

THOUGHT - A CREATIVE ENERGY IN NATURE

Adelaide Gardner

I Think Therefore I am. This startling phrase was coined by Descartes to denote that thought was an ultimate experience. Theosophy would hold this to be true if the phrase were extended to suggest that thought is a basic creative power in the universe.

The experience we know as thinking has been very carefully studied by modern laboratory techniques. When the fact of the control exercised by the higher and lower brain over bodily movements was first fully demonstrated, materialistic thinkers considered that it had been proved that "thought was a secretion of the brain as bile is a secretion of the liver". This view was strengthened by the study of glandular activity, which demonstrated that changes in the secretions of the glands, or the administration of adrenalin, can have a profound effect upon human behaviour. Further, the use of drugs to induce an experimental heightening in perception has shown how deeply a change in physical stimulus can affect human thinking. Materialistic students of psychology therefore claim that bodily conditions determine the nature of human thinking.

In the field of psychotherapy and parapsychology, however, the opposite relationship has been demonstrated. Psychological treatments have now proved many times over that the cause of certain chronic diseases lies in the mind and feelings and not in the body, for when a patient is suffering from such illnesses the relief of mental difficulties is usually accompanied by the relief or even the cure of physical ailments.

Meticulous investigation of the brain has shown that the higher impulses of choice and directive thought come from some as yet undiscovered centre within the brain areas. Wilder Penfield, FRCS, FRC, a distinguished neurosurgeon, concluded a broadcast talk on the BBC as follows:

"What is the real relationship of this mechanism to the mind? Can we visualize a spiritual element of a different essence, capable of controlling this mechanism? When a patient is asked about the movement which he carried out as a result of a cortical stimulation, he never is in any doubt about it. He knows he did not will the action. He knows there is a difference between automatic action and voluntary action. He would agree that something else finds its dwelling place between the sensory complex and the motor mechanism, that there is a switchboard operator as well as a switchboard".

There is a steady increase in scientific testimony to the effect that thought is an energy that works through the brain, and – while it may indeed be conditioned by the conditioning of the vehicle through which it registers – it can also at times dominate the physical organ and act independently of physically determined influences.

The traditional teachings now called Theosophy, which have come down to us through the ages, describe thought as one of the three great creative forces in nature. Plato taught that it is through formative archetypal thought-patterns that the universe came into being. Earlier still this teaching is found in the Hindu Upanishads, as well as in other ancient literature. The purpose of the evolutionary scheme, it is said, is to evolve a physical form so delicately responsive that creative thought can register within it and become effective at the physical level.

The Ancient Teachings consider the human form to be the result of planned effort on the part of the Divine Mind, which has resulted in the growth of a threefold being – spiritual, psychological and physical. At present men and women are seldom aware of their spiritual or even of their psychological aspects, except in rare moments. It has been said that mankind chiefly lives on the ground floor of his consciousness, although there are upper floors which he rarely visits.

But it is possible to awaken to this fact and to learn more of the whole field in which human consciousness operates. As man becomes able to observe his thoughts and feelings, the spiritual faculties tend to awaken, and through these it is possible to learn something of the inner laws of nature, and of certain creative processes that are capable of direction by impersonal thought.

It is obvious that training is required for such a change in human ways of thinking. The first step towards the larger view of life is to learn to think and to feel impersonally and constructively. At present very few people think at all clearly, for they are full of prejudice and personal reactions – deeply ingrained through the habits of a lifetime. Now it is true that even fixed habits of thought and action can be “reconditioned” by a course of treatment or enforced indoctrination, but this is external and artificial, and merely replaces one habit of reaction by imposing another. To be “free” and creative we must each undertake the alteration of ourselves.

The first step is honest self-observation, learning to think consciously, to be aware of life as it is, and of the behaviour of one’s thoughts and feelings. Then comes the steady exercise of impersonality, and of goodwill to others, and the gradual control of thought and feeling by the conscious use of suitable thought exercises, study and some form of meditation. Try this for yourself. It is relatively easy to discover how little we are aware of, or direct, our own thinking. The test comes when we attempt to become alive to life-as-it-is and to deal with it creatively.

Yet the effort is worth the making, for humanity is intended to be a much finer creature, far more self-aware and aware of the higher creative powers which lie latent within. If the world of the future is to become a better place in which to live, men and women need to recognize, and learn to use, the powers that await discovery within their shrouded minds. A study of the real nature of thought, and of its creative uses for human service, is one of the ways by which each one of us can help humanity to move towards a new and better age.

Adapted from the writings of Adelaide Gardner.

Adelaide Gardner was a well-known member of the Theosophical Society in England from the 1920s to her death in 1960, particularly in England and Europe. She served as National President. and was a national speaker for many years and an active member of the Medical group of the Theosophical Research Centre, being very much interested in Healing.