part of his treatment was a set of Indian exercises – namaskars – which he impressed on me must be done every morning. I was, however, too tired each morning to do them and did not get past doing more than one. I didn't think they were very important and I placed more hope on the homeopathic remedies he had given me to take. After a few weeks I went back to see him and although he was pleased that I had taken the remedies, he stressed that I must get on with the namaskars and try to increase the number each day. With new resolve, I performed them religiously every day and to my astonishment after one month I was performing 100 per day and my strength had increased dramatically.

An important revelation that came around this time was when I was describing to Robin that I always knew when I was going to start shaking, because each bout was preceded by an electric shock flashing through my body, starting in the head all the way to the feet – or vice versa. I told him this was very scary and he replied that it should not worry me, because I was made of electricity anyway. This was important knowledge to obtain experientially, because it was the start of the realisation that the body was something other than flesh, blood and bone, something immaterial.

One day, Robin handed me a book, namely “The Secret

Path” by Paul Brunton and he recommended that I take up Hatha Yoga. This I did like a duck to water and the combination of reading “The Secret Path” and studying every other Paul Brunton book that came after it, plus meditation, namaskars and the homeopathic remedies proved to be a very powerful combination that brought me back to a reasonable standard of health. There were a few minor hiccups along the way, but I certainly made steady improvement.

I carried on with Hatha Yoga, teaching myself from books – I’m not keen on doing things with a group – and I became very supple, very adroit and proficient at it. I was thrilled with my progress. I gradually became vegan at this time and my morale and confidence were very high. I was slim as a pencil and had also taken up running and played a bit of football to keep fit.

1973 came and at 30 years old I was sitting one morning in a Full Lotus meditating – by this time I was quite good at slowing my thinking – when suddenly this colossal force surged up from my genitals and very dramatically lengthened and straightened my spine. It was an exquisite feeling and I was absolutely ecstatic. This force was irrepressible, and there was nothing I could do except sit there and revel in it. It seemed to have surged up through the floor and I could not exaggerate its power. I sat bolt upright with no effort whatsoever before it started – after about 10 minutes - to recede very slowly until I felt normal again. The same force returned during meditation the next morning, but not so powerfully and not for as long as the first time.

I now know that this experience was a sign of what was to come later in my life through the discovery and practice over the last 37 years of constructive conscious control in the use of the self as expounded by F.M Alexander. All these years of relentless and dedicated practice of his teachings has resulted in the delightful and inspiring experience - at 70 years old - of feeling the kundalini flowing strongly up my spine on rising each morning, keeping it gracefully and dynamically erect throughout the day.

In 1976 I visited Robin about some minor complaint. He

said he had found something better for me than hatha yoga and handed me a copy of Dr. Wilfred Barlow's book, "The Alexander Principle". I read the book and was mildly interested, but I was so keen on yoga that I was not drawn to explore Alexander Technique. I had been practising Hatha Yoga for 4 or 5 years now, had made considerable progress, and did not intend to give it up now!

A few days later, however, my ex-wife said she had arranged a lesson for me, but I told her I was not interested and asked her to cancel it. She said that this would be embarrassing and she would probably have to pay for the lesson. I decided to take the lesson. It turned out to be very significant that the only 3 teachers in the whole of Scotland were teaching not more than 2 miles from my home!

I had my first lesson with Aksel Haahr who was running a practice with his wife, Jeanne. On entering his teaching room, I was immediately struck by how "up" he was. I could see the power in his back, and his energy seemed to be filling the room. That was the start of me having 4 lessons per week for a month, 3 for another month, 2 for another month and one for another month. Then I attended about once a week or every 2 weeks as I felt necessary.

When I saw Aksel, the first thing that struck me was, "My God, I could practise Hatha Yoga for the rest of my life and I'll never have a back like that!" After 4 years or so of practising Yoga and despite having become very supple, I was still walking around like the Hunchback of Notre Dame, like an old man! I thought back to that morning when the kundalini came surging up my spine and I could see that Alexander Technique was the way to get it to return.

This first lesson was, of course, an introduction to that fundamental requirement necessary for the psycho-physical-emotional-spiritual progress of humankind, namely – the use of the self. I did not know this at the time, but as I studied it over the course of 37 years, I came to see that it was the missing link in all

attempts by human beings at psycho-physical-emotional-spiritual progress. It dawned on me slowly that constructive conscious control in the use of the self is fundamental, is central to all human endeavours. It truly is our blind spot in our attempts to improve the lot of humanity. As I said years later in my book, "GOING MENTAL": - "No matter what your philosophy of life is, you will have to come to this one."

Constructive conscious control in the use of the self is unknown to the vast majority of the human race. This lack of knowledge is a fundamental reason for us being in the horrible worldwide situation we are now in. Billions of people suffer from psychological problems and physical ill-health. The vast majority of us are spiritual paupers. Of the people I have met, who have sincere spiritual aspirations, a great number set their sights too high and attempt to soar into the spiritual ether without realising they have to keep their feet on the ground. It's a bit like reading "The Wisdom of the Overself", which is Paul Brunton's last book, before reading his first book, "The Secret Path" and every other one leading up to "The Wisdom": or wrestling with Einstein's theory of relativity before you know that $1 + 1 = 2$. Constructive conscious control also teaches the individual to take responsibility for his or her own health and way of being.

I was so moved by Alexander Technique that I asked Aksel in my second lesson if I could learn to teach it. To my great delight he said that I could because he and Jeanne were in the process of setting up a 3-year training course in Totnes, at Dartington College of Arts. I said I would be there, and in August of 1980 I gave up my job and moved to Totnes with my ex-wife, Jean, my son Scott, and my daughter, Carol-Jane and started the training in September.

From then on the kundalini flowed up my spine intermittently, but getting stronger all the time, until at 62-63 it became a steady force, and now ranges between steady and exhilaratingly dynamic.

As I said, at 70, a profoundly inspiring experience.

PART 3

A STEP INTO THE UNKNOWN AND ANOTHER AND ANOTHER AND ANOTHER.....

And the Great Mind said to the Wee Mind, “I have endowed you with awareness and attention. By these powers you will develop four basic attributes – thinking, feeling, willing, and action. Go out into the universe and learn, learn all there is to know - but don’t forget yourself. If you solve the mystery of the Self, the mystery of what you are, you will also, at the same time, solve the mystery of what the Universe is.”

And the Great Mind showed the Wee Mind a point of light in the far, far distance.

“Look carefully,” the Great One said.

The Wee Mind saw that the light was receding and growing dimmer until it was gone.

“I can’t see it anymore” said the Wee One.

“I know, but it is still there,” said the Great Mind, “you must go in search of it.”

“But how am I to do that?”, asked the Wee One.

“You will find the way.”

“And now” said the Great Mind, “you will know me no more. But although you will not be able to see, hear, smell, touch or taste me, I will always be with you and will never leave your side. One day in the distant future you will come to know me again. You must go now.”

“Your suffering will be my suffering,” said the Great Mind.

“Your pain will be my pain.”

“Your joy will be my joy.”

“You are a mental being, a form of Consciousness. I have also blessed you with the powers of thought, imagination, creativity, action, memory, learning and evolution, which you can use to satisfy your every need. There will be no problem that you

cannot overcome, no summit that you cannot reach. You are also blessed with the strongest force in the universe – the wish. Go forth and multiply.”

“Multiply!?”, cried the Wee Mind, “I don’t even know how to add and subtract yet!”

“You see,” said the Great Mind, laughing, “I have also given you a sense of humour.”

The Wee Mind suddenly realised he was alone, and at the moment when the Great Mind had disappeared, he felt the need to become a form, become somehow more dense – not different from the ethereal consciousness he was – but denser.

“Look at me,” he thought joyfully, “I have become this strange form, sort of round like a ball. This feels good!” The Wee Mind spent some time simply revelling in the feeling of this body he had become. After a while he sensed that his vital energy had gone right down, and he felt weak.

“What can I do about this?”, he wondered. As soon as he thought this, he fell into a blank swoon – with no sense of time or space. After some time he realised that he was awake again: but he was not the same. He was ethereal again with no form, like the wind.

“This feels strange,” he thought, “What’s happened?”

Then he thought, “Oh no, I’m ‘dead!’.” I’ve lost my form. What a shame. I liked my form, I liked being a ball even if I was denser. I want my form back, I wish I had my form back.”

Before he could think anything more he fell into another blank swoon for an unknown time. Suddenly he became awake again, although he could not make out where he was.

“Oh good,” he thought, “I’ve got my form back, I’m a ball and I’m denser! This feels great.”

Time passed and the Wee Mind could still not figure out where he was. He could not see or hear, but felt somehow that there were other beings around him - dense like himself. The feeling became stronger and suddenly he touched something - something smaller than himself. He felt attracted to it, he needed

it.

Somehow he knew that the smaller entity was a seed-form, and he must draw it into himself. But how? After great deliberation, he realised he would have to change his shape and create a mouth and use it to draw the seed into himself. This he did eventually and with great difficulty drew the seed into his body. When the seed entered the hole and was assimilated the Wee Mind had a sense of well-being, of satisfaction. He knew he and the seed had become one, united. The seed merged with his own form and disappeared into him.

For a while the Wee Mind felt good, the seed made him feel strong and energetic. But then, he felt a little discomfort and sensed that a part of the seed had not been absorbed into him. He felt the need to get rid of it: but how? The remaining part of the seed was lodged in the back of his mouth and try as he may he could not dislodge it. What could he do to get rid of it?

After much deliberation, the Wee Mind got the idea that he could extend the back of his mouth further until it reached the other side of him and he could eject the part-seed. After much time and much thinking, he managed this feat and the residue of the seed was ejected. He had now become a cell with a tunnel running right through him.

By this time he was feeling hungry again and went in search of another seed. Eventually, he found one and quickly snapped it up. Again a residue was left over, but he could not move it to the other end of the tunnel. Again after much thinking and experimenting he discovered how to undulate his new body and use it to push the part seed to the opening at the other end of the tunnel. He somehow managed to contract his form, make it smaller and then expand it. This wavelike motion caused the part seed to move along the tunnel. Encouraged by this, the Wee Mind repeated the contraction and expansion movements until the seed was ejected from him at the end opposite the one where it came in.

No sooner had this happened than the Wee Mind felt a kind

of pressure all around him and he became very hot. The pressure increased, making him really frightened. Even though he was afraid, he realised that he was experiencing an emotion of fear for the first time.

“What’s happening?”, he thought desperately. “Something seems to be crushing me!”

Then he found himself in a strange tunnel where he was having the same experience that the little seed had had inside him. He fell into a deep sleep.

Once more time passed and the Wee Mind woke up again and realised he was “dead”. The strong wish, the irresistible need to become a body again came back to him, but he fell asleep as soon as he thought and felt this need.

After some time – he didn’t know how long – he woke up as a body again. This pleased him immensely because he loved being a body so much. He was very happy for a while, enjoying the feeling of being a body, but then the strange sensation in the walls of his tunnel returned and he knew he must find another seed-form and draw nourishment from it. He moved his body around by contracting and expanding it, feeling all around him in search of a seed-form. He searched for a long time and his feeling of need of nourishment got stronger and stronger until he felt very anxious. He knew somehow that if he did not get nourishment he would cease to be a body and “die.” The Wee Mind wished fervently to remain living as a body.

“I must find something,” he thought, his anxiety verging on desperation, because he could feel that he was losing his strength. Just when he thought he could travel no further, he suddenly sensed a seed-form next to him and quickly drew it into his tunnel. He immediately felt much better and his strength came back. No sooner had this happened than he felt this great pressure and heat again.

“Oh no!”, cried the Wee Mind, “It’s happening again”.

This time he was quickly aware that some other bigger body had drawn him into its tunnel and was drawing nourishment from

him. He passed out. Once again he later woke up to discover he was “dead” and had lost his form. Yet again the great need, the great wish arose in the Wee Mind to be a body again. As before he fell into a deep sleep and on awakening was delighted to discover he was a body again.

“This is great,” he thought, “I love being a body.”

He then figured that to remain being a body, he must become aware of any other entities around him that he could draw into his tunnel and get nourishment. He thought also that he must avoid any forms which tried to draw him into their tunnels and get nourishment from him. The Wee Mind learned, that if he was to stay alive, he would have to function at the peak of his “psychophysical” capabilities: he must primarily learn to think at lightning speed and move rapidly to avoid being eaten.

So the Wee Mind contracted and expanded himself and in this way moved around feeling everything around him. If he felt a smaller seed-form than himself, then he would draw it into his tunnel at one end, take nourishment from it, and expel it at the other end. If he felt a larger seed-form, he would contract and expand his body very quickly and move away to avoid being drawn into the entity’s tunnel.

He repeated this process countless times, until he became very adept at it. But the relentless, staggering repetition, the constant vigilance meant that his sense of feeling had to remain very acute and his attention had to function optimally. Eventually, this made him feel tired and he could not keep his attention up. Suddenly, he sensed another creature close by and knew he was in danger of being drawn into its tunnel. Before he could move, however, the creature swallowed him up and he fell into another blank swoon.

When he woke up yet again, he knew that he was ‘dead’, and this time his longing to be a body grew even stronger. Once again, however, he fell into another deep sleep. When he woke up he was delighted to find he was a body again. He moved around gracefully, enjoying the feeling of being alive. Then, however, he

suddenly felt sad because, although there were many other life-forms around him, he had to consciously and constantly avoid them because they were hostile and would swallow him up. This made him feel very lonely.

He wanted so much to meet another form that would not want to destroy him, another of like mind, but he dared not trust any others if he would stay alive. Then he had an idea. He remembered that the Great Mind had given him the power of thought and he felt a great need to use this power to create another body from himself. But how? He thought long and hard and tried to remember what he had done to become the dense life-form that he now was.

He recalled how, when he was formless, was pure Consciousness, that he had managed to channel the cosmic energy that he had into a dense form that had a sense of touch.

Then came the thought, "Well, if I could do that once, I can do it again!"

The Wee Mind gave all his attention to remembering how he had thought himself into being a body, and when the process became very clear he managed to duplicate the form he had and he became two identical cells. This was wonderful! He did not feel lonely anymore because he had a companion. The two Wee Cells loved and supported each other and were inseparable friends. And yet they were still one. The two were distinct but not separate from each other. This made him feel even happier. But this joyous feeling had distracted his attention from his surroundings and he suddenly felt a larger form beside him and before he could move away it swallowed him up. When he woke up he realised he was "dead" and was pure consciousness again with no form. His sadness was truly devastating and he wished strongly to have, not just his single, but also his double form back. He did not want to be lonely anymore. Suddenly, he became aware that he was a body again, and this made him so happy that he immediately drew on his memory and duplicated himself. He felt great! He also noticed that because of his previous experience from the first time,

he was able to become a body a little quicker this time.

The Wee Mind then realised that by thinking about it he could consciously repeat this duplicating process over and over and over again. He enjoyed it so much he could not stop doing it. The process got faster and faster. And so he became 4 and then 8 and then 16 forms and so on until after billions of years and many incarnations, he became the beautiful creature that he is today: a form of Consciousness that we now call the body: a body spun out of the Wee Mind's fundamental Consciousness that gifted him with the ability to recognise a need, and to use his amazing, creative power to meet that need. Today his beautiful form is made up of billions of little forms that have been created by the power of his conscious thinking. Little forms that became his beautiful heart, head, eyes, ears, face, neck, arms, legs, vital organs and every other part that makes up the human being that exists today. All of these tiny living beings also know how to think and work together as one being, one beautiful organism that is now known as the body.

In all his incredible evolution, however, he has forgotten that he is a creation of the Great-Mind, Universal-Mind, World-Mind, the Creator - call it what you will - and It was with him all the way - truly a CO-CREATION. His task now is to find his way back home and realise he is a thought in the World-Mind. He was born out of Its boundless imagination.

PART 4

CONSCIOUS EVOLUTION

“How is it that the formation of a thought takes place with such unbelievable swiftness? We can only reply that originally it must have been a slow and conscious act which in the course of evolution through countless centuries was imperceptibly transferred by the individual and the race into an instantaneous and unconscious one. Familiar and equally recurring experiences have rendered it easy for the mind to create its images practically instantaneously. The complex and complete act of seeing the object really occupies a number of successive steps, but they flash by with such unimaginable and incredible rapidity as practically to fuse into a single instantaneous operation. This rapid working is partly a result of the existing background of past-sense experience into which new sensations immediately merge, and partly the result of the mind’s innate power.”

Paul Brunton, “The Hidden Teaching Beyond Yoga,” Rider & Co. 1969 Edition, Page 226.

In this part where the term I is used, it refers to me, Danny, as a person. Where I use the term ‘I’ in parenthesis, it refers to the ego as the ‘I’ of any and every human being.

So, here I am, having been blessed with three score years and ten upon this beautiful planet Earth.

I have been on a spiritual quest searching for the real ME since I was a teenager. I am still searching.

Along the way I have come across pseudo-spiritual teachers who tell me I am not the mind, muddled mystics who tell me the world is an illusion, religious ranters who tell me I am not the body, supercilious scientists who tell me I am nothing more than a mass of electrochemical reactions, and fallacious

philosophers who tell me that to find enlightenment I must kill the ego. The spiritual teachers tell me that, if I have cares and troubles in this time-bound world, all I have to do is use the power of Now where pure Being dwells and all will be well. They say it as if it can be done as easily as falling off a log! Well, unless you have experienced the great blessing of Grace descending upon you, you might, like me, spend a lifetime or ten plodding on the Long Path trying to enter the Now without success. Is such a feat not the most difficult task for any human being, and few there be who can do it just like switching on a light?

Those mesmerized mystics who cannot analyse their inner experiences with strict scientific detachment, tell me that the whole world, even the Universe, is an illusion, is not real. What they don't tell me is that, paradoxically, the Appearance is also the Real. Illusion or not, I have to deal with the world in my everyday interaction with it. At the practical level I must function as a "psycho-physical" being.

Recently on TV, I heard a scientist say that when two physical neurons meet each other they produce a mental thought! One of the greatest mysteries of human existence solved instantly, just like that! What they don't tell me is, that firstly, the brain itself is a thought-form. Consciousness is the noumenon behind the phenomenon, the brain. In other words, consciousness becomes the brain and is manifested through the workings of the brain.

Those false philosophers can't tell me what the phrase "kill the ego" really means. Well, I don't want to kill my ego, because if I was not functioning as ego, as 'I,' right now, I would not be writing these words. How could anybody exist in the world without functioning as ego?

I wish to respect and acknowledge the ego in its rightful place in the constitution of the human being, because nowadays it is usually regarded as a part of the individual that is selfish, arrogant, hateful, ignorant, cruel, evil, greedy etc. and has many other undesirable negative characteristics. This is egotism. It has, however, many admirable qualities such as love, virtue, creativity,

compassion, courage, kindness, mercy and selfless service to others etc. This is egoism.

