



The Psychogram

1. A being knows only the modifications of itself. This is self-evident, for if a being knows anything whatever it is only insofar as this thing produces modification of the being that the being knows it.

2. Because a being knows only the modifications of itself, if it acts, its action is conditioned by these modifications. The modifications of a being are the contents from which it draws the forms upon which its actions are based. The consciousness of a being contains forms arising only from the being's modifications, and these modifications condition the being's actions and reactions with other beings.

3. Action which is conditioned is not free action. Therefore a being the action of which is conditioned by the modifications of that being is not free. What kind of being may act freely? Only that being which has no modifications in itself to condition it. To become free, then, one must eliminate the modifications of one's being. This is why the first rule in yoga is "suppress the modifications of your being".

4. If we watch a healthy young child we will find that it exhibits a tendency to move, a tendency over which it has apparently little self-control. Every action of the child is a modification of its being; and every modification conditions its actions. Here is a vicious circle. The child's energy not yet under control roams about its organism and modifies its action, physical action or psychical action. The child jumps or skips or runs or climbs, and each action conditions its feelings, ideas and volitions, and these again condition its actions. If nothing is imposed on the child from outside, the child's self-conditioned action cycle continues without interruption. But in practice the child's action cycle is interrupted. The interruption comes either from within itself by the action of one of its inner modifications upon another, or from a force originating from outside.

5. An example of the first is seen when a child becomes excited and loses control over the action of its limbs and hits itself in the eye or mouth with its fist, or trips over its own feet. An example of the second is seen when an uncontrolled, noisy child is suddenly smacked or shouted at, or the child is forcibly made to sit still, or it is compelled to go to school for the purpose of modifying its behaviour and bringing its action-pattern into a form acceptable to those around it.

6. Most so-called "education" is merely a conditioning process in which the child's action-pattern is brought into conformity with that of the society in which it finds itself. In this sense the word "education" (which means an "out-leading" of potentialities of action) is misused. The proper word for the actual process of producing socially acceptable beings is "conditioning". This may be divided into physical and psychical processes, and insofar as it may involve the implanting of



ideas may be called "indoctrination", which, it may be well to remember, is merely the insertion into a mind of words representing opinions which the indoctrination-authority considers it expedient to insert.

7. For convenience, instead of using the expression "record of a modification occurring in a being", or "persistent being modification" (which is what a record is) we shall use the word "Ontogram" (from Gk. ontos, being). By this we shall mean any record of a modification produced in a being, whether induced within the being itself by its own processes, or introduced into it from outside. Insofar as a record made in a psyche is felt by the psyche (or soul or self) we shall call it a "psychogram". A psychogram is thus an ontogram viewed from the standpoint of feeling. The psyche experiences the psychogram as a feeling state within itself, inclining it to some orientation in relation to a given experience, in whole or part.

8. The psychogram experienced as a feeling state may be either positively or negatively charged, that is, inclining the psyche towards or away from experiences similar to those recorded in the psychogram.

9. In all psychopathological states the causative source is one or more psychograms or a psychogram-compound.

10. Whenever a psyche's experience inserts energy into the psyche beyond the level at which it can assimilate it rationally, the energy engraves itself into the psyche sub-rationally, that is, produces a modification in the psyche which is recorded below the level of rational consciousness. Being sub-rational, such a psychogram is beyond the reach of the rational control centre and therefore acts irrationally.

11. As the sub-rational psychogram inclines the psyche to act or react in accordance with its pattern, it would be more efficient to make, if possible, the content of the psychogram enter the rational centre, where it may be rationally considered and organised in accordance with the soul's true purpose. We shall later consider possible techniques for moving the content of the psychogram into the rational control centre. But first we must more closely consider the nature of the psychogram, and for this purpose we must say exactly what we mean by "psyche" or "soul".

12. When we observe a living being responding to a given situation, we see a behaviour pattern adjusted in some measure to the things in the situation. The type of adjustment we see in a living being differs from that of a non-living being. A non-living being, say a rubber ball, rolled down a slope, shows no signs of activity other than the rolling. If we place some obstacles on the slope, the rubber ball may strike against them and bounce off them, but we do not see in its action anything to suggest that it is making a purposeful adjustment to the situation. But if we place a living being, say, a kitten, on the slope, so that it



slides down, we observe that the kitten's actions show some purposeful adjustment to the situation, perhaps clawing at the surface or hanging onto the obstacles as if trying to stop itself sliding down.

13. We say there is something inside the kitten which is not in the rubber ball. This something is the life-principle. Beings which show evidence of apparently purposeful adjustments, like those shown by the kitten, we call animals. The word "animal" is from the Latin "anima", meaning air, breath, life. The animating principle in a living being is the soul. The Greeks used the word "psyche" for this same principle. The soul or psyche in a being is the principle which determines the being's purposeful adjustments to its environment, (environment here meaning all outer existence whatever), and to its own inner content.