A human being, however, can be selfless, egoless, only in the moral sense, not in the “psycho-physical.” Our sense of personal being and individuality starts and ends with the ego. In this book, therefore, I am not dealing with the morality of the ego, but only with its function in the constitution of the human being.

The chapter on “A STEP INTO THE UNKNOWN” is a lighthearted attempt to show that the ego - the ‘I’ - existed before the body. Using the gifts of evolutionary compulsion given to it by the World-Mind, it spent billions of years, and who knows how many lifetimes, creatively spinning the body out of itself: it did not create the body as a sculptor forms a statue. It became the body.

In the beginning arose the ego. This statement could sound contradictory, because the ego must have been born out of something. That something was the Overself. The Overself could not be the first “thing,” because it abides in the Timeless Absolute and is not in time and space. It knows no succession, and simply IS. With the appearance of the ego, space, time, and action were born. When that happens, we have a “beginning” and an “end.” Succession of thoughts and actions occur. The ego then is the root-thought of all other subsequent thoughts. It is also the root of all emotions and actions, and abides in and deals with the world of form.

When the individual mind became one “physical” cell, it had to move and function at its optimal capacity - with incredibly heightened attention - to survive: otherwise it would be eaten by a predator. It had to be, therefore, fully conscious of itself and its immediate environment. If its attention - the first function of the conscious mind - lapsed it was pounced upon and destroyed. The little creature - through countless lifetimes - became more and more complex as it built certain mechanisms in itself to avoid being consumed by some other creature. (See John Hull Grundy’s beautiful drawings of this amazing process). It also had to develop certain mechanisms in itself so that it could eat other creatures.

As it developed further, it repeated this conscious building of its “physical” body a staggering number of times. It repeated thoughts and actions so often that it eventually learned how to delegate these thoughts and actions to what we curiously call the subconscious mind. Survival being its primal need, it was always on the alert, and did not have the leisure time to raise its consciousness into ego-consciousness - the sense of ‘I’ - self - knowledge.

The function of the ego, therefore, is to provide itself with the means of experiencing the world around it. This it does by weaving the six senses out of itself and by creating everything in the body from inner heart to outer skin. The individual ego-consciousness is expressed through its own form i.e. the body and the senses. It executes mental and physical maneuvers as in thinking, doing, imagining, ruminating, performing an activity, accomplishing tasks, carrying out plans, implementing creative ideas etc. Its primal activity would be the act of perceiving. As an adult, the individual knows that he is conscious, has the sense of ‘I’, is able to think abstractly, and becomes able to ask the question, “What am I?”. He is also able to deeply ponder, as in metaphysics, as well as undertaking meditation and mystical practices. With these pursuits, he can venture to discover what ultimate reality is.

PART 5

THE EGO'S ROLE AND ATTRIBUTES

Mind is pure Awareness and as the ultimate 'I', the Overself,
it is pure Thought.

Consciousness is attentive awareness from which
the ego springs as a thought.

Baby-mind to Ego-mind

When the individual is in the infant stage of development he reacts to the environment as if it were part of himself; he understands it as himself. The baby cannot separate the self from the not-self. He cannot recognise the difference between subject and object. That is why he puts every object given to him into his mouth, an act of survival he had learned much earlier during former incarnations in his desperate search for food that would ensure he stayed alive. Only later, when he reaches ego-consciousness and becomes aware of himself as the 'I' distinct from the not-'I' - the environment - is he able to interact with it as a separate reality. The infant becomes the growing child, able to distinguish himself, as an individual ego, from all other people and things. He achieves self-consciousness, ego-consciousness. This self-consciousness, however, creates the illusion that the individual is separate from the environment.

On reaching the adult stage, the individual knows that he is conscious, has the sense of 'I', and is able to think abstractly.

Some Attributes of the Ego

In the constitution of the human being the ego was the first and foremost thought that sprung from the World-Mind - via the Overself - and it was destined from that moment to change permanently. Movement and change would be its only constants.

The ego's sense of 'I' springs from the Overself. The 'I' was blessed with the wish to develop through evolutionary compulsion into whatever the World-Mind had planned for it. The 'I' in turn used the power of creative thinking to evolve into what it is today. It is the first thought from which all subsequent thoughts spring.

The ego is also the most persistent thought that appears within Consciousness. It is the witness of the activity of the intellect. It is infinitely inquisitive, always curious, always seeking new knowledge. In the manifested world it is the very basis of the make-up of a human being. It is the centre of the individual as he thinks, moves and has his being at the everyday "psycho-physical" level of existence. The 'I' and the body are an indivisible unity. This is an inadequate way of saying this, caused by the limitations of language to express such a thing. As stated above, it is meant to convey that the ego evolved into the body. In the wakeful state, thinking, feeling and action are under the control of the ego-self. The 'I' instigates and directs the body's actions, and the intellect's thinking processes. It experiences the whole gamut of emotions and deals with reports from the senses of sight, hearing, taste, touch smell and kinesthesia. Without the ego there would be no evolution, no actions, no thinking, no emotions, no sensations and no kinesthetic sense. The ego also gives a person his sense of individuality, separate from others.

From the divine Overself the ego - the underself - is put forth and is the channel that connects the divine with the world. Little by little and bit by bit the truth comes slowly dawning about the ego's relation to the divine Overself on one hand and the world on the other hand. Much musing and deep deliberation is required to understand these connections. The ego is the thinker, the conscious mind that drives the individual ever forwards into the unknown: the great creator and inventor at the heart of all his thoughts and actions at the "psycho-physical" level.

To talk of the underself as the ego can cause confusion. To use phrases like, "The ego does this, the ego thinks that," could give the impression that there is another entity that exists

separately from the 'I': but again the limitations of language apply here. The ego is the 'I'. To talk of the ego in the possessive sense implies the existence of another entity that owns the ego. At the "psycho-physical" level this is not so. Another example of how little we know of what we really are is shown in the inadequacy and inaccuracy of the everyday language we use in talking about ourselves. The word "soul" is used by many religious people to mean the essence of the human being. Phrases like, "I feel it deep in my soul," are used, but this implies another entity - usually the body - that owns the soul: or some people refer to the mind as the entity that is the owner of the soul. If, however, the soul is the essence of the individual, the mind and body cannot refer to it in the possessive sense. The paucity of our knowledge of our deeper selves, mentally, physically and spiritually, is shown in this constant shifting of our standpoint. In discussing these deeper layers of our being, we too often talk ourselves round in confused, ever-decreasing circles until we are in danger of disappearing up our own egos!

It occurred to me some years ago that Descartes' statement, "I think, therefore, I am," was the wrong way round. "I am, therefore I think," indicates the true situation. As stated earlier, the ego existed as a formless conscious entity that used the intellect to think itself into the form commonly known as the body. To talk of the ego in this way again indicates the limitations of language to express this accurately, because the ego is also a thought, albeit the fundamental one after which all others followed.

The everyday language we use, however, when referring to ourselves as human beings, is closer to the truth than most of us imagine. For example, we use phrases like:- "I am thinking," "I am doing," "I am walking," "I am talking," "I am feeling emotional,"

In this way we instinctively aver and confirm that the ego came first, and through evolutionary compulsion and creativity became the body: "I am, therefore, I think and do."

Further Development of the Ego and Related Random Thoughts

To achieve enlightenment, it is not necessary, nor desirable to kill the ego, but simply to put it in its proper place in the constitution of the individual. On the contrary, it is to be developed spiritually to come ever closer into the divine light of the Overself, and to be honed, evolved and perfected mentally, “physically” and emotionally in its interaction with other people and the world. If the individual wishes to express himself fully, he must develop himself fully. His spiritual aspirations and development must be combined with the endeavour of cultivating and perfecting the ego. He must allow the fullness of the ego to unfold. Such unfoldment would make the individual a better person who appreciates that this is to his own advantage, particularly in the pursuit of constructive conscious control in the use of the self during the relentless repetition of activity in the daily round: and, if he is altruistic, would benefit him more to truly serve others.

.....

The origin of the intellect is found in the ego. All thoughts, perceptions and conceptions arise in the ego – the primal ‘I’, the primal thought-emotion.

.....

The Overself exists as that ineffable Stillness that is beyond intellectual ideation, i.e. as pure Mind; whereas the ego exists as the first result of Mind’s active phase, i.e. Consciousness. The ego, then, is the point where Mind becomes Consciousness. The Overself as pure Mind is Be-ness or Be-ing; the ego as Consciousness is ever-Becoming. This is easier to understand if we remember that to be conscious means to be conscious of something. Consciousness would be useless if it had nothing to be conscious of. This means that the individual – as ego – and the world arise at the same moment and must always exist together in

inseparable union. The ego and the world are truly reborn when the individual wakes up every morning to start a new day. The Overself, then, projects the ego and its world at the same time.

.....

Attention is the primal power, the hidden source of the process of perception. The ego's ability to think and creatively produce our world of perception is derived from this source. Awareness is truly wondrous!

.....

A consideration of attention reveals that it is a force inherent in the Overself and not in the ego, because the latter loses its capacity for giving attention to its surroundings when the person falls asleep. In deep sleep we know absolutely nothing about the world, and this indicates that the 'I' of the Overself not only bestows, but also withdraws, the faculty of attention from the 'I' of the ego.

.....

The ego is the root thought of reflected consciousness, the Moon, the underself, whose light is borrowed from its source - the Sun, the Overself.

.....

In worldly life the ego can effect tremendous accomplishments, and a great number of the wonderful innovations and inventions that ingenious individuals have produced for the benefit of humanity have been born from a combination of intuition and reason. To create something entirely new many thinkers have experienced a Eureka moment, when a flash of intuition has suddenly illumined reason's long-drawn deliberations, and the answer they were seeking was revealed instantaneously. Intuition comes from the Overself and reasoning is a function of the ego.

.....

Philosophically, I am I - the Overself; practically, I am I, the underself - the ego.

.....

Although the Overself is the real and ultimate experiencing innermost core of the human being, the ordinary thinking, feeling and willing that occurs during the wakeful state, in our day to day dealings with the environment, is performed by the ego.

.....

The 'I' of the Overself is not a thought at all; it is pure Be-ness or Be-ing, pure Mind, the Principal Principle. The 'I' of the ego is a thought, and even more accurately, a thought-emotion that is the root of all our worldly experience.

.....

The ego is the 'I' of the senses.

.....

The ego not only instigates and directs the body's activities, but also the intellect's thinking processes.

.....

No thoughts can be separated from the ego, because it is itself a thought, albeit the fundamental one of the intellect.

.....

Insight is inherent immanent knowledge that infuses intuition, which in its turn, illumines and inspires intellect, the implement of the ego.

.....

Intuition is the informing instantaneous intermediary between inherent insight and inquisitive intellect. Rigorous reasoning by the ego is required to ratify intuition's revelations.

.....

Attention is antecedent to awareness of the finished mental perception that the ego creates, and which we then call the physical world.

.....

The stillness of the Overself is stirred by the karmic forces and the first conscious thought appears - the ego!

.....

Conscious Attention = ego = "psycho-physical" movement, i.e. thinking and doing.

.....

It is the ego's thinking that brings "objects" into our consciousness. In the wakeful state this is unavoidable. If I asked you to stop perceiving the world around you right now, could you do it? If you did manage to remove the ego, the world would disappear with it. Hence the ego is the root-thought of all perception.

.....

The man whose way of being, way of life, includes the practice of constructive conscious control in the use of the self, who is conscious of every move he makes, will pay no heed to the effect he has on other people with whom he comes into contact, sceptics who negatively criticize him through egotistical ignorance. He works constantly to achieve the state of detachment from people and things, a state which paradoxically allows him to be fully and lovingly involved in his worldly interactions. Cold, uncaring indifference has no place in his ego.

.....

If an individual becomes deeply interested in constructive conscious control in the use of the self, it does not mean giving up spiritual aspirations, religious beliefs or philosophy of life. These disciplines can be practised simultaneously. The realistic practicality of using conscious control is a spiritual duty, because through it he can truly love the body and respect its need to function with grace, poise and dynamism at its optimal capacity.

.....

The body is the means whereby the ego moves around. The quality of that movement plays a huge part in the quality of each individual life. The adoption of the discipline of constructive conscious control will ensure that the quality gets better and better as more experience is gained.

.....

Just as wakeful-state consciousness would be useless if there was nothing to be conscious of, so, as the only constant in manifested life is movement, the latter would be useless if there was nothing to move around. Hence the need for the ego, the 'I', to build a body to participate in the world. In Alexander's case, he discovered how to re-build the body by **thinking** his way out of his misuse of it. He was aware that this process sprung from what he called, ***"the transcendent inheritance of a conscious mind."***

.....

If the lack of knowledge of the co-ordinated use of our "psycho-physical" functioning causes the individual to break these laws of movement and become ill as a consequence, being remiss about obeying them can cause illness in those who do know them.

.....

It is impossible to judge the real worth of a "method" such as constructive awareness by intellectual means alone. The kinesthetic sense must be developed to the level where he knows

exactly what he is doing with the body as a mechanism.

.....

The man who consciously co-ordinates the movements of his body from the central unifying mechanism of the primary control - the head-neck-back relationship - will find it easier to command the negative psycho-emotional aspects of his personality, and other difficult vicissitudes of life in general.

.....

Both a fittingly disciplined body and a philosophically shrewd mind will ensure steady progress in the constant pursuit of constructive conscious control in the use of the self. This he can depend on, this he can trust.

.....

Constructive conscious control is potentially in everyone. It is as timeless as it is universal.

.....

A feeling of lightness, freedom, and dynamism comes with the identification with a consciously controlled body. This is the reward for dedicated mindfulness by the ego, and sincere heartfelt spiritual searching.

.....

Although I wrote earlier that I was dealing only with the ego in its place in the constitution of the human being, a few words must be written about its moral character.

It would not be possible to improve the use of the self without a corresponding improvement in the moral character and behaviour of the ego. Spiritual behaviour is nothing more than loving and compassionate behaviour towards yourself first, and then you would truly know how to love all humankind, and all life-forms in the universe. "Love your neighbour, **as yourself.**" goes

the Biblical adage. How can an individual learn to love others, if he does not know how to love himself? In taking on the discipline of constructive conscious control in the use of the self the ego is truly learning to love itself in body and mind. This means the 'I' would also learn to be more considerate and loving to other people.

.....

The ego is the root-thought of the intellect. All thoughts spring from this root. It is the witness of the activity of the intellect. It is infinitely inquisitive, always curious, always seeking new knowledge. It has an insatiable appetite for the unknown. It has intelligence, and contrary to popular belief, each individual human has the same intelligence. Intelligence is part of our essence; it does not grow, knowledge grows. The fact that the 'I' exists as a human being shows how incredibly intelligent we all are. As this intelligence, the 'I' has created every part of the so-called body that it needs for experience and development, for evolution.

.....

I said earlier that the ego is the witness of the intellect's activity. But this brings up a curious question. If we take the ego to be our essence, how come it disappears when we sleep? Its existence is intermittent. It is present during the activity of the waking hours but vanishes completely in deep sleep. The ego dies a mini-death every night during sleep. Where does it go during this nocturnal period? Does its sporadic existence not suggest that there is something behind it that alternately manifests and withdraws it?: and does it not also suggest that this something must be of enduring existence?

This is indeed the case. Behind the ego as the very essence of the human being dwells the Higher-Self, the Overself. The timeless Overself presides over the activities of the finite ego. It is this grand and glorious essence of us that is the witness of the ego and all its activities. The Overself is the home to which the ego returns every time we sleep.

The ego abides in and deals with the world of form whereas the Overself dwells in the formless. The ego is full of wishes, desires, joys and fears, deals with the finite, and experiences time and space, whereas the Overself is beyond these emotions, beyond time and space, and dwells in eternity.

.....

Mystical revelations are beyond refutation by the scientist. If the latter has never attempted to explore the inner world of his own mind, then he cannot comment on the truth or falsity of the writings and sayings of those who have. Knowledge of the real essence of the human creature is exclusively individual and a private affair between each ego and the Overself.

All other people can share all knowledge of things discovered by the scientist, but knowledge of the essence of the human being is not at the disposal of others. Again, experience of the inner world is entirely individual and must remain so.

At the heart of this inner world dwells the Overself, the intermediary between the World-Mind and the ego. The Overself is our essence, that still small point in the heart from which the individual emanates. Thus each creature is a micro-universe, with the Overself as its still, majestic centre surrounded by the kinetic aspect of itself, the ego. With the Overself as the link between the World-Mind and the individual ego, the personal consciousness arises and the entity begins the experience of building a form, spinning this form out of its essence you could say, to experience the world.

.....

The function of the ego is to provide itself with the means of experiencing the world around it. This it does by weaving the six senses out of itself and by creating everything in the body from inner heart to outer skin. The individual egoistic consciousness is expressed through its own form i.e. the body and the senses.

.....

The “physical” body is a form which consciousness has shaped itself into. The body’s existence as a supposedly separate substance called matter is mere assumption and gives rise to this deep, mesmeric illusion. The real problem lies in the fact that we have forgotten not only that the individual consciousness has adopted this form, but also the incredible length of time it has taken to do so.

.....

The light of consciousness is passed by the Overself - via the ego - into a thought-form known as the body.

.....

The ego, having spent countless lifetimes creating a body by spinning it out of itself; countless lifetimes of consciously recognising a need and learning how to fulfil that need by creating a part such as an organ like the heart or the brain and, through relentless repetition of teaching that organ what to do, until, at our present stage of evolution, it appears that all the subconscious activity in the body carries on completely separately from the conscious mind. All these activities may take place beneath our conscious awareness, but that is because the conscious mind has created this situation. It has, however, completely forgotten that it has done so. This is why memory plays the most important part in our attempts to understand what we are. The conscious mind has taught the subconscious mind everything it knows and because the subconscious mind performs these multifarious activities while the conscious mind attends to any matter that may be to hand during the waking state, it is more easily understandable that the subconscious functions of the body continue to operate while the ego is withdrawn by the Overself during sleep. During sleep the ‘I’ no longer focuses on the body and cannot give attention to it.

The connection, during sleep, of the ego to the subconscious mind has not been lost, because when you wake up

the ego remembers that it has slept. The ego knows only by reflection that sleep has taken place. It has no experiential knowledge of the state of sleep. It knows only that it has lost consciousness and fallen into sleep and later, on waking, has regained it. This indicates that there must be a deeper part of the individual that knows he slept, and that part is the Overself. The Overself, of course, cannot be described as “a part” but is indeed our very essence.

.....

One of the great illusions of the many that some people suffer from is that the world and its countless external things are presented to the conscious mind with no effort on the part of the individual; it is assumed that perception is just something given. But this is not so, because the ease with which we view the world at this point in our evolution happens because we have spent an unimaginable length of time learning to use our fundamental conscious awareness. The human being is a co-creation of the World-Mind and the individual mind, this fundamental conscious awareness being the gift given to the individual mind by the World-Mind.

Because the world is always in our face, so to speak, we have forgotten why this is so. The instantaneous appearance of the environment in the waking state is the result of the tremendous effort by the individual through aeons of time to build up a perception of the world. Perception is indeed a wondrous act of creativity and not a passive event. We create the world of our surroundings, then we explore it.

.....

The ego does not create the things around us, it creates perceptions of things. But the only way the ego can come to know the thing is through this **creative** - not passive - process of perception, which is the act of mentally constructing the thing, i.e. the thought of the thing. In other words, the ‘I’ does not create the object, but to know the object it must create its own perception of

the object. But it cannot step outside this bubble of perception and know the thing directly. It can, therefore, only deal with the thought of the thing, which means from the **individual** standpoint the thought is the thing. This is irrefutable.

.....

The fact that the ego is the primal root thought of the personality and is the centre of intelligence indicates that we are all of equal intelligence.

.....

Just as the ego observes, weighs, ruminates and studies its thoughts, so the Overself by its power of pure awareness can observe the ego - the primal thought at the base of the intellect.

.....

Because the ego is the root of all thought, it must think these thoughts in sequence, one after another, to perceive them at all. A thought may be a multifaceted one, but nevertheless it remains a single thought. It is the amazing speed at which the 'I' can think, can manufacture perceptions, that creates the illusion of continuous manifold experience. It is the sheer magic of the mind that binds all thoughts together. The act of perceiving is a colossal but necessary habit.

.....

Incisive Intellect

The origin of the intellect is found in the ego. All thoughts, perceptions and conceptions arise in the ego - the primal 'I'-thought - the primal thought-emotion. In the learning of constructive awareness, the incisive, but humble intellect, is used to imbue the whole body with dynamic thinking, and together with the cultivation of the kinesthetic sense, can deeply and dramatically transform the pulled-down, badly misused body into

a co-ordinated mechanism whose movements are full of grace and power, a “psycho-physical” self that is changing into an entirely new way of being and doing. F.M Alexander’s account of how he used this combination in his book, ‘THE USE OF THE SELF’ is an inspiring example.

The intellect is also the tool of the ego, and can be used most effectively, not only in the practical acts of life’s daily doing, but also when musing over the deeper aspects of the self. In both cases, a flash of intuition - the higher faculty - is needed to solve the questions that reason cannot work out. Intuition guides and aids the incisive, ever-curious intellect that is only too willing to recognize and obey its whispered and wise revelations. A balanced use of intuition and reason must be found. It is no mean feat, however, for the intellect to put into suitable words and clear statements that which intuition reveals. To catch a vague intuitive flash with the intellect and think it out thoroughly enough to make it intelligible to other people is an art to be learned.

When applying abstract thinking in attempts to solve the mysteries of the self, it is important to have a detached attitude to thoughts and not to allow wishful thinking, personal bias and desires to distort efforts to find truth. To achieve true detachment it is also necessary to understand that negative neuromuscular tension patterns throughout the body will adversely affect mental ruminations, and spiritual aspirations: our psycho-emotional doubts and fears are stored in the muscles. Hence the need to bring the body to its optimal use and functioning by using common-sense, practical thinking to educate and refine the kinesthetic sense through the process of constructive conscious control.

PART 6

THE BODY BEAUTIFUL

I begin this part with a quote from the book, “THE ETERNAL WORLD PICTURE” by MARTINUS, the renowned Danish philosopher: page 108 in section 4

“All creation, that is all that is at all accessible to common sense perception, that is, all that we see as moving and motionless, all that we call matter or substance, solid, liquid, gaseous and radiating, all that we call mountains and valleys, all that we call town and country, all that we call human beings, animals and plants, all that we call writing and speech etc., all that constitutes a kind or form of movement, either it apparently is movement or stagnation. Likewise, the substances of which the living beings’ organisms are built-up are combinations of different kinds of movements. In reality only the ‘I’ and this movement exist. The many created things are only varied combinations of movements. It is only in the living beings’ sensory fields that the movements by virtue of the perspective principle are perceived or experienced as created things, made of substance or matter. This construction or adjustment of movement of what is called creation, since besides creation only the creator exists, and this creator is the ‘I’, then we see that all creation, all movements and all adjustments of movements can exist only with an ‘I’ as its originator. And a single living being’s ‘I’ together with all other living beings’ ‘I’s thus form the ‘I’ of the Godhead. They are each a fellow-creator in the structure of movement or creation of the universe. Consequently, no movement whatsoever, can come into existence by itself, but must, as indicated, originate from an ‘I’.”

There exists a relationship that the individual needs to **recover** in his lifetime. It is his conscious connection to the body and the thinking intellect. This is achieved by learning to get in touch with

the kinesthetic sense - a sense unknown to the vast majority of humankind - which will enable him to change for the better his misuse of the body caused by misuse of his thinking. It would be of great all-round benefit to learn the value of co-ordinated use of the body by cultivating the knowledge of its proper function and movement as a mechanism - not just specific parts of it - but as a unified whole.

Note also, that the word "recover" above is in bold italics, because he does not find new knowledge, but ancient knowledge that he has forgotten. The proof of this is easily seen if he tries to recapture, in mind and body, the easy, alert and beautifully co-ordinated "physical" movement he made as a very young child - up to around 3 years old. In striving to remember, he finds he cannot. The reasons are that his body has become badly misused: and his kinesthetic memory has completely disappeared, buried beneath the ever-growing pile of his subconscious, negative, habitual "psycho-physical" mechanisms. He also finds that he is now the slave of these habits. He who seeks to recover this relationship is indeed on the quest of a vast store of real wisdom.

The body is truly wondrous; a veritable micro-universe; consciousness made manifest. It is the form that the individual mind – the 'I' – takes to function in the "material" world. Like the world the body is a thought-construct. This co-creative process of building the body is a tremendous feat of imagination and endeavour, and has taken a length of time and a number of incarnations that would stagger the imagination. The newly conceived entity, the baby, goes through this whole evolutionary process each time he or she reincarnates. This is done at an incredible speed. The baby - in conjunction with the World-Mind - has to think every part into existence.

The reason he can move the body so easily when he wants to, is because of this intimacy - this deepest intimacy - between the World-Mind and the individual mind, as well as the staggering repetition involved to produce this ease of movement. There is not a mental mind that moves a physical body; they are one and the

same mind-stuff.

The body is the instrument, the medium, by which the ego, the 'I', experiences the world around it. It is the form that the ego takes to function in the "material" world. Its welfare is each person's responsibility. It must be cared for with great love, respect and reverence. The conscious co-ordinated use of the body in the everyday acts of life is not only an art to be learned, but a way of re-educating the body that many people know nothing about. The cultivation of this art will not only allow the body to move gracefully and powerfully, but will ensure that these movements are in harmony with the correct laws of body mechanics that will not harm it. If he is to make all-round progress in his psycho-physical-emotional-spiritual aspirations, then endeavouring to achieve the mastery of the body's structures and movements would not only be a very desirable virtue, but also an indispensable discipline to adopt.

In general, the modern mind suffers from mind-wandering and the modern body from misuse. He habitually denies the spine, for example, its proper function by slumping and leaning on the backs of chairs, instead of allowing the spine to be erect, thus allowing it to act as a dynamic support for the whole torso. If any kind of mechanism is never allowed to perform its proper function it cannot become fit for its function. Another example of misuse of the spine is shown in performing toe-touches repeatedly with rapid vigour, the legs held straight, and a prominent curving of the lumbar spine back and forth. This is a gross misuse that will eventually damage the intervertebral discs, and will also distort the knees.

The modern mind also suffers from ignorance of properly co-ordinated and holistic body-mechanics. It knows even less about the evolutionary significance of learning to think the body back to its optimal performance in use and functioning. All his unco-ordinated habits of use of the mind-body complex are caused by wrong thinking about how the body works.

If, therefore, in his spiritual aspirations, he is attempting to

eliminate the bad habits of the mind, and elevate the feelings of the heart, but neglects to consider the misused state of the body, then his concept of the human being is based on a lopsided, incomplete view.

If the body is ignored, life must still be lived in it by all people. The same spiritual attitude he applies to his heart and mind must be applied to his body, and especially to how he uses it. The body is needed by all of us - even spiritual seekers - to gain experience of life. Why relegate it to some inferior level while we attempt to deal with “higher” spiritual matters. The spiritual quest cannot be dissociated from constructive conscious control of the body that would re-create the individual into a way of being that is highly co-ordinated, graceful and dynamic. A balance can be struck between attending to the **how** of moving the body and spiritual aspirations.

The body consists of countless numbers of cells that look to the ‘I’ for kindly, loving attention. Knowledge of the laws that govern how it moves, govern its use and functioning, are crucial to any kind of spiritual development. Most people are ignorant of these laws, and as they move through life they unwittingly injure and distort it and cause themselves unnecessary suffering. Misuse of the body - caused by misuse of his thinking - causes the vital life-force that flows through it to be greatly diminished, greatly weakened.

At the “psycho-physical” level the ego came first, and if it was going to live a life as a manifested being, it would have had to create something that would be its means of participating in the “physical” world. There would be no point in being the primal ego-thought if he did not have something by which he could move around. Just as consciousness would be useless if there was nothing to be conscious of, so also would the ‘I’ be useless if it had no means of moving around. And so the ‘I’ created the whole body, but not as a separate structure: over an immense period of time it **became** the body. This process would have been the foremost task of his existence and would have been paramount in our

evolutionary development. Because of this colossal preoccupation with the “physical” realm, he would have had little or no chance of becoming aware of anything outside this realm; be it spiritual, astral, subtle, Godly, mental or whatever. It was only after he learned to think abstractly that he could consider “higher” states.

The study of conscious, co-ordinated, dynamic, graceful, poised and balanced use of the body can be done in conjunction with spiritual studies, because the former awakens the kundalini and eventually allows it to flow freely through the spine and the rest of the body. There is no substitute for the moment-to-moment discipline of consciously and constructively controlling the body in every act of daily living, which is essential if spiritual progress is to be fully rounded out.

When the ‘I’ was born it did not sit down immediately and contemplate its navel, because it didn’t have one. It would have to create one as part of the body, and then, through abstract thinking, become able to consider and develop things like philosophy, religion, art, ingenious invention etc. The length of time that has passed since the advent of abstract academic thinking is infinitesimal in comparison to the aeons spent in building the body. The modern intellect’s knowledge is minute when compared to the vast store contained in the subconscious mind. Ironically, however, the explosion of abstract, academic thinking in the modern era is pushing us further and further away from proper consideration of the body and its needs. If we represent the age of planet Earth on a scale of twenty-four hours, then humankind appeared on it - as the scientists curiously put it - at two minutes to midnight. Consideration of spirituality and other abstract things would have started at two seconds to midnight and these ruminations would have had to be carried out while living in the body. This indicates that the body - not just the heart and mind - is the basis of our spiritual hopes and pursuits. Constructive conscious control of the body is not only a personal need, but also a spiritual duty.

PART 7

F.M ALEXANDER

AN INTERPRETATION OF CHAPTER 1, “EVOLUTION OF A TECHNIQUE” IN HIS BOOK, “THE USE OF THE SELF”

Note: I am using the word “interpret” to mean,
“understand as having a particular meaning or significance”
I am not attempting to enhance F.M’s writings.

Please note also that it is impossible for me to adequately convey the enormity of Alexander’s epic transformation and his account of how he fundamentally changed himself from a subconsciously controlled human being, who was the slave of his harmful habits of “psycho-physical” misuse of the self, to that of a consciously controlled one that created a whole new dynamic way of being for himself, as well as great benefits to his health and welfare.

In this interpretation I will attempt to show how Alexander’s discoveries about the “use of the self,” as he called it, were achieved by a combination of rigorous reasoning using his intellect, and intuitive revelations from the deeper parts of himself. His studies on a living human being - himself - were carried out in ways that would match the strictest, unbiased, detached, scientific approach to the study of anything from subatomic particles to gargantuan galaxies. He is not regarded as a scientist, because he did not use complicated apparatus and paraphernalia usually associated with scientific research. He did not take notes of muscular reactions, speed of nerve impulses etc. but what he did discover experientially was a sense that very few people know about - the kinesthetic or proprioceptive sense.

At the beginning of his search, Alexander - a professional actor - who had been told by the doctors that they could not help

him anymore to cure the throat trouble that was threatening to prematurely end his career - stood in front of a mirror and tried to see if there was anything wrong with the way he was using his vocal physiology - jaw, lips, tongue etc. As the doctors had given up on him, the decision to find out for himself what was wrong was the first of many flashes of intuition he would have during his many years of studying his use of himself. He had no idea of what he was looking for. Eventually, however, he discovered by looking in the mirror, that his reaction to a given stimulus was not - kinesthetically - what he felt it to be. He could not feel that in his attempts to recite, or do any other movement, that he was stiffening his neck unduly, shortening his muscles at the back of his neck, causing his head to be pulled back and down, and thus putting excessive pressure on his vocal organs. In addition, he observed that he was breathing inadequately by stiffening his thorax, shortening and narrowing his torso, thus causing excessive pressure on the vital organs in his abdomen. He saw also that, in standing, he was bracing his knees back, thrusting his pelvis forward and stiffening his hip joints. He thought he was the only person who had these negative habits of misusing the body, but when he looked around at other people, he saw that misuse was universal. He could not see anyone who did not have these harmful ways of misusing themselves.

The now famous account of his discovery of how he was misusing, not only his vocal mechanisms, but the rest of his body as well, is given in the chapter "EVOLUTION OF A TECHNIQUE" in his book, "THE USE OF THE SELF". To fully appreciate the vital importance of Alexander's discoveries for the benefit of humankind, the reader is invited to study this chapter. I wish to emphasize that, during his attempts to stop misusing himself and find a new way of being, all he had to work with was his old habitual self. Here indeed is a tale of fundamental change so radical, that I have yet to hear of anyone else who has achieved this feat single-handedly, without the aid of a teacher. All of us who teach Alexander's constructive conscious control are his descendants,

so to speak.

As he observed himself repeatedly in the mirror while reciting, he eventually noticed some potentially harmful movements he was making around the head-neck area that could be causing hoarseness and the loud sucking in of the breath. This was an intuitive moment, a glimpse of another way, perhaps, of using his voice.

He went on for months, adjusting different parts, the relationship of his head to his neck, the use of his lips and jaw etc. and eventually his voice improved. His medical friends confirmed this improvement.

Because of the positive changes he had reasoned out in his use of various parts around the head-neck joint that had improved his performance, he writes at one point, *“In this way, it was borne in upon me that the changes in use that I had been able to bring about.....had produced a marked effect upon the functioning of my vocal and respiratory mechanism.”* The phrase, *“borne in upon me”*, indicates guidance from his intuition.

After many months of experimenting on his use of the voice, he felt confident enough to dispense with the mirror. He was shocked, however, to discover that he could not maintain the improved use of himself without looking in it. He realised that his kinesthetic sense was still not reliable enough and his old habitual use of his mechanisms was too strong to resist.

F.M continued to experiment patiently month after month, but suffered many setbacks, which made him think that his lack of success in changing his unco-ordinated, habitual use of the mind-body complex was due to some shortcoming in himself. This did not deter him, however, and he persevered in his strict scientific approach of never making the results of his theories fit his preconceived ideas about what the results might be. Again and again he saw that his body was not doing what he felt it was doing and realised his kinesthetic sense was unreliable and could not be trusted. As he wrote, *“This indeed was a blow. If ever anyone was at an impasse, it was I.”* His subconscious habitual behaviour was

still dominating his attempts at consciously controlled movement. He had to find a surefire way of knowing, not only what he was doing during any particular movement, but **how** he was doing it.

After months and years of disappointing experiences where his theories did not work out, F.M had an intuitive flash. In his experiments he had learned that his reactions to the stimuli of living were unsatisfactory because they were subconscious and harmfully habitual. He decided that next time he gave himself the stimulus to recite, he would attempt to stop the habits of stiffening his neck, pulling his head back and down, and shortening and narrowing his back etc. When he tried this, however, he was disappointed to discover that his old habitual use was far stronger than he had imagined and he could not prevent it.

It is not necessary here to go into all the nuances of his reasoning powers and inspirational intuitions that came to him in changing himself fundamentally - but suffice to say that F.M eventually discovered the process of inhibition, a vital function of the neuromuscular system that anyone can learn to use consciously if they have the desire to truly change themselves mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually.

At a certain point Alexander speculated that, in all his experimenting, he may have been end-gaining; that is, giving priority to achieving his end of reciting without enough attention to the conscious means he had reasoned out were required to achieve his end. He repeatedly failed by resorting back to his old habitual use that had caused the problem in the first place. He then surmised that if he changed his priority so that the conscious means were given prime consideration, he may be able to prevent his habitual misuse.

He went on yet again by giving himself the stimulus to recite and then immediately inhibiting his wish to do so, which was followed by mentally directing:

- his neck to be free, or not to stiffen his neck,
- his head to go forward and up,

- and his back to lengthen and widen.

This time instead of going on to gain his original end of reciting, he was determined to wait - no matter how long - to see what would happen. As he waited he kept repeating mentally his directions to his neck, head and back until suddenly, he felt the urge to raise his hand. This he did, and was elated to see that he did not fall back on his old habitual misuse and interfere with the integrity of his head-neck-back relationship. The light was no longer glowing dimly at the end of the tunnel, it was shining like the midday sun: here indeed was a great Eureka moment, a wonderful intuitive revelation that happened in conjunction with his inspired reasoning. Important new discoveries occur at these "Eureka" moments and in this one Alexander realised that the way to make positive change was through the process of inhibition. This indeed was his crowning glory, his crowning moment. To realise that to change his habitual behaviour, he must STOP his old habitual reactions at source.

This moment occurred, not after a period of weeks or months, but around ten years of meticulous, detached and unbiased study, worthy of any of the great scientists.

But science is not enough. Just as the scientist cannot refute the personal inner revelations that come to the mystic, neither can he refute Alexander's findings, because the scientist would have to learn how to re-educate his kinesthetic sense, and his misuse of himself. He would have to take on the discipline of learning the moment-to-moment process of constructive conscious control in the use of the self - for himself. If he merely wired up a subject who was experienced in conscious control and then noted, on a computerized device, certain neuromuscular reactions during certain movements, his "knowledge" would remain at the intellectual level only: it would not be a merger of the kinesthetic sense with the intellectual faculty, which would be authentic **experiential** knowledge. Einstein showed that the observer must be included in his own observations and

calculations; that ultimately complete objectivity is not possible. Alexander showed that the findings of science may be positively influenced if the individual scientist were to include the quality of his use of the mind-body complex in his observations. The individual and the environment are one. We exist in a unified field of perception and awareness.