14. In our own case we human beings know what we mean by purposeful adjustment. We mean any action performed to gain some pre-imagined end. (Instinctive reactions arise from the protoplasmic records of previously purposeful actions of our ancestors, and sometimes from our own intensely practiced, purposeful actions, as with the "instinctive" placing of the fingers of a pianistic genius on his instrument.)

15. How do we know that an action we perform is purposeful? We know because we have in our consciousness, whether clearly defined or not, an image of some end to be gained, some aim to be secured. Without consciousness of such an aim we would not have any sense of purpose. Consciousness and aim are therefore essential to the knowledge that we perform purposeful acts.

16. The end to be gained is a formal situation felt or known to be worth gaining. Without feeling or consciousness, even if such a situation existed, it would not be experienced by us as purposeful. The power to feel or know is an inherent property of the soul or psyche. This power we call "sentience". The Latin "sentire" means "to feel" and "to know". All knowing is based upon feeling. Feeling is the ground of all knowledge, all consciousness. Consciousness is merely the content of feeling analyzed and defined and related to some degree. Feeling may be of indeterminate form; vague or less vague or sharp. Consciousness is feeling in which the form has attained a certain degree of sharpness and its forms gained definition and relational significance.

17. In this sense consciousness is a relatively high state of feeling, "high" here meaning clearly comprehending the formal and relational significance of a situation in such a manner that the purpose-fulfilling or end-gaining process may be adequately defined wholly and in its parts.

18. In ourselves we experience events with more or less intensity and more or less clarity of definition. Intensity and clarity are not the same, for we may experience an intense emotion without being at all clear what we have



experienced, or we may attain very great clarity of ideas without marked intensity of feeling.

19. All that we experience however, is known to us only because we are sentient. Our sentience is the basis of all our knowledge. And our sentience is the ground of our right to the title "psyche" or "soul".

20. The psyche is a sentient being, a being possessing the inherent power to feel and know the form of its experience. Every experience it has introduces into it a quantity of energy formed in some specific manner. This energy changes the inner form of the psyche by super-stressing parts of it and so gives rise to percepts, concepts, feeling states, volitional impulses, etc. The psyche is a field-force in the infinite field of the Absolute. Its vibrations produce within it all conceivable forms or patterns of energy. It is therefore in principle omniscient. But its formal energy-patterns, prior to the introduction of energy from outside, have no particular order of precedence, and are presented to it simultaneously, thus constituting a kind of chaos. The introduction of formed energies (stimuli) from outside introduces an order of super-stresses on the inner forms and so gives rise to particular perceptions. (cf. Plato's concept of anamnesis.)

21. If the introduced energy of the stimulus can be rationally assimilated by the psyche, the psyche's behavior response and comprehension of the significance of the situation is rationally controlled. But if the stimulus-energy is too high for rational assimilation the psyche tries to hold the energy in check by using some of its own energy to encapsulate the stimulus energy. This is the mechanism of so-called repression.

22. The encapsulated stimulus-energy now operates like a sub-rational subsidiary entity. For short we may call this a "subent". A subent acts on its own account as if it were a sentient individual with its own purposes. Whatever the form of the situation providing the stimulus-energy is now embodied in the psyche as an action determinant.

23. Strictly, any stimulus which records itself in the psyche is a psychogram, but specifically we are concerned with those psychograms which interfere with the psyche's proper function, namely the sub-rational psychograms which act as subents in the psyche and sub-rationally determine some part of its action.

24. A sub-rational response is a response not rationally related to the whole psyche's purpose. It is a response which may have its own inner reason, but this reason functions only at a protopathic level, that is to say, that all elements in a sub-rational psychogram may stand in each other's place. Protopathic thinking is that which arises in primitive mono-cells in which the protoplasm mixes up all the incoming stimulus energies so that their causal interrelations cannot analytically be seen. The cock which observes the sun to rise as it crows and believes therefore that its crowing causes the sun to rise is thinking



protopathically. The child used in a behaviouristic experiment to demonstrate the process whereby a conditioned reflex is made, and who thinks that the bang being made by the experimenter is caused by a rabbit coming near him, is also thinking protopathically. The man who hates red hair because a red-haired aunt used to make him go to church as a small boy, is also thinking protopathically. Protopathic thinking makes any element in a situation do duty for any other.

25. Protopathic thinking arises in a mono-cell because it has no inner walls to enable it to sort out the different kinds of stimulus received. In the multi-cell being the cells may be used as a filing system in which the different categories of stimuli may be found at will and returned into the system for future reference. In principle each cell group specialises in one category of response. A human being with his millions of cells has the potential of an excellent filing system.

26. Protopathic thinking is opposed to rational thought, for rational thought places each experience in its proper category, whilst protopathic thinking makes a chaos of the whole world. In protopathic thinking any element in a situation may be equivalent to any other element, because the total stimulus situation is engrammed simultaneously without analysis whenever the energy-input is higher than can be rationally assimilated.