Alexander had arrived at the point where his old habitual use of himself was no longer dominating his movements and reactions to the stimuli of everyday life. He was no longer the slave of these habits, but had transformed himself into a consciously coordinated human being with real freedom of choice in all his actions. He had truly discovered a new way of being. Referring back to the beginning of his search, as he looked in the mirror to find this new way of being, he had nothing else to work with apart from his old, subconscious, habitually misused way of being. His old way felt “right,” felt familiar. Only after his discovery of conscious inhibition and direction was he able to make that remarkable switch from subconscious misuse of the self to constructive conscious control. This achievement is even more remarkable when we consider that his new way of being and doing made him feel “wrong” kinesthetically: it was unfamiliar. Reason told him repeatedly that, after he consciously adjusted the relationship of his head to his neck into a balanced situation, what he could see in the mirror was correct, and he should ignore his kinesthetic sense that was telling him it was “wrong.” The adjustment of his whole body in this conscious way was a process of deep thinking that he used for the rest of his life.

There is no substitute for the continuous moment-to-moment discipline of using constructive conscious control in every act of living. This practice is essential if a truly spiritual way of being is to be rounded out, made complete. Unless the individual puts the theoretical principles of constructive conscious control into the concrete, practical acts of daily life, and unless his guiding thoughts to the body and mind are reflected in his most “trivial” movements, his efforts to achieve balance in the self will be in vain.

This theoretical knowledge must show itself in practical, dynamic action in his “mundane” existence. This moment-to-moment practice will free him from the negative thought-grooves that habitually dominate his life. If he persists, however, in living a life immersed only in the five senses of touch, sight, hearing, taste and smell, he does not live it to its full capacity. These five senses must be augmented and rounded out by the cultivation of the awareness of the sixth sense: that is the kinesthetic, which will, in time, make him conscious of every movement he makes in the daily round, and he will no longer be the slave of his negative, unco-ordinated “psycho-physical” habits.

John Dewey said that F.M’s work rounded out all the sciences, because it deals with the fundamental element that is at the centre of all scientific observation - the observer himself: but the work has a huge influence on four other significant areas - education, including re-education, health, spirituality, and evolution. The practice of constructive conscious control is a huge, vital part of the evolutionary process, where the conscious mind teaches everything to the subconscious mind. The modern conscious mind must wake up and resume this role of being the teacher. As F.M wrote, ***“the conscious mind must be quickened.”***

This whole description of the evolution of his technique, given in his book “THE USE OF THE SELF,” is an inspiring account of a pioneering individual taking, not one, but many steps into the unknown. Significantly, his discovery of misuse in himself led him to realise that such misuse exists in the vast majority of the human race. This disturbing deterioration in most of humankind today can be halted by the adoption of constructive conscious control and the cultivation of an accurate kinesthetic sense - the neglected sense.

The cultivation of accurate kinesthesia will not only enable him to distinguish between the truth and falsity of the relationship of one part of the body to another, but also what he actually does with the body in movement. If he is willing to combine the intellect

with the kinesthetic sense, he has a chance to become master of his own body and mind. The intellect and the kinesthetic sense - thinking and feeling - must be balanced.

Inhibition and Direction

The importance of inhibition as the gateway to real change could not be emphasized enough, and its close relation to direction is a fascinating one. At first glance, the former appears to be passive, the latter active: but they are both activities of thinking, activities of the neuromuscular system.

To prevent - at the onset of a stimulus - the instant, subconscious response of the old neuromuscular patterns that constitute habitual movement as the individual knows it, he must actively inhibit these impulses in the tiny tick of time between stimulus and response. In this time-gap he has the chance to prevent the old habitual response and create the possibility of reacting in a new co-ordinated way. Inhibition is a dynamic function that has nothing to do with suppression. It is the platform from which new directions spring, particularly to the primary control of the body, that is, the head-neck-back relationship.

After inhibiting his habitual reaction - STOP - he must energise and move forward - GO - into real change by thinking the neck free, the head to go forward and up and the back to lengthen and widen. Because the body is a thought-form, the repetition of this dynamic process of stopping (inhibition) and going (direction) will undoubtedly produce the desired results of co-ordination, grace, poise and balance in the use of the self. The individual can fundamentally transform himself through this twin process of inhibition and direction.

PART 8

THE FALLACY OF “PSYCHO-PHYSICAL” UNITY

The term “psycho-physical” unity appears in this book for the first time on page 23. It is a phrase used often in the books of F.M Alexander to indicate that in any explanation of the constitution of the human being the mind and the body cannot be separated. He describes psycho-physical in the following way:

On page 1 of his book, *THE USE OF THE SELF*, F.M writes
“when I began my investigations, I, in common with most people, conceived ‘body’ and ‘mind’ as separate parts of the same organism, and consequently believed that human ills, difficulties and shortcomings could be classified as either ‘mental’ or ‘physical’ and dealt with on specifically ‘mental’ or specifically ‘physical’ lines. My practical experience, however, led me to abandon this point of view.....my technique is based on the opposite conception, namely, that it is impossible to separate ‘mental’ and ‘physical’ processes in any form of human activity.”

On page 5 of his book, *CONSTRUCTIVE CONSCIOUS CONTROL*, F.M lays down a definition.

*“At this juncture, I wish to make clear the sense in which I use the word ‘psycho-physical’. The term psycho-physical is used here throughout my works to indicate the impossibility of separating ‘physical’ and ‘mental’ operations in our conception of the working of the human mechanism. As I wrote in *MAN’S SUPREME INHERITANCE*, ‘In my opinion the two must be considered to be entirely interdependent, and even more closely knit than is implied in such a phrase.”*

Alexander also says, *“I am forced to use the words ‘physical’ and ‘mental’ here and throughout my argument because there are no*

other words at present which adequately express the manifestations of psycho-physical activity present at these various stages, not in any sense that the 'physical' and the 'mental' can be separated as such. I wish, therefore, to make it clear, that whenever I use the word 'mental' it is to be understood as representing all processes and manifestations which are generally recognised as not wholly 'physical' and vice versa the word 'physical' as representing all processes and manifestations which are generally recognised as not wholly 'mental'."

These are the words of a wise man, an original, groundbreaking, innovative, pioneering thinker, but a man, who, during his long and distinguished life did not come to realise that there is no such thing as matter and that everything - including his own body - is a form of consciousness, a thought-construct. I greatly appreciate the tremendous difficulty he had to express what he meant about the general notion that there is some kind of interface between the 'mental' and the 'physical'. I acknowledge that a whole new terminology is needed to adequately express what the self is.

When one looks deeply into how the mind and body come together, one enters a little known region that is vague and confusing. How do the mental and material unite? The phrase "psycho-physical" carries its own inbuilt contradiction and the hyphen between the two words stubbornly persists in keeping them apart, even though you may have a sneaking feeling somewhere that the two are actually one. If they are one, why do they have a different name from each other? Why not one name like the beautiful simplicity of F.M.'s "***the self?***" Is there some kind of mental-material, psycho-physical super glue that binds them together - at that mysterious mind-body interface that you cannot locate - but leaves you with the uneasy impression that you have simply stuck two separate elements together and you don't really understand how? Is that unity? Is a unit not simply an individual thing? Or can it be two things brought together? Surely we must have two things in order to unite them? Can two separate things

be united to become one?

The answer is there are not two separate elements to be brought together; there is only one - the mental. The so-called body is mind-made-manifest, a form of consciousness, and its apparent materiality is a myth, an ancient fallacy, and a false belief.

I cannot here enter into a treatise on the vast subject of mentalism, a subject that takes years of hard study to understand, but I will give a few statements about it that I hope will give the reader a hint of what mentalism is, and show why psycho-physical unity does not go far enough in attempting to explain, what, in essence, a human being is.

Like a thought, the body is a mental construct. The difference between a thought and, for example, a muscle, is one of *degree*, not of *kind*. They are both made of the same mind-stuff. To know a thought you have to think it, and equally, to know your body you have to think of it. The body is known through the medium of the senses, and to sense it you have to think of it. We live entirely in a world of sensation, and a sensation is also a mental construct. You experience your body only through sensation, can only talk about how it feels to you in terms of sensation, and sensations and thoughts are completely private to each individual. They are not accessible to anyone else. The apparent solidity, however, that you feel, the substantiality of the body, is no proof that it is made of a substance called matter. We need only look at the latest scientific discoveries to confirm this. The body's solidity is an assumption, albeit an understandable one. Substance, however, is a supposition, substantiality is a sensation.

This explanation applies to every object in the world around us, and even in the universe. All things are thought-objects, mental constructs, mental perceptions. Many people go through a whole lifetime without realising that all they ever dealt with in interacting with people and things in this world was that which was conveyed to them by the six senses. Every object - including the body - must

be a **known** object to the mind. Each individual's private perception of the world **is** the world. Each one's perception of one's own body **is** the body. None of us can step outside the four walls of perception. None of us can burst our bubble of perception. We live in an entirely mental world constructed by the innate power and sheer magic of the individual mind from the master image imposed on all of us by the unfathomable World-Mind: an incredible co-creation.

When the meaning of mentalism becomes clear, it does not mean that everything takes on some ghostly, spectral, non-substantial form, like mist, or the heat-haze from a highway. The people around you do not become wraiths. It is simply that you realise that the substantiality you apparently feel in an object does not prove it has substance; that perception does not prove the thing-in-itself can have its own separate existence apart from a knower. When you bump your head against the wall it is, relatively speaking, solid, and will cause you pain. Mentalism is not etherealism.

In my teaching experience I am often asked by pupils what psycho-physical unity is, I reply that I cannot answer the question because the question cannot be asked. It springs from a generally accepted, ill-considered assumption that the physical - matter - exists. Because something is generally accepted, however, by most people, does not make it authentic.

Psycho-physical unity: - Practical nevertheless

Having said all that about Alexander's erroneous belief that every human being is a psycho-physical unity does not, however, diminish its effectiveness for the practical purpose of interacting with people and things in everyday living. It must not be completely dismissed, because thinking of mind and body being one is better than regarding them as two entirely separate elements.

When someone comes to me for lessons it makes no difference whether they believe in mentalism or materialism, or

any other kind of “ism”. The beliefs of each and every pupil about what constitutes a human being are respected, because the wonderful process of constructive conscious control, as expounded by F.M Alexander, really works. It covers the whole gamut of human activity, and if the pupil has the capacity to learn it, he will transform himself - with the help of the teacher - into a new way of conscious being and doing that will free him from the slavery of his negative psycho-physical habits. The “is” is not an “ism”.

PART 9

A TESTIMONY TO THE WORK OF F.M ALEXANDER

A genius, a true pioneer in
the “psycho-physical” progress
of the individual human being, and of all human kind.

The titles of the four books he wrote
brilliantly encapsulate his “method” of
constructive conscious control of the individual
by the individual

THE TITLES ARE:

**MAN’S SUPREME INHERITANCE
CONSTRUCTIVE CONSCIOUS CONTROL
THE USE OF THE SELF
THE UNIVERSAL CONSTANT IN LIVING**

A whole philosophy of life is shown in these titles.

*His full name is Frederick Matthias Alexander.
He was fondly known as “F.M.”*

*The initials of his name aptly indicate
the consciously controlled way of being
that he appealed to us to learn, adopt, and eventually master.*

F.M.A: Forever Mindful in Action

We are not normally aware of our awareness, but could be - if we stop to think about it. Such process is ***constructive conscious control in the use of the self, the universal constant in living, which is man's supreme inheritance***. F.M.'s profound appreciation of his own work is portrayed in the titles of the books. His work distinguishes him from that of a therapist, because it is an educative process that fundamentally and positively changes any individual who wishes to take responsibility for his own health and well-being, and deeper still, it leads to a new way of being.

In writing this testimony, I do so with great reverence for F.M. Alexander and his work. This reverence is that of the deepest respect and veneration, and not some kind of excessive adulation. After thirty-seven years of learning and teaching his process of constructive conscious control of the individual - by the individual - I humbly, but confidently, state that my knowledge is authentic because it has been gained from experience - and hard experience at that. Nothing that comes easily is worth having. I am still learning.

If the individual were to take the trouble to analyse deeply enough, he would realise that in his interaction with the environment, he does not deal directly with the things around him, but only indirectly through the impressions in his body reported to him by the senses of touch, sight, hearing, taste, and smell. He cannot step outside of this bubble of perception, and deal directly with the things around him. The thing must be a known-thing, a thought-object known by means of the miraculous power his mind possesses - the ability to perceive. The great difficulty for him is to understand that the object does not stand alone in time and space: his perception of it *is* the object. This is self-awareness - not at the higher level of the Overself - but at the level of the personal self, the ego, the 'I'-thought. This is the reality of dealing with the bodily sensations, not the "outside" objects. Normally, he refers to the five senses of touch, sight, hearing, taste and smell, and has no awareness of the sixth one - the kinesthetic - which tells him of the

relationship of one part of the body to another, and the body's relation to the environment. This is the sense that tells him about **how** he is using his body, and the vast majority of people are unaware of its existence. This is the sense that he can learn to bring up to the conscious level and use to improve the co-ordination of the body. This consciously controlled process is the **how** of doing. If he is living life in the five senses only, then he is not living it to the full. He will have little idea of what he is really doing with his body in his everyday movements of sitting, standing, walking, running, eating, washing, sitting at the computer, etc. If he wishes to live a fuller life by learning a more satisfying way of being, he must cultivate the kinesthetic sense, and learn constructive conscious control in his dealings with the "material" world. This world and all things in it constitute the realm of the ego. It deals with objects large and small that the individual interacts with via the six senses. It is a tangible world, a world that Alexander dealt with in the most practical, common-sense manner. In expounding his knowledge in his books, and in teaching it practically to others F.M never stepped outside the realm of the ego. If he believed in some religion that promised a better life after death, or if he dealt with paranormal states, discarnate realms etc. outside of the world as it was presented to him by his senses, he never mentioned them. He knew that this so-called "physical" realm was a great enough mystery in itself, and if humankind was to effectively progress in it, then it must concern itself with the conscious evolution of the most important tangible thing that we know, namely the self, the "psycho-physical" organism. He was a very pragmatic, realistic humanitarian whose work was truly scientific. During the many years of meticulously studying his use of himself in movement, any theory he posited that did not work out in practice was promptly discarded.

F.M's acute powers of reasoning and scientific observation were allied with that deep inner fountain of intuition. What intuition unveils the keenest reasoning validates. Intuition revealed to him that the body works in a certain co-ordinated way that does not

violate the laws of its use and functioning as a mechanism: for example, the modern individual's habit of bending the whole spine too much, instead of articulating at the hip, knee and ankle joints, as the babies do, is a violation of these laws of movement in the body. This repeated excessive bending of the lumbar spine, in particular, causes damage to the intervertebral discs, and is, today, one of the biggest disabling and debilitating problems in the world. This balanced combination of intuition and reason resulted in the shrewd, practical application of constructive conscious control of his "psycho-physical" organism. He expressed this new way of being through art and in service to humankind. Alexander's findings are an indispensable part of the evolutionary process, because the conscious mind has been brought to the fore as the great driving force in evolution, where it recognises a need and then uses its marvellous creativity to fulfil that need, by re-educating the subconscious mind to free itself from the slavery of its negative psycho-physical-emotional habits that beset the vast majority of the human race. His method of constructive conscious control, of *indirect* fundamental change, is the vital nitty-gritty of any attempts at evolutionary progress in the individual. The conscious mind - the 'I' - has thought itself into this present-day sorry situation of misuse of the self, but thankfully, can think its way out of it again. This is *inspired egoism*.

PART 10

THE FORGOTTEN FUNDAMENTAL TO BE INCLUDED IN THE TRINITY

On my journey so far in this incarnation I have come to realise that there are three parallel lines of evolution that Nature demands the individual should pursue. These lines are inspired action, contemplation, and the proper use of intelligence. The human being who functions consciously traverses each incarnation using the faculties of thinking, feeling and doing. These faculties constitute a working trinity. He or she attempts to harmonize the reasoned thinking cultivated by means of the unstinting study of metaphysics, the intuitive feeling arising from the dedicated practice of mysticism, and the inspired action necessary in the staggering repetition of the daily doing performed by the ego. In short, the intellectual, the mystical and the practical must be cultivated equally and brought consciously into balance and harmony. If all these qualities are fused and equilibrated, they will allow the profound realisation of the essential quality of insight, which transcends them. This is not the place to elaborate on insight, as the purpose of this essay is to bring attention to the Forgotten Fundamental. Suffice to say that within the individual there exists a hierarchy of insight, followed by intuition, followed by intellect.

Sharpened and quickened use of the intellect in the study of metaphysics, and in the practical affairs of everyday life must be combined and balanced with the feeling of love of the Overself in mystical contemplation. The person cannot escape the dedicated work that needs to be done if the harmonious integration of these elements is to be achieved and insight unfolded. In short, the individual must make the Quest of the Overself into a practical pursuit in everyday life. But everyday actions must not be blind ones. This statement leads us into a consideration of the Forgotten Fundamental that must be included in the trinity. That fundamental

is the use of the self.

Wise and altruistic action is, for the thinking, caring person, the would-be philosopher, a process of tireless working for the triumph of Good. But too often the altruist attempts to help others when he has not realized that the quality of his use of the self in his selfless actions has a profound influence on his own spiritual development. In other words, that Forgotten Fundamental of the use of the self is the missing link in his endeavours to balance his psycho-physical-emotional-spiritual development. Constructive conscious control in the use of the self is something that will inspire his moment-to-moment everyday existence.

Before explaining what constructive conscious control in use of the self is, it will be clearer if we consider what subconscious misuse of the self is.

As I wrote in my book, 'CONSTRUCTIVE Awareness', Chapter 2, page 21:

“As explained in the previous chapter, misuse of our thinking, resulting in misuse of the body, is a present-day malady. The modern person is a victim of generations of misuse caused by artificial living conditions in civilization. These artificial, stressful conditions cause taut necks, rounded backs, stiff joints, inadequate breathing, stretched nerves, all kinds of neuroses, worried minds, and so on. Such is our unawareness of ourselves that these states can come to feel ‘normal,’ to be ‘us’. In other words, we develop a habitual, devitalized way of being and doing. Our habits are us. This devitalized condition is usually considered to be an unavoidable part of life, something that is inevitable as we grow older, and we usually blame something or someone else for our situation.

Consider, though, how much of our way of being is of our own making, is our own responsibility. The environmental conditions into which one is born, or lives in, cannot be excluded from this consideration; indeed, extremely adverse situations play

a large part in shaping our lives. If such conditions, however, are within reasonable limits, they can be ignored for the purpose of this illustration.

One of the strongest habits that we develop from early childhood is that of 'end-gaining'. This means a constant striving to get to the end of any task that we perform, without consideration of the co-ordinated 'means' we should employ to gain the desired end. Education is geared to end-gaining. Children are encouraged to produce a good result at school without proper consideration of the 'how' of achieving it without losing their psycho-physical equilibrium. This is true of so-called mental as well as physical activities. The best way to illustrate the difference between 'end-gaining' and 'means' is to give a simple example, such as picking an object up from the floor. The vast majority react to the stimulus of the object falling on the floor by bending the torso forward at the lumbar spine by keeping the knees straight as we reach down with the hand. This movement continues until the knees have to be reluctantly bent to allow the hand to reach and grasp the object. The return journey usually starts with placing the hands on the knees and pushing up with the arms because the back is not strong enough to perform this task easily. The breath is held throughout this activity - except for when a tired grunt of effort is forced from the body. This habitual way of bending the back can be extremely detrimental to the welfare of the lumbar spine. If done too often, it can lead to damage to the intervertebral discs in the form of distortion and even prolapse.

If you ask a person to describe in detail what she actually did with the different parts of the body in lifting up the object, she will be unable to do so. This is because the co-ordinated 'means' of performing the act are of little interest to her and occur beneath her awareness. She will have no more than a vague, hazy idea of the 'how' of her doing. This is classic, habitual 'end-gaining'.

A more mechanically appropriate way of bending to the floor is to allow the back to remain 'straight' and to bend the knees and hip joints as young children do.

*The above explanation, however, does not go far enough as it gives the impression that we can change **directly** one method of doing something for a better one. This example is given simply to point out that a superior, mechanically appropriate method exists; but if this were as far as it goes, we would be dealing with nothing more than physical culture. The **indirect** process of constructive awareness is much more than mere physical culture: to learn it we ought to begin to use our minds and consider the ‘how’ of performing our everyday activities. We can learn how to constructively ‘think in activity’, how to attend to the co-ordinated ‘means’ of doing something, no matter how trivial.*

The first method of bending in the above example is a misuse of the body mechanism; it is not designed to do this. Numerous other examples could be given of the inappropriate, detrimental habits of use of the psycho-physical self.

Physical habits cause mental habits and vice-versa. Sects, cults and groups which recognize, and attempt to utilize, the power of the mind over the body are out of truth, and so out of balance, to the extent that they fail to recognize the power of the body over the mind. The way to change bad physical and mental habits is by inhibiting them. Inhibition in the sense meant here is the very basis of change.”

(The reader is asked to refer to ‘CONSTRUCTIVE Awareness’, Chapter 4, for an account of ‘Inhibition and Direction,’ which includes the importance of consciously attending to the integrity of the head-neck-back relationship.)

There is no need to add another element to the trinity, because constructive awareness is a fundamental part of the use of the intellect in which the conscious mind is quickened and expanded to attend to the use of the self. The intellect, however, cannot achieve a fundamental change in the use of the self without combining its endeavours with the cultivation of the kinesthetic sense. The latter is unknown to the vast majority of people, so much so that we usually refer only to the five senses of sight, hearing, taste, touch and smell when considering what they tell us

of the world around us. If our awareness of the body and its interaction with the environment are to be complete, we must learn to include and appreciate the kinesthetic sense as being of equal importance to the other five.

In the trinity, therefore, the kinesthetic sense would come under the category of feeling; but it is not mystical or emotional feeling. It is the awareness of the relationship of one part of the body to another as the body interacts with its immediate environment. The body as a mechanism must be understood: but what is more important, ***the quality of the use of it must also be studied and understood.***

Thinking aright is essential. Nebulous thoughts that float aimlessly through the mind are of no importance, but the habitual trend of thoughts is. If you are habitually thinking thousands of trivial thoughts in your buzzing internal dialogue then you are always with these thoughts, not with yourself. In contrast, constantly recurring dynamic thoughts about improving the use of the self will allow the aspirant to positively influence his own contribution to his earthly experience. The more often we repeat the thoughts that will produce co-ordinated use of the self, the quicker will we reach, not only a truly conscious way of living that will improve our general progress and well-being, but also make it easier to elevate ourselves to spiritual nobleness.

No matter what a person's philosophy of life may be, if he is seeking authentic all-round development, it must include constructive conscious control of the individual by the individual - the Forgotten Fundamental.

PART 11

INSTRUCTIVE EXPERIENCE OF THE BODY AND THE GIFT OF A CONSCIOUS MIND

*“The conscious mind has limitless power,
hence it performs every action.”*

*“The conscious mind is the leading power
and leader of all states and all minds.”*

*Rammurti S. Mishra M.D, “FUNDAMENTALS OF YOGA”,
Chapter 4, pages 53 and 54.*

Each individual has evolved from a formless ego to become a so-called body. This has been achieved through a co-creative process initiated by the World-Mind and continued and developed by the individual mind. The awesome power of the World-Mind to create anything it wishes is to be marveled at, but the creative power of the individual mind must not be underestimated and undervalued. This lack of appreciation of the power of the individual conscious mind pervades the vast majority of humankind and prevents us from realizing our full psycho-physical-emotional-spiritual potential in each incarnation. The person who does appreciate the power of the individual conscious mind realizes that this knowledge cuts right through and eliminates any ideas that exist in the misguided minds of certain human beings who believe that a hierarchy exists in human social interaction. These narrow, selfish minds assume that some individuals are superior or inferior to others. Intelligence, however, does not discriminate. In essence we all possess the same fundamental intelligence. The fact that an individual exists at all as a human being reveals how incredibly intelligent that individual is. It is only the varied experiences of different individuals throughout countless incarnations that have brought each one to the

evolutionary stage that he is now at.

Considering the evolutionary stage humanity is now at, where we have not only forgotten our origin, but also that long process of building a body; a process lasting aeons of time involving staggering repetition by the conscious mind of repeatedly recognizing a need and then using its incredible powers of creativity to fulfil that need. The need could have been an organ, a limb, a desire and so on. As each need was fulfilled, it was committed to memory and its vast store is what we now curiously call the subconscious mind.

It is worth considering three - among many - different approaches and attitudes to the body. The first one - and this one is in the vast majority - is the person who goes through life never considering the body and its needs and is almost completely unaware of it until it becomes ill. The beauty, grace and power of the body is usually missed by these people and it is doubtful if they have ever considered how they ever came to be one. This type of person does not deliberately ignore the body; he or she simply has no deep appreciation of it whatsoever.

The second is the person who undervalues and even denigrates the body because he or she is pursuing a spiritual quest, where the body is dismissed as a hindrance to spiritual advancement. One example is the mystic who considers the body and the world to be an illusion and wishes to remain constantly in the ecstatic states that are achieved during meditation. Such states are usually regarded as the highest ones of existence. Mother Nature, however, does not allow these blissful experiences to last very long and the mystic is forced back into the body and the world. The fact that the mystic is unable to remain in these ecstatic trances shows that he has to learn that the world may be an illusion, but it is also the real. This paradox is a hard fact of the human condition. The mystic has to learn that the body and the world cannot be spirited away at the behest of any individual and they are there to be experienced, studied and understood if psycho-physical-emotional-spiritual equilibration is to be achieved.

It is a wise mystic who can balance spiritual experiences in the lofty spheres of meditation with a common-sense practical approach to living in the body and accepting the instructive experience it provides.

Before considering the third type, it is worthwhile noting that the human being has evolved through the mineral, plant and animal stages to the human one. This is not the place to elaborate on this progression, as it would labour the point being made here. At the animal stage of its evolution the human being relied on what we curiously call 'instinct'. This term is used by many people even although they have no real idea of what it is. Phrases abound such as,

“Well, it’s something that we’re born with,” and,
“It’s something that you do without thinking about it.”

No consideration is given to the staggering repetitive creative thinking used by the ego to develop a body.

The third type, then, is the person who has come to realise that the way in which we use the body in our everyday activities has gone wrong. The vast majority of the human race has no clear idea or understanding of what is really taking place in the body as they are carrying out a movement. The conscious co-ordinated use of the body is completely unknown to them.

How did this state of misuse of the body come about? The answer is that evolution was a slow and conscious process that gradually speeded up as each new development was practised and mastered. Up to and including the animal stage, the individual was totally concerned with the building of the body in such a way that it could function optimally in its immediate environment and thus increase its chances of survival in very difficult conditions. The superb use of the body can be seen in any and every wild animal.

When the individual evolved into the human stage the sense of 'I' arose, followed by the ability to think abstractly. This abstract thinking, this expansion of the intellect, led to the invention of primitive tools right up to the amazing technology that exists

today. Also, at the human stage when we became cognizant of being the 'I', the ego could ruminate and ponder the question, "What am I?"

This amazing expansion of the intellect, however, had a very negative influence on our use of the body, because it now has to function in unnatural environments such as offices, factories etc. The individual no longer needs to function optimally to survive. Slumped torsos, twisted spines, narrowed chests causing inadequate breathing, shortened, rigid and flaccid muscles etc. etc., resulting in mental and physical debilitation, lethargy and ill-health, can be seen in all nations all over the world.

Referring to the evolutionary process described earlier, we must relearn how to discipline the conscious mind and allow it to take the lead again as the great driving force and by the greatly unappreciated power of thinking take charge - as it did in the past - in our evolutionary development. We must take the next evolutionary step and adopt ***constructive conscious control*** in the use of the self, which is humankind's supreme inheritance. The use of the self - good or bad - is the universal constant in living. Through this process we can restore the body to its former glorious state of co-ordination, balance, grace, poise and dynamic power. Not only that, we can also reclaim the gift - our greatest gift - of a conscious, vibrant and quickened mind willing to take responsibility for its own destiny, a truly conscious and constructive way of being. In our everyday interaction with people and things such constructive awareness is true mindfulness.

PART 12

BABY-BENDING

This part is about the huge evolutionary significance of that incredible conscious act that we all performed of coming up on to two feet, thus changing from a quadruped to a biped, and then, as babies, performing all variations of the movements of bending down and up again co-ordinatedly in the daily round, using the hip, knee and ankle joints, as they are designed to be used, and maintaining the integrity of the head-neck-back relationship. These movements I call “baby-bending”. Sadly, by the time we reach adulthood most of us have lost this conscious co-ordination.

“Oh yeah, Alexander Technique, that’s that queer method where they teach you how to stand up and sit down properly.” This is a typical misconception that many people have about the Alexander Technique – a better name for which is “constructive conscious control”. There is, however a great deal to be gained from learning how to perform the movements of standing and sitting – and any other movement - in a consciously, co-ordinated way, for the following reasons.

One of the most harmful movements we learn in early life is to bend down to pick something up from the floor by bending the back in an excessively round manner - mainly in the lumbar region - keeping the legs straight and strongly pulling the head back and down into the shoulders by shortening the muscles at the back of the neck. These movements are a gross misuse of the body and yet they are considered by many physical training “experts” as highly desirable things to do. Such movements have been encouraged in many physical training programs, because it is considered that they will bring flexibility to the stiff person and maintain flexibility in the person who already has it. This way of bending becomes a very strong habit that persists throughout a whole lifetime.

Consider, however, what is actually happening during this grotesque movement. The person is attempting to bend the knees backwards - something they are not designed for - and bend the lumbar spine to an extent that is outside the safe range of movement that the intervertebral discs can allow without being damaged. The hip joints - which should always be used when bending in conjunction with the knees moving forwards - are hardly bent at all. This is one reason - among many ways of misusing the body - why damage to the two lowest discs in the spine is one of the most common ailments in the world.

Another negative result of bending the back to an excessive degree is that all the vital organs in the torso are harmfully compressed and this can lead to malfunctioning, which leads to dis-ease and ill-health.

There exists, however, a group of human beings who do not misuse themselves when bending down into a deep squat and straightening up again to standing - babies! These lovable creatures perform these movements naturally and gracefully by allowing their knees to go forwards and hips to go backwards, as well as maintaining the integrity of the head-neck-back relationship by allowing everything above the hip joints to remain virtually undisturbed. Even if the baby's head rotates backwards at the atlanto-occipital joint, say to look at something above eye-level, this is done in an easy, natural and co-ordinated manner that causes no harm.

Considering in particular the movement from squatting to standing, let's look at the evolutionary significance of the first time the baby performed this movement. From the moment he was born, he was driven by evolutionary compulsion to fulfil an inward need that he had recognised: a need that brought out his creativity, which in turn would fulfil that need. Such a need was satisfied when he used his creative powers to learn how to turn over from lying on his back to lying on his front. The next need he felt was to get on to hands and knees and subsequently to crawl around: both being acts of tremendous creativity. Next came the need to get up

from this situation and stand on two feet. This wonderful act was performed by taking his knees forward and up off the floor so that he was now supporting the body on his hands and feet, which were now quite close to his hands. He then performed the amazing act of taking his hands off the floor, straightening his legs and bringing the torso back and up until he arrived at the upright situation of standing on two feet. The significance of achieving this feat could not be overstated. In that one magical movement he changed from a quadruped to a biped; another act of tremendous creativity.

Bearing in mind that the baby had to learn how to remain upright, he had performed a movement that was now the basis of every other movement he would make in the rest of his life. He would now repeatedly fall down when he lost his balance by letting his knees go forward and hips go back until his bum plopped gently on to the floor. Despite appearances babies are very good at allowing themselves to fall and they very rarely hurt themselves. When the baby thinks he can maintain the upright situation, he then attempts to walk: I'll come back to this later.

The reason that I use a chair as one of a number of teaching aids in my lessons is because most adults are so badly misused they can no longer go into a deep squat easily and come back up to standing, as natural-living humans do. The chair was invented because of this inability, caused by misusing the body. It is probably the most atrocious invention in history. It is not all bad, however, because when a person wishes to stop misusing themselves and seeks the help of a teacher of constructive awareness in order to re-learn how to stand up and sit down in the co-ordinated manner of the baby, he only requires to go about halfway up in rising from the chair and halfway down when descending to it. This co-ordinated way of performing, in particular, the movement from sitting to standing stirs the kinesthetic or proprioceptive memory of performing that first fundamental magnificent feat of coming up from a quadruped to a biped. Standing up from a chair, or sitting down into one in a lesson has nothing to do with standing and sitting, as done habitually and

harmfully by most people. It is simply about re-learning how to move consciously and co-ordinatedly in a mechanically appropriate manner in harmony with the way the body is designed to move. The chair is almost incidental and is merely there to provide a stopping point, a halfway house, for the person who cannot squat all the way down.

Constructive conscious control teaches us how to react reasonably and co-ordinatedly to the countless stimuli of life coming at us relentlessly in daily activities. Our reactions to these stimuli are habitually too fast and ill-considered, mentally, physically and emotionally. Considering physical movement, during a lesson the teacher gives the pupil a stimulus by asking her to sit down, but before doing so to stop and consider that the appropriate way to do this is to let the knees bend forwards, the hips go backwards and the torso to incline forwards in space. The pupil is then asked to give attention to the act of moving downwards in space, asked to ignore the chair while remaining in the moment and consciously bending as described above until the bum arrives on the chair. As I said earlier, the chair is incidental and is merely there to provide a stopping point. Nonetheless, because of our habitual way of reacting too quickly to stimuli and because we are inveterate end-gainers, the chair is always there inviting the unthinking body to collapse into it: always there inviting him to forget to stop and consider the most mechanically appropriate way to sit on it. The chair is, therefore, what I call the eternal stimulus.

Considering the act of rising from the chair, the pupil starts from a point that is about halfway along the path of that amazing movement the baby made in moving from all-fours to become a biped. The teacher asks the pupil to stand up, but before doing so, to stop and consider the most mechanically appropriate way to do so with minimum effort. This is done by ensuring that the feet are flat on the floor and placed under the knees or a little behind them, depending on what the pupil can manage. If the feet are placed too far forward, the pupil will be unable to stand up. The teacher

guides the pupil through the co-ordinated process of allowing the torso to incline forward from the hip-joints, while allowing the back to be as close to its optimal length as possible, until a point is reached where the legs must come into play to perform the act of coming up to standing. Thus, at least half of that crucial evolutionary act of moving from all-fours to standing on two feet has been performed in the way the body is designed to do it: that is, by articulating at the hips knees and ankle joints and not bending and shortening the torso.

These two movements of sitting and standing with conscious, co-ordinated use of the body are enough in themselves to re-educate the whole neuromuscular system, provided they are repeated often enough. The importance of repeating them under the guidance of the teacher's hands could not be overstated. These are fundamental movements that allow the pupil to get in touch with his kinesthetic sense and to gradually become familiar with it: so familiar with it that eventually he will not need the help of the teacher. A word of warning! Repeating these movements does not mean doing so in the rapid-fire, over-vigorous, mindless way in which most people perform mechanically inappropriate gymnastic exercises, physical jerks etc. They must be done slowly and consciously with the help of a competent teacher.

It must also be emphasized that these co-ordinated movements are not only mechanically appropriate ways of moving - although that would be beneficial anyway - they must be preceded by certain thoughts or directions to the body before going into them. Foremost of these thoughts is the refusal to react too quickly to the wish to stand up or sit down by inhibiting the strong tendency to perform the act in the old habitual, misused way. The teacher then tells the pupil how to think certain directions that will maintain the integrity of the head-neck-back relationship - not only during these basic movements - but also eventually in any and every act of daily life. These movements are simply used at the beginning to introduce the pupil to "constructive conscious control" which is the title of one of Alexander's books.

Constructive Conscious Control - is not an “ism”. It is simply a conscious, co-ordinated way of being and moving and covers the whole gamut of human movement from the “simple” act of moving a finger to the most complex combination of movements, whatever they may be. It is true mindfulness. Psycho-emotional benefits also occur in using conscious control, but I am not covering them in this essay.

Let's return to that profoundly significant moment when the baby arrived at the upright situation and became a biped. Although in attempting to perfect this ability to stay upright the baby fell down many times, he was now experiencing being a biped more often than a quadruped. In the upright situation he had a great difficulty to overcome that he had not had as a quadruped: and that was to learn how to balance the head on top of the spine. In relation to the rest of the body, the baby's head is proportionally much larger than the adult's. On reaching the upright situation, his head will naturally and persistently fall forwards, but will be prevented from doing so by the muscles at the back of the neck. This drop-catch process at the head-neck joint causes a ripple of postural adjustment all the way down the back and through the hip, knee and ankle joints. This flowing adjustment throughout the body is usually lost, however, as the baby becomes a child and starts to lose his good use of himself by copying badly misused parents and other adults with similar, faulty co-ordination. The word “postural” is here used to mean a constant, dynamic and natural process of adjustment, starting at the head-neck joint. It does not mean some contrived and fixed position as used, for example, by fashion-models walking around balancing books on their heads. In a consciously co-ordinated body that has appropriate, balanced muscle-tension throughout, this ripple of postural adjustment will always be there, even when standing “still”.

Once the baby is able to remain standing on two feet, he then sets out on the great adventure of maintaining the upright situation as he learns to walk. I will come back to this later. In the meantime, there is another situation that the teacher demonstrates

to the pupil, which is that of stopping in mid-ascent as he rises from the chair, but does not go all the way to the erect situation. The pupil has now stopped with his knees bent forward, hips back and torso inclined forward: stopped at a point along the way described earlier of the baby rising for the first time from all fours to balancing on two feet. The teacher then asks the pupil to think certain directions mentioned earlier that will maintain the integrity of the head-neck-back relationship. With his hands the teacher makes subtle adjustments for the pupil that may be necessary to achieve this co-ordinated relationship. While the pupil remains in this balanced baby-bend, the brain gets time to assimilate the information coming to it from the muscles and this stirs the kinesthetic memory of moving and pausing in this co-ordinated way as a child. The re-education of the whole neuromuscular system begins not only in this situation, but also in the acts of moving in and out of the chair described earlier. Repetition of these procedures is necessary for the improvement and refinement of the functioning of the neuro-muscular system. It is worth noting here that while the pupil is in this “stationary” baby-bend, the big extensor muscles in the back, bum and legs are working efficiently just to maintain this situation and, as I wrote above, information of this co-ordinated “position” is being sent to the brain, which - although a bit confused - begins to deal with it. The brain’s kinesthetic memory is stirred even more when this “stationary” situation changes to a mobile one when the pupil decides to either come up all the way to standing, or bend deeper until the bum reaches the chair and the pupil is seated.

In conclusion, the above procedures - right from the beginning – are of the utmost importance in this wonderful, re-educative process of constructive conscious control of the self because they deal with that fundamental movement of changing from a quadruped to a biped; that movement of coming up from all-fours to standing on two feet, which is the basis of all subsequent movements made as a biped throughout a whole lifetime. The reverse of this consciously co-ordinated movement to

arrive at being seated in a chair, or to stop at some point on the journey, or, if you can, squat all the way down, is what I call, “Baby-bending”.

Stepping Out

The above explanation of baby-bending would not be complete without going further into the next great need that the baby felt, which was to learn to walk: truly a step into the unknown.

There he was - having arrived at the upright situation and now balanced precariously on two feet - which were quite far apart because he also needed to maintain his balance laterally. While working to keep his head balanced on top of his spine, such process demanding great thought and attention, he had to be brave and move one foot forward. He may have only managed one step before falling down on to his bum, but that was enough to show that he could do it. That evolutionary compulsion that drives every human being urged him to repeat the whole process of rising from all-fours to two feet and taking another step and another and another and another.....As he repeats the process of taking one step after another he learns to bring the feet closer together laterally as he calls on his ancient memory of balance via the vestibular apparatus in the ears and receptors in the muscles all over the body.

This means that during this period of development, the baby’s brain is probably dealing with more kinesthetic information from the rest of the body than he will ever handle in the rest of his life. If he is left alone to pursue this great adventure of exploring these inborn capabilities he will make rapid progress. In general, however, there are two great obstacles that block the baby’s smooth process of refining his movements. These two obstacles are called parents.

The parents are usually there displaying nail-biting anxiety and enthusiastic anticipation at that magical moment when the baby takes those first few hesitant steps. The baby’s apparent -

not actual - clumsiness is mistaken by the parents to indicate that the little one needs help. Most parents cannot curb their enthusiasm and if they feel the toddler is not progressing quickly enough, they will take him by the hands or arms and half-drag him across the floor, with the result that the baby flaps his legs back and forward in a futile attempt to contact the floor with his feet. This is a gross interference by a misused adult on the little one's finely tuned neuromuscular and kinesthetic systems.

No matter how well-intentioned the parents may be - after all, we all love to think how special our own child is and wish fervently for him to progress as quickly as possible - they cannot help but impart their end-gaining misuse to the co-ordinated organism of the toddler. The baby is so sensitive that he picks up the clumsy habits of movement that the parent has developed during his or her lifetime.

The vicissitudes of life have brought the parent to a state of misuse that manifests as habitual, harmful, malco-ordinated muscle-tension patterns throughout the body. Parents are not to be blamed for this misuse: they simply do not know they have it. This habitual misuse is passed on to the finely tuned organism of the baby and is the start of the toddler learning to misuse himself by copying the parents. While the baby is going through this whole evolutionary process from lying on his back to turning over on to his front, to coming up on to all-fours, to coming up on to two feet, to finally walking, parents would do well to leave him entirely alone to find his own way.

The baby knows what to do, and apart from making sure that he stays clear of dangerous objects and hard, sharp-edged furniture, the parents should leave him to his own devices. As I said, despite appearances, the baby is not clumsy, but is going through a highly skilled process of calling on his ancient memory - which we curiously call instinct. Even plopping down on to his bum without hurting himself is a skilled act springing from this ancient memory. He is working with the kinesthetic sense and needs no help from a misused adult to do so. The apparent ease with which

he walks as an adult is achieved through these “clumsy” efforts he made during the whole learning process. The process itself cannot, therefore, be a clumsy one.

Another situation where the child’s co-ordinated use of himself is badly interfered with occurs when he can walk reasonably well at around two or three years old, and is walking hand in hand with a parent who is in a hurry and is unwittingly pulling his body harmfully to the side via the arm. This can cause a lateral twist in the little one’s spine as well as an imbalance in the use of the muscles of the back on each side of the spine. I am not saying the parent should not hold the child’s hand - the child may even want to do so - but the parent must be careful not to upset the toddler’s good use. Sadly, however, many parents have no idea that they are interfering with the child’s co-ordination, and causing harmful, imbalanced muscle-tension patterns that will last for a whole lifetime. These negative patterns can also cause psycho-emotional problems that endure for a lifetime.

PART 13

RELATIVE VALUES

There is a section in F.M Alexander's book, 'THE USE OF THE SELF', in Chapter 5 entitled, 'Diagnosis and Medical Training' in which he draws comparisons between attempts at making positive psycho-physical changes **directly**, and attempts at doing so **indirectly**. He compares trying to change **directly**, without using his way of inhibition and direction, to changing **indirectly** by the conscious use of inhibition and direction. He calls this comparison, 'Relative Values'.

In the individual's quest to achieve fundamental, abiding change in the organism, Alexander's great discovery of the power of the **indirect** method of change - **the power of how** - using conscious inhibition and direction, has proved most effective in creating striking benefits in the health and quality of life of those people dedicated to his theory and practice.

The following is my understanding of what he means:

The six paragraphs quoted below can be found in the book. The reader may wish to read the whole chapter and book to get them into proper context. I have numbered the paragraphs for easy reference.

Paragraph One

"I have been asked whether the technique I advocate is applicable to cases of people who are anxious, not so much to remedy a so-called physical defect, but to overcome or change what they think of as 'mental' or 'nervous' troubles, including bad habits of all kinds, as they realise that as long as they cannot control these they are not getting the best out of themselves. (By these I mean such habits as absent-mindedness, forgetfulness, lack of awareness

and observation, undue excitability, twitching, plucking at fingers, inability to sit still, nail-biting, over-sensitiveness, uncontrollable temper, inattention etc.). My answer is that the fact that these people are unable to make a change within themselves, which they have reasoned out would be a desirable change, shows that their reaction to the stimulus to gain this end is an unsatisfactory reaction, and that this brings their case into line with the golfer who cannot keep his eyes on the ball when he wishes to, and of the stutterer who cannot speak as he desires.”

Paragraph Two

“I will say at once that of course no one could give a general definition of a satisfactory reaction which would meet the particular circumstances of every case, but we shall surely all agree that in cases where people wish to improve themselves, or to make changes which they consider will be for their good, or to overcome defects and bad habits, their reaction may be considered satisfactory when they succeed in doing what they have reasoned out is the right thing for them to do.”

Paragraph Three

“This should make it clear that we are not here concerned with fixed standards of value as to what constitutes right or wrong in any particular case. Such standards are relative and more or less individual, for a man's beliefs and acts are largely the outcome of his upbringing and circumstances, and therefore should not be judged by any fixed standard of right and wrong. Acts which are held to be right by one race and at one period are often condemned by other people or at other periods. Circumstances and conditions play a part in the question, and each case has to be judged on its own merits.”

Paragraph Four

“But where the use of the self is concerned, there is a standard which can generally be accepted, for it can be demonstrated that a certain manner of use of the mechanisms is found in association with a certain satisfactory standard of functioning and with conditions of health and general well-being. We are surely justified in considering a manner of use that is associated with such desirable conditions to be 'natural' or 'right' under all circumstances. But this is not a fixed standard of 'right', in the accepted meaning of the word, for this manner of use, being based upon a primary control of the mechanisms of the organism is the one that can be applied and adapted to meet all circumstances, and its 'rightness' may therefore be said to be relative to those circumstances. Further, the experiences involved in acquiring a knowledge of such 'right' and 'natural' use of the self gives a person a criterion of judgement to go by, and also an understanding of relative values, for in this process, he is constantly brought up against situations in which, after receiving a stimulus, he has to decide what manner of use is the best to employ in reacting to it and also to judge which of the directions for this manner of use is primary, which is secondary, and so on. The standard of relative values that he thus acquires is one that will stand him in good stead in reacting to the stimuli of modern life, in which conditions change so constantly that they cannot be adequately met by any external standard or fixed code as to what is right or wrong. Seeing that the self is the instrument of all his activities it follows that a valid criterion relating to the use of the self will be a criterion that is valid in relation to all his activities, both so-called 'mental' and 'physical'.”

Paragraph Five

“It is the lack of a valid criterion as to what constitutes right use in the sense of 'right for the purpose' that renders people unable to

carry out their resolutions and to make certain changes for the better in themselves and in their conduct and attitude towards others. Like the golfer and the stutterer, they want to make a change, but bring into play for the purpose the only use of themselves they know - that use, with its associated habits, which we have called throughout this book the 'habitual' use of the self, and the fact that, when using themselves in this habitual way they do not succeed in doing what they have reasoned out is the right thing to do, indicates that their habitual use is misdirected and faulty for the purpose. As long as they have no other criterion to go by but that of the familiar feeling of their wrong habitual use, the use they employ will be wrong for the purpose and their reaction to the stimulus to make the desired change will be their instinctive reaction, and therefore directed along the old wrong channel."

Paragraph Six

"To meet this difficulty I would apply to their case the technique which I advocate for the building up of a conscious direction of use, for its employment demands that instinctive reaction be inhibited and superseded by reasoning processes. I have found that in this process of acquiring a conscious direction of use my pupils gradually develop a higher standard of sensory awareness or appreciation of what they are doing in the use of themselves, so that when it comes to carrying out a course of activity they have decided upon, they possess a criterion within themselves which will enable them to judge whether the use they are employing is right or not for the purpose. This will constitute a criterion of self-criticism where impressions conveyed through feeling and leading to further experience, are concerned."

(End of relevant paragraphs)

For clarity my words are written in ordinary type and Alexander's in bold italics and/or bold type. I will quote his words extensively throughout.

Comments on Paragraph One

The fact that Alexander says that people who wish to change mental or nervous habits by methods ***“which they have reasoned out”*** shows that he acknowledges that, to make a particular change, people can use their reason. There is also no doubt that specific changes can be made by an act of will, but too often the will is not strong enough. Why? The reason is that these so-called mental or nervous habits manifest as so-called physical muscle-tension patterns. Many people do not recognise these patterns and do not know how to deal with them.

The person who does manage to change a specific habit by an act of will has managed to change the muscle-tension pattern associated with that mental or nervous habit. The problem is, however, according to F.M., that this specific pattern will be replaced in the body by another, which is then used to prevent the recurrence of the specific mental or nervous habit. The person is justified in thinking that this is a ***“satisfactory reaction”***, because they have succeeded in doing what they set out to do, i.e. get rid of the specific mental or nervous habit.

When a person does not succeed in changing, by an act of will, the muscle-tension pattern associated with a specific mental or nervous habit then, F.M. says, ***“their reaction to the stimulus to gain this end is an unsatisfactory reaction.”***

Comments on Paragraph Two

It should be noted here that although ***“no one can give a general definition of a satisfactory reaction.”*** F.M. says that ***“their reaction may be considered satisfactory when they succeed in doing what they have reasoned out is the right thing for them to do.”***

Here he is acknowledging that the person’s method of changing some habit cannot be questioned or criticised. The

person has succeeded in doing what they set out to do. That's that! The person is justified in believing in the method and feeling satisfied with the result. F.M. is also acknowledging the person's reasoning powers, their ability to use their reason.

To illustrate the point, two different methods of giving up something which someone is addicted to can be compared. One person reduces, a little at a time, their intake of the substance to which they are addicted. The second person simply stops their intake abruptly. Both of them reasoned out what to do and both were successful. There are no **“fixed standards of value”** which is what F.M. discusses in the next paragraph.

Comments on Paragraph Three

In this paragraph F.M. emphasises that when a person has reasoned out what to do in particular circumstances and has succeeded in doing it, then the method adopted **“*should not be judged by any fixed standard of right or wrong. Such standards are relative and more or less individual, and each case has to be judged on its own merits.*”**

He then goes on to say, in paragraph four, **“*But where the use of the self is concerned, there is a standard that can generally be accepted. But this is not a fixed standard...*”**. Let's consider this whole paragraph.

Comments on Paragraph Four

A lengthy explanation involving many aspects of the process of constructive conscious control is necessary.

The first part of this paragraph says, **“*But where the use of the self is concerned, there is a standard which can generally be accepted.*”** There are two important points to be considered here (1) **“*the use of the self*”**, (2) **“*there is a standard which can generally be accepted.*”**

Let us first consider **“*the use of the self*”**. F.M. goes on to

say, **“it can be demonstrated that a certain manner of use of the mechanisms is found in association with a certain satisfactory standard of functioning.”** In short this quote says that use (of the self) affects functioning (of the self). What does this mean? To remind ourselves we can go back to the chapter **“USE AND FUNCTIONING IN RELATION TO REACTION”**, where he defines the phrase **“use and functioning”** and says, **“I wish to make it plain that whenever I use the phrase ‘use and functioning’ in relation to the human organisms, I do not indicate by it mechanical activity as such, but include in the phrase all manifestations of human activity involved in what we designate as conception or understanding, withholding or giving consent, thinking, reasoning, directing etc.. For the manifestation of such activities cannot be dissociated from the use of the mechanisms and the associated functioning of the organism.”**

It is important to note, that in using the phrase **“use and functioning”**, F.M. does not mean only the mechanical activity of the body, such as moving an arm or a leg or whatever. Constructive conscious control is about the use of the SELF, not the use of the body alone. Constructive awareness is not about bodywork. It is about *stimulus - reaction*. It teaches one primarily how to deal with a stimulus that always puts one wrong. Elsewhere F.M. uses the phrase, **“psycho-mechanics,”** which covers the mental activities of forming conceptions, of understanding, withholding or giving consent, reasoning, directing etc.. The “use of the self” then, is not only so-called physical activity; it is psycho-physical activity.

Going back to this part of this paragraph 4, where he says **“it can be demonstrated that a certain use of the mechanisms is found etc”** note that F.M. uses the term **“use of the mechanisms”** instead of **“use of the self”** and it is here repeated that **“mechanisms”** means “mental” as well as “physical” activity.

Another point. **Where F.M. says "a certain manner of use of the mechanisms is found in association with a certain**

satisfactory standard of functioning...” what he means by a **“certain manner of use”** is good use (to put it simply) or the co-ordinated, harmonious use of the psycho-physical mechanisms, because he then says this **“certain manner of use”** is found in association with **“a certain satisfactory standard of functioning.”** In short, satisfactory functioning is achieved through the co-ordinated use of the self.

The next phrase, **“there is a standard which can generally be accepted”** we will consider later, together with the phrase, **“But this is not a fixed standard of right...”**

Before this, we can consider the phrase, **“We are surely justified in considering a manner of use that is associated with such desirable conditions to be natural and right under all circumstances.”** This is F.M.'s way of saying that the co-ordinated use of the psycho-physical mechanisms, as advocated by him, are definitely **“‘natural’ and ‘right’ under all circumstances’**: hence the reason for saying, **“there is a standard which can generally be accepted.”**

He then says, **“But this is not a fixed standard of ‘right’ for this manner of use, being based upon a primary control of the mechanisms of the organism is one that can be applied and adapted to meet all circumstances, and its ‘rightness’ may therefore be said to be relative to these circumstances.”**

Let us consider the phrase, **“But this is not a fixed standard of “right”, together with “for (because) this manner of use, being based upon a primary control of the mechanisms....”**

The primary control of the mechanisms is, as F.M. says elsewhere, **“a certain relation of the head to the neck and the head and the neck to the torso”**, which I will here call the integrity of the head-neck-back relationship. This **“manner of use”** then, is *based* upon this integrity, which should be attended to in all circumstances: but the *general* "manner of use" is not a **“fixed standard of ‘right’...”**, and as I said before I will attempt

to explain this later, in conjunction with **“this manner of use... can be applied and adapted to meet all circumstances...”**.

But first, F.M. says, **“Further, the experiences involved in acquiring a knowledge of such ‘right’ and ‘natural’ use of the self gives a person a criterion of judgement to go by....”**. He is referring here to the teaching situation (a lesson), because, apart from doing what he did single-handedly there is no other way for a person to acquire this knowledge. **“The experiences involved in acquiring a knowledge...”** refers, therefore, to an individual taking lessons in constructive conscious control to acquire **“a criterion of judgement to go by”**, and also an understanding of relative values, **“for (because) in this process (the lesson) he is constantly brought up against situations in which, after receiving a stimulus, he has to decide what manner of use is the best to employ in reacting to it.”**

Let us consider these points. In the lesson, the teacher attempts to educate the pupil in how to apply constructive conscious control in the use of the self, and in my experience of teaching, I find it best to start with the "simple" act of sitting down in a chair because it is such a big stimulus to the pupil to react habitually and to sit down as they know "sitting down". As a co-ordinated **“manner of use”** is *based* upon the integrity of the head-neck-back relationship - **“the primary control”** - the pupil is asked to inhibit her reaction to the wish to sit down, to STOP and then think of not stiffening the neck, think the head forward and up and think the back to lengthen and widen: and while maintaining these directions as the first priority, to sit down in the chair. It goes without saying that, of course, I do not ask my pupils to think of all this in their first experience of a lesson. This is far too much, but in time, over a number of lessons, the pupils learn to expand their attention enough to be able to think in this way.

This seems straightforward when applied to the activity of sitting down, but strange things can occur when the pupil is confronted with another situation **“in which, after receiving a**

stimulus, he has to decide what manner of use is the best to employ in reacting to it.” I will give two examples from my teaching experience to illustrate this:

(1) After some lessons, I asked a male pupil how he would apply the principles he had learned in sitting down to the activity of picking up a stool, which I had placed in front of him. I noticed that he stopped, thought through the neck-head-back directions and then proceeded to bend his back in a huge curve, kept his legs straight and picked up the stool. Despite being shown how to bend his knees and hips co-ordinatedly in sitting down, he was unable to make the link and employ these movements in another situation. (I should point out that I do not use only the activity of sitting down for 20 lessons or so. I confront my pupils with new situations all the time.)

(2) A woman, an experienced pupil who had had lessons with another teacher, came to me for the first time. I could see that she was tired, so I worked with her quietly in the chair and then on the table. At the end of the lesson, she took out her cheque book, put it on the table and proceeded to bend like the man in the first example. I stopped her politely and asked if I could show her how to bend co-ordinatedly to write the cheque. She agreed and after a few minutes she was in a beautiful “baby-bend”, where she had bent her knees and hips in a co-ordinated manner. I asked her to keep attending to the integrity of her head-neck-back relationship and to go ahead and write the cheque. To her astonishment, she found that she could not even start writing. (Maybe it was paying for the lesson that stopped her!) She too could not make the link and apply the principles to another situation. She actually told me that she thought that constructive awareness need only be applied to sitting down and standing up in the ‘proper’ way!

To return to the man in the first illustration, I explained that

his thinking was fine, but to pick up the stool he should bend his knees and hips as he did when sitting down in the chair. He understood the point, went through the directions again, bent his knees and hips, but pulled his head back and bent his back, although not as much as the first time. I then asked him what he thought of during the movement and he said, “My knees”. The point of this last sentence will be explained later.

We are still considering this point where F.M. says, “**he** (the pupil) **has to decide what manner of use is the best to employ**”. What this means is that the teacher invites the pupil to consider what the teacher is advocating as a co-ordinated “**manner of use.**” The pupil then “**has to decide what manner of use is the best to employ.**” If the pupil agrees that the co-ordinated “**manner of use**” proposed by the teacher “**is the best to employ**” then the pupil has made a choice. In other words, this means that the pupil chooses not to employ his old, habitual “**manner of use**”, because he now knows that it is not based on the “**primary control**” and could not, therefore, be “**‘natural’ and ‘right’ under all circumstances.**”

This last point is obviously linked to the next one where F.M. says the pupil must “**also judge which of the directions for this manner of use is primary, which secondary, and so on**”. As this “**manner of use**” is based on the “**primary control**”, the primary directions are, “**not to stiffen the neck**”, - “**head to go forward and up**” - “**back to lengthen and widen**”. Secondary directions (and following directions, third, fourth, fifth etc.) are those such as “**think the knees forward**” - “**think the hips back**” and any other directions to be given in sequence, depending on the activity one is doing. F.M says elsewhere that the directions should be given in their proper sequence in a combined activity, “**all together, one after the other**”, and we can now return to the example of the man who gave his knees the priority during his second attempt to pick up the stool. In doing this, he did not think of the primary directions - “**not to stiffen the neck**” - “**head to go forward and up**” -

“back to lengthen and to widen”, but was preoccupied with his knees. This means that he had not yet understood that a coordinated **“manner of use, being based upon a primary control of the mechanisms of the organism is one that can be applied and adapted to meet all circumstances”**.

Next we can consider another point about the phrase (the pupil must) **“also judge which of the directions for the manner of use is primary, which secondary and so on”**. Here we are still in the situation of a lesson and the teacher has again invited the pupil to consider what the teacher is advocating as the correct sequence of directions. If the pupil understands why the directions are to be thought of in the correct sequence then *he has decided or agreed with the teacher as to which direction is primary, which secondary and so on*. In other words, having given consent to the learning of constructive conscious control the pupil takes on the self-discipline of giving the directions in their correct sequence. He cannot, therefore, choose a random sequence of directions like the male pupil in the first example who made his direction to his knees the primary one and forgot about the integrity of his head-neck-back relationship.

The fact that the pupil has agreed with and accepted what the teacher advocates as **“the best manner of use to employ”** and also has decided with the teacher **“which of the directions for this manner of use is primary, which secondary and so on”**, is confirmed in F.M.'s account of his work with a stutterer where he says on page 48 of his book, **“I would repeatedly urge him, whenever I gave him a sound or word to pronounce, always to inhibit his old habitual response to my request by refusing to pronounce the sound or word until he had taken time to think out and employ the new directions for the use which he had decided upon as best for his purpose. He would agree to do this, but as soon as I asked him to pronounce some sound or word, he would fail to inhibit his response to the stimulus of my voice, and forgetting all about the new directions he**

had been asked to employ, he would immediately try to repeat the sound....”. Note that when F.M. says, **“which he (the stutterer) had decided upon”**, he does not mean that the stutterer decided on his **“manner of use”** by himself. It was put to him by F.M. for consideration and the stutterer then agreed or decided that it was **“best for his purpose”**. He not only decided that the **“manner of use”** advocated by F.M. was **“best for his purpose”**, but also agreed that the **“new directions”** were **“best for his purpose”**. This is confirmed where F.M. says, **“the new directions he had been asked (not told) to employ.”**

It is vitally important here to remember that in Chapter 1, **“EVOLUTION OF A TECHNIQUE”**, F.M. himself went through, alone, this very process, in attempting to change the manner of his reaction to the stimulus to recite, of having to decide what manner of use is the best to employ in reacting to it, and also to judge which of the directions for this manner of use is primary, which secondary and so on. It took him years of working on himself to discover that his main concern had always been to gain his end and recite: and only when he recognised instead that his conscious direction of his **“manner of use”** had to become his primary concern, even when reciting, did he further realise that **“this manner of use, being based upon a primary control of the mechanisms of the organism is one that can be applied and adapted to meet all circumstances.”** He also became able **“to judge which of the directions for this manner of use is primary, which secondary and so on.”**

F.M. then moves from the situation of a lesson into that of using the principles in the everyday acts of life, when he says, **“The standard of relative values that he thus acquires (in the lessons) is one that will stand him in good stead in reacting to the stimuli of modern life in which conditions change so constantly that they cannot be met adequately by any external standard or fixed code as to what is right or wrong. Seeing that the self is the instrument of all his activities, it follows that a valid criterion relating to the use of the self will be a**

criterion that is valid in relation to all his activities, both so-called ‘mental’ and ‘physical’.” In the phrase, **“conditions change so constantly that they cannot be adequately met by any external standard or fixed code”**, F.M. is showing the value of having an internal, individualised standard, **“a valid criterion relating to the use of the self”**. This internal, individualised standard **“will stand him in good stead in reacting to the stimuli of modern life.”** It is the self-discipline involved in the process of learning constructive conscious control, which paradoxically leads to greater freedom, not only *of* thought and action, but freedom *in* thought and action, **“both so-called ‘mental’ and ‘physical’.**”

Let us now consider the phrase, **“The standard of relative values that he thus acquires.”** Firstly, a reminder that in this paragraph the context is within the **“use of the self,”** because it begins with, **“But where the use of the self is concerned there is a standard which can generally be accepted.”** F.M. is not now talking about the social and cultural differences that exist between nations, which he mentioned in paragraph 3. So, in the context of the **“use of the self”** we can consider the two earlier examples of each of two people using different methods of giving up something to which they are addicted. As F.M. says, **“their reaction may be considered satisfactory when they succeed in doing what they have reasoned out is the right thing for them to do.”** The question is, “In relation to the use of the self what have they achieved?” They have, by exercising their will-power, stopped their addiction, but in the process have merely changed one *specific* muscle-tension pattern for another. Is this ultimately for the greater good of the organism as a whole? What is the value of this? Will they be able to use their will power to change some other *specific* muscle-tension pattern? Have they now acquired **“a standard of relative values”** and a **“manner of use”** that can be applied and adapted to meet all circumstances?

We can now take these two examples of a person succeeding **“in doing what they have reasoned out is the right**

thing for them to do”, thus achieving a specific **“satisfactory reaction”** and compare them to Alexander’s process of constructive conscious control. The question is, “What are the relative values of the two approaches?” One is where the person, by an act of will, has succeeded in stopping their addiction, a *specific, direct* change, but has made no fundamental change in the *general* use of the self. The other is where the person attempts to adopt - indirectly - the principles of constructive conscious control to achieve a **“manner of use”** which is **‘natural’ and ‘right’ under all circumstances**”, because **“it can be demonstrated that a certain manner of use of the mechanisms is found in association with a certain satisfactory standard of functioning and with conditions of health and well-being.”** To repeat the question, “What is the value of this?” A further question is, “Does the person who succeeds in stopping their addiction by a direct act of will achieve **“a certain manner of use (which) is found in association with a certain standard of functioning and with conditions of health and well-being”**?”

We will now return to consider the phrase, **“this manner of use, being based upon a primary control of the mechanisms of the organism, is one that can be applied and adapted to meet all circumstances.”** and in particular we will consider, **“can be applied and adapted.”**

If one is sitting at the computer, a certain use is made of various parts of the self. One is sitting, thinking deeply, tapping keys, jotting notes, sucking glucose sweets to keep the brain alive etc., *but all the time giving conscious directions, based upon the primary control to maintain good use of the self.*

One then becomes fed-up and decides to do something vigorous like digging the garden. A different use of various parts of the self from those used at the computer is then adopted. One uses the legs in walking, bending, pushing the spade, whereas the legs were not used in sitting at the computer. In employing the arms to use the spade one moves them differently from tapping keys and jotting notes, *but all the time giving conscious directions,*

based upon the primary control, to maintain good use of the self. In these two examples the conscious use of the self is **“applied and adapted to meet all circumstances.”**

This means there is a **“‘natural’ and ‘right’ manner of use based upon a primary control of the mechanisms of the organism that can be applied and adapted to meet all circumstances.”** And F.M. emphasises this in paragraph five by stating what happens with wrong, habitual use, where he says, **“As long as they have no other criterion to go by but that of the familiar feeling of their wrong habitual use, the use they employ will be wrong for the purpose and their reaction to the stimulus to make the desired change will be their instinctive (habitual) reaction, and therefore directed along the old wrong channel.”** He is saying there is a **“wrong manner of use”** based on subconscious, habitual behaviour and a **“right manner of use”** based upon conscious, reasoned behaviour.

F.M. confirms this in paragraph five and links it to sensory awareness, where he says, **“I have found that in this process of acquiring a conscious direction of use my pupils gradually develop a higher standard of sensory awareness of what they are doing in the use of themselves so that when it comes to carrying out a course of activity they have decided upon (e.g. either working at the computer or digging the garden), they possess a criterion within themselves which will enable them to judge whether the use they are employing is right for the purpose.”**

He goes on to say, **“This will constitute a criterion of self-criticism where impressions conveyed through feeling and leading to further experience are concerned.”**

This **“criterion of self-criticism”** means asking oneself, **“What am I actually doing with myself during this activity?”**

“Am I bending my back habitually too much, and not articulating co-ordinatedly at the hip, knee and ankle joints: am I holding my breath unnecessarily etc. as I pick up shovelfuls of

earth in the garden?"

Or, "Am I slouching deeper and deeper at the computer, causing great pressure on the vital organs of the torso, as well as inadequate breathing, and become so mesmerised that I've been forcing myself to work too long?"

Another point to consider in paragraph six is where F.M. says, **"I have found that in this process of acquiring a conscious direction of use (in the lessons) my pupils gradually develop a higher standard of sensory awareness."** Note that he refers to **"my pupils acquiring a conscious direction of use"** and this confirms that he is referring to the situation of a lesson, because there is no other way apart from what he did by himself of **"acquiring a conscious direction of use"**. This also confirms my explanation of what F.M. says in paragraph four, where reference is made to the situation of a lesson, beginning with the phrase, **"Further, the experiences involved in acquiring a knowledge (the lessons) of such 'right' and 'natural' use of the self"**, going on to **"for in this process (the lessons) he is constantly brought up against situations in which, after receiving a stimulus, ("Sit down, please" or, "Pick up the stool, please" or, "Write the cheque, please") he has to decide what manner of use is the best to employ in reacting to it, and also to judge which of the directions for this use is primary, which secondary and so on."**

If we go back to the beginning of paragraph six, we read that F.M. gives inhibition the first place of importance where he says, **"To meet this difficulty, I would apply in their case the technique which I advocate for the building up of a conscious direction of use, for its employment demands that instinctive (habitual) reaction be inhibited and superseded by reasoning processes."** Note again the emphasis on *stimulus - reaction*, the very core of his work. Alexander then goes on to emphasise in paragraph six the primary importance of inhibition

Lastly, the phrase, **"they possess a criterion *within***

themselves” indicates **CONSTRUCTIVE CONSCIOUS CONTROL OF THE INDIVIDUAL, *BY THE INDIVIDUAL***, the self-discipline which leads to greater and greater **FREEDOM** in everything we think, feel, and do.

PART 14**RANDOM THOUGHTS RELATING TO THE
SUBJECT MATTER OF THIS BOOK**

(accumulated over 37 years of learning and teaching)

The average modern person uses his mind and body in a way that is far below his best potential. He does this through ignorance of their co-ordinated use and functioning. He also lacks proper instruction on how to achieve this optimal use and functioning. Good use of the body in the “trivial” everyday activities of life - such as walking, standing, sitting, running, bending, etc., is an art to be learned. He must stop doing them habitually, must stop taking them for granted, bring his conscious attention to bear on them, and learn to improve them to create a new way of being.

.....

If the spine is habitually shortened below its optimal length - as it is in most people - the torso will sag and cause undue pressure on its vital organs, thus denying them their legitimate functioning, and causing malco-ordination, disharmony and ill-health in the whole body.

.....

As constructive conscious control of the body makes it more refined in movement and function, it will be easier for individual consciousness to evolve to a higher level.

.....

In their search for truth, the mystic and the metaphysician use different approaches. They would, however, derive great benefit from learning good use of the body as a mechanism in their everyday interaction with the environment. In contrast to the specialized muscle-bulging, over-strenuous exercises of the West, they can learn to bring the muscles no farther than the point of

easy, but dynamic action and allow the body to perform its varied movements gracefully and with minimum effort for each task.

.....

Conscious, co-ordinated, dynamic, graceful, poised and balanced use of the body is a prerequisite for spiritual growth, because it awakens the kundalini and eventually allows it to flow freely through the spine and the rest of the body. If a person is already a spiritual quester, the learning of constructive conscious control will greatly enhance spiritual progress.

.....

My way of learning has always been achieved through my ability to stand back and be the witness. I think that on many occasions, before I came across F.M Alexander's work, I was using a form of his classic inhibition, which is the gateway to fundamental change. As a young man I was always a rebel, but a quiet one: always knowing what I wanted. Now, in my seventies, the two pillars of my existence have been - and still are - the great truths of constructive awareness and mentalism.

.....

Habitual use of the mind-body complex, whether of the whole or a part, and whether good or bad, stems from the astounding conscious repetition of the same act until the self became so skilled, so efficient at performing the conscious act, it became able to delegate it to another part of the mind that we now call the subconscious.

.....

This relentless repetition of the conscious directions needed to maintain the integrity of the head-neck-back relationship, as well as the co-ordinated use of the self, is the discipline that brings joy and freedom into one's life.

.....

Constructive conscious control, calmness, confidence, courage, compassion, creativity and clarity are some of the characteristics that you must conscientiously and consistently cultivate if you really want to “see.”

.....

It is a false notion to regard consciousness as a property **of** the person, as if it belongs to each individual. The person **is** consciousness. In other words, I - as mind - am.

.....

The importance of constructive conscious control for the psycho-physical-emotional-spiritual betterment and uplifting of the human race could not be overstated.

.....

There is the potential in each human being to learn constructive conscious control, which could transform his life in the most positive way, yet it remains deep inside unexplored, untouched and undeveloped. A committed focussing of attention is all that is required, but few are willing to give it.

.....

Constructive conscious control is the way of inspired action and mindfulness that forms the bridges between, reasoned practicality, science and philosophy.

.....

He has come far when, as a result of unstinting dedication to refining his kinesthetic sense, he can **feel** accurately the reports from his neuromuscular system about the relationship of one part of his body to another.

.....

Only when he has liberated himself from his old, habitual, harmful use of the self can he find a new and truly mindful way of being. He does this through the process of constructive conscious control.

.....

To adopt constructive conscious control in the use of the self is to take the first step on the journey back home to mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual balance.

.....

It is his ignorance of the conscious, co-ordinated use of the self, as well as the unawareness of his spiritual selfhood that causes so much pain and suffering, and keeps him groping blindly in the darkness.

.....

If a man understands theoretically the efficacy of constructive conscious control, but will not take the trouble to discipline himself to obtain it as real, practical, experiential knowledge, then "life", or some other higher power will not do it for him. It is really the task of the individual to take responsibility for his own use of himself.

.....

Out of this failure to comprehend the power of constructive awareness to fundamentally change the individual comes the continuing and recurring ills of most of humanity.

.....

An individual's thoughts make his surroundings. His body, however is his most immediate environment, and it needs to be consciously balanced and co-ordinated to interact with maximum efficiency with his physical surroundings.

.....

Practising constructive awareness will not only improve the quality and accuracy of your interaction with the environment, but will also improve your mental and emotional states. Conscious repetition of the guiding thoughts necessary for improvement is a creative process that will allow you to take hold of your own inherent powers of thought and action. Repetition brings conviction. Belief in the power of your own thinking will bring remarkable changes. This assertion of the power of mental attitude becomes valid only if the attitude assumed is a true one. A half-baked approach that lacks faith will not bring the positive benefits of this conscious process. Long and dedicated experience turns faith into knowledge. We have no right to expect full knowledge for partial effort.

.....

He has come far when unstinting dedication to refining his use of himself - via the conscious cultivation of an ever improving kinesthetic sense - allows him to feel accurately the reports from his neuromuscular system about the relationship of one part to another in his interaction with the world.

.....

If he works determinedly, diligently and doggedly at improving his use of himself he will open new doors of consciousness, perception and understanding.

.....

In certain spiritual pursuits people attempt to reject identification with the body to the point of denying its existence. We are, however in the body and must recognise its needs, including the quality of how we use it in everyday activities. A balanced spiritual existence cannot be achieved if it does not include constructive conscious control in the use of the self.

.....

If he works with true mindfulness - constructive awareness - to meet the pressures of daily existence, he displays realistic knowledge of the body's use and functioning, and its practical connection with the world around it.

.....

In his quest to find real freedom he must abandon so-called security - both mental and physical. There is no security in the mechanisms of the body. It is built in a way that means it is constantly falling over, because the joints are rounded, but is prevented from doing so by the muscles. The joints are turning spheres, not static cubes. This perpetual fine adjustment, however, is found only in a body that is consciously co-ordinated by an alert and quickened mind. Allow yourself to go to the edge of the cliff, but don't worry, you won't fall over. This is true mindfulness.

.....

Few people wish to bother themselves with following such a way of dynamic regeneration that is to be found in constructive conscious control. They prefer the comfortable sloth of accepting the numerous psycho-physical deficiencies as normal states of the human being as he or she goes through a lifetime. They allow one thing after another to detain them from making the necessary mental effort needed to become a consciously controlled human being.

.....

A man, as a subconsciously controlled sense-bound human being trapped by the discomfort and pain of a misused body, is the very antithesis of a man as a consciously controlled co-ordinated being who is practising true mindfulness in a search for freedom of the spirit.

.....

Don't be a slave of your misused body. Don't be a prisoner of its negative, painful habits. Study how it works as a co-ordinated mechanism, then use your wonderful power of thinking to bring it back into a beautiful state of grace, poise and dynamic action.

.....

Misuse of the "psycho-physical" organism is a tragic self-deception.

.....

The apathetical inertia caused by misuse of the self can be devastating to his health, especially in old age.

.....

Many people fuss about with so many things that keep the mind occupied with so much trivia and sensationalism that they miss the fundamental and most immediate thing of all - constructive conscious control in the use of the self. To others it is more important to reach Nirvana, the Kingdom of Heaven - call it what you will - than it is to correct the habitual negative defects that exist in the modern misused individual.

.....

Modern humans do not usually know that they are misusing himself in their everyday doings. The removal of such ignorance is vital to health and happiness.

.....

Most of their ideas about how the body functions as a mechanism are limited by the illusions about themselves caused by faulty kinesthetic awareness and neuromuscular tension. This is misuse of the self.

.....

Sluggishness and incredulity are barriers to the learning of constructive conscious control in the use of the self.

.....

In the pursuit of a spiritual life there is plenty of room for the rational and practical life to be found in the learning of constructive conscious control in the use of the self.

.....

No education system can be a complete one if it does not teach the young constructive conscious control in the use of the self. It is a fundamental process that will enable them to master all other activities they may undertake in life, because they will have mastered themselves first. Such mastery will allow all their intellectual and practical capacities to achieve the most individual expression with the most economy of effort.

.....

Teach the children the great value and importance of constructive conscious control before befuddling them with the pseudo-importance of remembering the capital of any particular country.

.....

If it were part of a child's upbringing this education in constructive conscious control in the use of the self would carry the individual through a whole lifetime of better quality of living. Its potential benefits are immense.

.....

What is the point of educating young people's intellects, when we allow their use of themselves to deteriorate to the point where they are living only half a life in adulthood that may lead to premature sloth and debilitation?

.....

Because so many people of today are not consciously seeking the great truths that exist in the world to help them, they are naively

robbing themselves of great opportunities to learn about things that would positively alleviate much of their pain and suffering. Constructive conscious control in the use of the self is such a truth.

.....

F.M Alexander's first book, "MAN'S SUPREME INHERITANCE" contains an INTRODUCTORY WORD by Professor John Dewey (1859 - 1952), American philosopher and educationalist, and founder of the philosophic movement known as pragmatism. This philosophy insisted that the way to test ideas was to check whether or not, when applied in practice, the results were the ones expected. Crudely stated, this has been taken to mean the test of an idea is whether or not it works in practice. A few quotes from this Introduction are given below:

"As a layman, I am incompetent to pass judgement upon the particular technique through which he would bring about a control of intelligence over the bodily organism, so as not merely to cure but to prevent the present multitudinous maladies of adjustment. But he does not stop with a pious recommendation of such conscious control; he possesses and offers a definite method for its realisation, and even a layman can testify, as I am glad to do, to the efficacy of its working in concrete cases.

It did not remain for the author of these pages to eulogise self-mastery or self-control. But these eulogies have too frequently remained in the hortatory and moralistic state. Alexander has developed a definite procedure, based upon a scientific knowledge of the organism. Popular fear of anything sounding like materialism has put a heavy burden on humanity. Men are afraid, without even being aware of their fear, to recognise the most wonderful of all the structures of the vast universe - the human body. They have been led to think that a serious notice and regard would somehow involve disloyalty to man's higher life. The

discussions of Alexander breathe reverence for this wonderful instrument of our life, life mental and moral as well as that life which somewhat meaninglessly we call bodily. When such a religious attitude toward the body becomes more general, we shall have an atmosphere favourable to securing the conscious control which is urged."

END OF DEWEY'S QUOTES IN "MAN'S SUPREME INHERITANCE"

F.M Alexander's second book, "CONSTRUCTIVE CONSCIOUS CONTROL OF THE INDIVIDUAL" contains an INTRODUCTION by Dewey, and a few quotes from it are given below:

"Any sound plan must prove its soundness in reference both to concrete consequences and to general principles. What we too often forget is that these principles and facts must not be judged separately, but in connection to each other. Further, whilst any theory or principle must ultimately be judged by its consequences in operation, whilst it must be verified experimentally by operation of how it works, yet in order to justify a claim to be scientific, it must provide a method for making evident and observable what the consequences are; and this method must be such as to afford a guarantee that the observed consequences actually flow from the principle. And I unhesitatingly assert that, when judged by this standard - that is, of a principle at work in effecting definite and verifiable consequences, Alexander's teaching is scientific in the strictest sense of the word."

.....

"Every step in the process has been analysed and formulated, and every changing condition and consequence, positive or negative, favourable or unfavourable, which is employed as a means for developing the experimental procedure, has been still further

developed. The use of this developed method has, of course, continuously afforded new material for observation and thorough analysis.”

.....

“Alexander has demonstrated a new scientific principle with respect to the control of human behaviour, as important as any principle which has ever been discovered in the domain of external nature.”

.....

“After studying over a period of years Alexander’s method in actual operation, I would stake myself upon the fact that he has applied to our ideas and beliefs about ourselves and about our acts exactly the same method of experimentation and of production of new sensory observations, as tests and means of developing thought, that have been the source of all progress in the physical sciences; and if, in any other plan, any such use has been made of the sensory appreciation of our attitudes and acts, if in it there has been developed a technique for creating new sensory observations of ourselves, and if complete reliance has been placed upon these findings, I have never heard of it.”

.....

“It is a discovery which makes whole all scientific discoveries, and renders them available, not for our undoing, but for human use in promoting our constructive growth and happiness.”

.....

“Never before, I think, has there been such an acute consciousness of the failure of all external remedies as exists today, of the failure of all remedies and forces external to the individual man. It is, however, one thing to teach the need of the return to the individual man as the ultimate agency in whatever humankind and society collectively can accomplish, to point out

the necessity of straightening out this ultimate condition of whatever humanity in mass can attain. It is another to discover the concrete procedure by which this greatest of all tasks can be executed. And this indispensable thing is exactly what Alexander has accomplished. The discovery could not have been made and the method of procedure perfected except by dealing with adults who were badly co-ordinated. But the method is not one of remedy; it is one of constructive education. Its proper field of application is with the young, with the growing generation, in order that they may come to possess as early as possible in life a correct standard of sensory appreciation and self-judgement. When once a reasonably adequate part of a new generation has become properly co-ordinated, we shall have assurance for the first time that men and women in the future will be able to stand on their own feet, equipped with satisfactory psycho-physical equilibrium, to meet with readiness, confidence and happiness, instead of with fear, confusion and discontent, the buffetings and contingencies of their surroundings.”

END OF DEWEY’S QUOTES IN “CONSTRUCTIVE CONSCIOUS CONTROL”

.....

Dewey also wrote an INTRODUCTION in Alexander’s third book, ‘THE USE OF THE SELF.’

A few quotes from it are given below:

*“Personally, I cannot speak with too much admiration - in the original sense of wonder as well as the sense of respect - of the persistence and thoroughness with which these extremely difficult observations and experiments were carried out. In consequence Alexander created what may be truly called a physiology of the **living** organism. His observations and experiments have to do with the actual functioning of the body, with organism in operation, and in operation under the ordinary conditions of living - rising,*

sitting, walking, standing, using arms, hands, voice, tools, instruments of all kinds. The contrast between sustained and accurate observations of the living and the usual activities of man and those made upon dead things under unusual and artificial conditions marks the difference between true and pseudo-science. And yet so used have we become to associating “science” with the latter sort of thing that its contrast with the genuinely scientific character of Alexander’s observations has been one great reason for the failure of many to appreciate his technique and conclusions.”

.....

“The vitality of a scientific discovery is revealed and tested in its power to project and direct new further operations which not only harmonize with prior results, but which lead on to new observed materials, suggesting in turn further experimentally controlled acts and so on in a continued series of new developments. Speaking as a pupil, it was because of this fact as demonstrated in personal experience that I first became convinced of the scientific quality of Alexander’s work. Each lesson was a laboratory experimental demonstration. Statements made in advance of consequences to follow and the means by which they would be reached were met with implicit scepticism - a fact which is practically inevitable, since, as Alexander points out, one uses the very conditions that need re-education as one’s standard of judgement.”

.....

“From one standpoint, I had an unusual opportunity for making an intellectual study of the technique and its results. I was from the practical standpoint, an inept, awkward and slow pupil. There were no speedy and seemingly miraculous changes to evoke gratitude emotionally, while they misled me intellectually. I was forced to observe carefully at every step of the process, and to interest myself in the theory of the operations. I did this partly from my previous interest in psychology and philosophy, and partly as

a compensation for my practical backwardness. In bringing to bear whatever knowledge I already possessed - or thought I did - and whatever powers of discipline in mental application I had acquired in the pursuit of these studies, I had the most humiliating experience of my life, intellectually speaking. For to find that one is unable to execute directions, including inhibitory ones, in doing such a seemingly simple act as to sit down, when one is using all the mental capacity which one prides himself possessing, is not an experience congenial to one's vanity. But it may be conducive to analytic study of causal conditions, obstructive and positive. And so I verified in personal experience all that Alexander says about the unity of the physical and psychical in the psycho-physical; about our habitually wrong use of ourselves and the part this wrong use plays in generating all kinds of unnecessary tensions and wastes of energy; about the vitiation of our sensory appreciations which form the material of our judgements of ourselves; about the the unconditional necessity of inhibition of customary acts, and the tremendous mental difficulty found in not "doing" something as soon as an habitual act is suggested, together with the great change in moral and mental attitude that takes place as proper co-ordinations are established."

.....

"In the study I found the things which I had 'known' - in the sense of theoretical belief - in philosophy and psychology, changed into vital experiences which gave a new meaning to knowledge of them."

.....

"Education is the only sure method which humankind possesses for directing its own course. But we have been involved in a vicious circle. Without knowledge of what constitutes a truly normal and healthy psycho-physical life, our professed education is likely to be mis-education. Every serious student of the formation of disposition and character which takes place in the family and

school knows - speaking without the slightest exaggeration - how often and how deplorably this possibility is realised. The technique of Alexander gives to the educator a standard of psycho-physical health - in which what we call morality is included. It supplies also the "means whereby" this standard may be progressively and endlessly achieved, becoming the conscious possession of the one educated. It provides therefore the conditions for the central direction of all special educational processes. It bears the same relationship to education that education bears to all other activities."

END OF DEWEY'S QUOTES IN "THE USE OF THE SELF"

.....

Alexander's fourth book, "THE UNIVERSAL CONSTANT IN LIVING" contains an APPRECIATION by G.E Coghill, and a few quotes from it are given below:

"The practice of F.M Alexander in treating the human body is founded, as I understand it, on three well-established biological principles: (1) that of the integration of the whole organism in the performance of particular functions; (2) that of proprioceptive sensitivity as a factor in determining posture: (3) that of the primary importance of posture in determining muscular action. These principles I have established through forty years in anatomical and physiological study of Amblystoma in embryonic and larval stages, and they appear to hold for other vertebrates as well."

.....

"In posture the individual is mobilized for a definite movement in which the energy utilized in posture is released in a definite pattern of activity."

.....

“.....in posture the individual is mobilized (integrated) for movement according to a definite pattern, and in movement that pattern is being executed. In posture the individual is as truly active as in movement.”

.....

“Alexander has found these same principles operative also in man. His work is concerned with the nature of the influence of the working of the psycho-physical mechanisms upon the general functioning of the human organism (posture), and his technique was evolved as an aid in maintaining the general conditions best suited to this working in those in whom they already exist and in changing and improving them when this working can be shown to be harmful. He has further demonstrated the very important psychological principle that the proprioceptive system can be brought under conscious control, and can be educated to carry to the motor centres the stimulus which is responsible for the muscular activity which brings about the manner of working (use) of the mechanisms of correct posture. Of course the time required for this education could be greatly lessened through the assistance of a competent teacher.”

.....

“These are the simple rudiments of movement which Alexander calls into play by his methods of re-education. For he is pre-eminently an educator. He seeks to restore the functions of the body through their natural uses. His methods of doing this are original and unique, based as they are, on many years of experience and exhaustive study. Yet they can scarcely be adequately described, although the results are marvellous.”

.....

“It is my opinion that habitual use of improper reflex mechanisms in sitting, standing, and walking introduces conflict in the nervous

system, and that this conflict is the cause of fatigue and nervous strain, which bring many ills in their train. Alexander, by relieving this conflict between the total pattern, which is hereditary and innate and the reflex mechanisms, which are individually cultivated, conserves the energies of the nervous system, and by so doing corrects not only postural difficulties, but also many other pathological conditions that are not ordinarily recognised as postural. This is a corrective principle that the individual learns for himself and is the work of the self as a whole. It is not a system of physical culture which involves only one system of organs for better or for worse of the economy of the whole organism. Alexander's method lays hold of the individual as a whole, as a self-vitalizing agent. He re-conditions and re-educates the reflex mechanisms, and brings their habits into normal relation with the functions of organisms as a whole. I regard his methods as thoroughly scientific and educationally sound."

END OF COGHILL'S QUOTES IN "THE UNIVERSAL CONSTANT IN LIVING"

.....

Paul Brunton, the Great Philosopher, wrote the following: "Let religion learn to adjust itself to science, and let science learn to adjust itself to philosophy, and let art learn to adjust itself to all three. Then we may look hopefully for a true education in our schools and colleges, a true life in our homes and workplaces." (NOTEBOOKS, VOLUME 9, "HUMAN EXPERIENCE," PART 2, LIVING IN THE WORLD, PAGE 143, PARAGRAPH 641.)

I venture to say that education in our schools and colleges, and life in our homes and workplaces will not be complete until it includes the study and attainment of constructive conscious control in the use of the self - as discovered, practised and expounded by Frederick Matthias Alexander.

.....

This realisation that the ego's most immediate concern must be the re-establishment of constructive conscious control in the use of the self is an evolutionary one. It is also a revolutionary revelation, but it is not new; its origin springs from the great antiquity of the distant past. In the present day - as it did way back then - the conscious mind must be engaged and take the leading role in the evolutionary process.

.....

The deepest understanding of the principles and procedures of constructive conscious control can come only to those who have the evolutionary fitness and maturity to fully appreciate it, and who are willing to take the necessary steps into the unknown to embrace it as a way of being.

.....

In the future, when we have all evolved into truly spiritual beings with astute reasoning powers of the mind, stability and lightness of the emotions, and peace, love, and equanimity in the heart - as Martinus says we will - surely this state must include beauty, grace, poise, dynamism, balance and consistent good health in the body? Could this enlightened state exist without such attributes, such vital conditions?

.....

I conclude with another question, a quote from F.M Alexander, a man whose teachings never stepped outside the realm of the ego, but who had the experiential knowledge that justified him asking humbly, but confidently, a poignant, soul-searching question for all of us at the end of his book, "THE USE OF THE SELF."

“If a technique which can be proved to do this for an individual were to be made the basis of an educational plan, so that the growing generation could acquire a more valid criteria for self-judgement than is now possible with the prevailing condition of sensory misdirection of use, might not this lead to the substitution of reasoning reactions for those instinctive reactions which are manifested as prejudice, racial and otherwise, herd instinct, undue ‘self-determination’ and rivalry etc. which, as we all deplore, have so far brought to nought our efforts to realise good will to all men and peace upon earth?”

THE END

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DANNY McGOWAN

Member of the Society of teachers of the Alexander Technique

My involvement with the Alexander Technique - a better name for which is constructive conscious control of the individual, *by the individual* - goes back to 1976, when I had my first lessons in Glasgow, Scotland. The history of my experience is as follows:

1976 - 1980 - Regular lessons with Jeanne and Aksel Haahr who studied under Walter Carrington in London. Walter studied under F.M Alexander, and took over F.M's training course after he passed away in 1955.

September 1980 - July 1983 - I undertook the 3-year training course for teachers at the Alexander Technique Training Centre (A.T.T.C) in Dartington, England. Jeanne and Aksel were the Directors of this centre, which was run in association with Dartington College of Arts.

July 1983 - Qualified as a teacher and started teaching immediately. I was offered a post by Jeanne and Aksel, and I gladly accepted. I began this work in September, 1983. Since then I have always been a training course teacher.

September 1983 - July 1988 - Assistant Teacher at the A.T.T.C

September 1988 - July 1990 - Assistant Director at the A.T.T.C

September 1990 - December 1999 - Director of the Ausbildungszentrum für F.M Alexander Technique - Berlin, Germany. During this time 42 students qualified as teachers.

Since January 2000, I have been teaching in Totnes, Aberdeen, Berlin, and the Dartington Summer School of Music. (Summer School since 1983.)

My partner Sarah Paice and I are co-founders and Directors of C.C.A.R.E - Centre for Constructive Awareness and Related Education.

As well as having 31 years experience as a training course teacher and director, I have also run a successful private practice, teaching members of the public in one-to-one lessons. I have taught the Alexander Technique in England, Scotland, Germany, France, Brazil, the Canary Islands, and in the United States of America.

In addition, I have, for the past 31 years, taught the Alexander Technique at the Dartington International Summer School of Music, which takes place at Dartington College of Arts in Devon, England. This work entails teaching singers and instrumentalists of many nationalities how to improve the use of themselves to improve their performance. This is done on a one-to-one situation, as well as in groups.

Over the years I have also given introductory workshops to doctors, musicians and the general public, as well as giving evening classes for beginner groups.

When I moved to Germany in 1990 to direct the Ausbildungszentrum, I prepared abridged versions of Alexander's four books for studying in class. This I did to help the students whose first language was not English to understand F.M.'s writings. One of my abridgments, "CONSTRUCTIVE CONSCIOUS CONTROL" has since been published by the "PAUL BRUNTON PHILOSOPHIC FOUNDATION" situated near Ithaca, New York, U.S.A.

In my 31 years as a training course teacher and Director, I have developed and taught "holistic anatomy," which means anatomy related to general good use and co-ordination of the human organism. My background in engineering has proved

invaluable in understanding the body as a mechanism.

I have also written the following books:

“CONSTRUCTIVE AWARENESS,” subtitled ‘*ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE and the Spiritual Quest,*’ which was also published by the same foundation.

“GOING MENTAL”, which features the Alexander Technique in relation to mentalism, as well as detailed illustrations of holistic anatomy mentioned above. In other words, it combines the practical with the philosophical approach to daily living. This book was self-published.

“INDICATIONS ON CONSTRUCTIVE AWARENESS,” which consists of a collection of short jottings giving various aspects of constructive awareness, the benefits of using it, and tips on how to maintain constructive conscious control in the use of the self throughout a lifetime. This book was self-published.

Lastly, I am also a professional singer and songwriter.

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