

Essentials

Aphorisms and Observations of A. R. Orage

Edited by J. Walter Driscoll

Drawn from a wide variety of sources, this selection of fragments introduces Orage's vision of the potential for conscious development of being. In places, Orage's formulation of ideas, cosmology and teaching employs Gurdjieff's terminology and expressions.

Consider the 'sly' man; he *tries* to be aware always.

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You can never be impartial about any person or thing until you have been impartial about your planetary body.

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Common sense mellowed and experienced is wisdom; and wisdom in its ripeness is beauty.

The last degree of esoteric teaching is plain common sense.

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The birthright of human beings is the desire for self-consciousness, which should appear at the age of majority. At about the age of thirty there should come a sense of the world in which we live, the dawning of cosmic consciousness. After this, according to one's gifts, conditions, circumstances and so on, one should become a conscious agent in the functions of the cosmos, which is a total scheme of which we would have a relative comprehension.

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There is little difference in the experiences of different people—the difference consists in what they do with them. The importance of our first food is not so much in the quantity and quality as in the digesting of it. Experiences are another form of food; from this point of view it does not so much matter *what* happens as how we take experiences.

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Nature is the objective creditor of every living being. She is, from one aspect, the wicked step-mother of the fairy tales, beguiling us and using us for her own purposes, the evolution of substances.

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Time is the most important thing next to awareness. The flow of time through us gives us an opportunity to extract what we can. Time is the three-fold stream flowing through our three centers. We fish in time's 'ever-rolling' stream; what we catch is ours, but what we don't is gone. Time does not wait for us to catch everything in the stream, but if we catch enough we shall have enough to form the higher bodies—and thereby become enduring.

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There is an 'I', a potential soul. If we can say with the same simplicity 'I have a body' as we say 'I have a car' we can begin to realize that this body is a transforming machine which 'I' have. 'I' have a machine to use, does not mean 'I' am a machine. 'I' have a body, a mechanical organism whose function it is to transform substances and energies.

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The advantage of the terrible disadvantage of being human is to be able to be glad—whether happy or unhappy—and, by achieving consciousness, to become greater than the angels. We, becoming conscious beings, are the mind of God;

angels are his emotions and there is more joy in heaven over one of us perfected, than over ninety-nine naturally evolved angels.

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The universe is a being with three centers corresponding to our own; their material aspect is comprised of vibration-rates which appear to us as substances.

The universe is the body of God; it is the neutralizing force of the Sun Absolute, the manifestation of the interaction of the positive and negative forces of God. We live in the body of God, are made in the image of God and God's 'fancy' is immortality.

God is the "I" of the universe, is termed His Endlessness and is not inferior to time. Time is a perpetual perishing. It is the enemy of God. He has a purpose. Our Hope depends on our ability to discover His purpose and co-operate with it. This is the definition of religion, helping God.

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The universe as a conscious being is the third dimension of time.

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Humanity is the mind of God and the passion for understanding the meaning and aim of existence.

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Conscience is a function of a normal human being; it is the representative of God in the essence; it is buried so deeply that it remains relatively indestructible.

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Truth before God is essence; 'truth' before man is personality.

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Essence is a chemical deposit from the sun and planets of the solar system, which enters earth-beings at the moment of conception. In man this affects the region of the solar plexus. It is unlike any of the chemicals found on this planet, and links man to the cosmos. As the chemicals of the physical body return to this planet after death so do the chemicals of essence return to their sources.

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Faith, Hope and Love are the growing ends of essence.

Faith is confidence, not belief; for example the way a lion walks through the woods.

Hope is effort, not wish; an effort to make it so and not a wish that it may be so.

Of love the first form is of self and of self in others; the second form is love of others and of self in them; the third form is love of duty or God and the other forms are by-products of it; that is, it is love of that for which the individual exists.

A being is defined in value according to the degree to which faith, hope and love have become objective in him.

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Pondering is answering questions from essence and answering them practically.

One-half the energy of a human being must be spent internally pondering.

One-third of one's time should be spent in pondering.

Pondering is a self-interrogation which consists in stripping off all the answers of association until you finally come to your own essential answer.

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Essence is what we inherit; personality is what we acquire.

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Beings differ in the *potentiality* of their awareness.

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Being and non-being are two absolutes between which is a state of existence moving in either direction, that of evolution or that of involution. The range of existence between positive absolute and negative absolute provides the scale of beings, of which man is the third from the highest and metal is the lowest.

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Being has to do with the feeling center and depends on knowing and doing. It is the result of the struggle between the affirming and denying parts. 'A being is one who feels', and is therefore to be graded by the range and intensity of feeling. Any attempt to attain superior being directly leads to a psychopathic state. This is the fallacy of mysticism, which involves imaginary feelings.

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Being *is* the emotional center but it is only the result of a conflict between knowing and doing. You must try to know and to do in order to be; that is the value of knowing and doing. Man is a superior species on earth because there is a great conflict between knowing and doing in his case. Men among themselves should also be graded in this way. For the same reason, the equal development of centers is necessary.

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The gradation of beings objectively is according to their inner development. In life, people are 'respected' for their abnormality, not for their inner development or degree of objective reason.

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A human being is one who works with three centers; he who works with one or two is sub-human and every time we repress the working of a center we become a two- or one-brained being.

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Ordinary man is at the mercy of his organism: —at the mercy of the instinctive center; impressions received by the senses, of appetites, inertia, disease; —at the mercy of the feelings; associations connected with people and places past and present, likes and dislikes, fear and anxiety; —at the mercy of the mind; imagination, day-dreaming, suggestibility.

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Reasoning is the locomotion of the thinking center, which is composed of definite organs—concentration, pondering, meditation, contemplation. Logical progression is the ordinary locomotion of the thinking center as a whole. Life in the planetary body is sensation; in the astral body, emotion; in the mental body, thought.

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Neurotic symptoms are due to the three centers being out of step with each other, out of harmony—one center being in a definitely different tempo and intensity from the others.

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The emotional center is the dynamo of our whole life. In it are our wishes, which maintain us and our bodies in life. Wishes are on different planes. The highest wish, once felt, never can be displaced.

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Suffering comes from the conflict of centers. (Taken consciously upon oneself, when one center wishes and the others dislike it, it can become Conscious Suffering.)

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Voluntary conscious labor is made against the inertia and mechanism of the organism; not for personal gain or profit, exercise, health, sport, pleasure or science; not out of pride, like or dislike. With conscious work, individuality takes the place of personality. Individuality grows from essence and is the consciousness of will.

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Learn to know when you are making effort consciously by your experience of making effort physically. You are making an effort when you are "pushing against the collar." You do this when you try to include more phenomena in consciousness that would be there naturally, a continuously sustained effort to include in immediate awareness more and more that is not there, beginning with your own body.

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Specific gravity controls the grasping of thoughts. In each of the three centers are depths in which related items lie. All thinking, feeling and instinctive perception is associated; and there are interrelations between corresponding depths in different centers. These interrelations between the three centers compose the total associative psychology of humanity.

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Center of gravity can be compared to absolute pitch. Any variation is a little abnormal. Every form has its own center of gravity, each substance the same. Permanent dwelling place or habitual center of gravity of whatever center you are most often in, has to do with Chief Feature.

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The only real understanding that can ever be acquired depends upon a certain substance which can only be formed in a particular manner. This substance depends upon three factors: the presence of understandings of a like nature which become relatively positive and negative, and the new piece of knowledge which is the neutralizing force. The result of the three is a new understanding.

One set of previous understandings says yes and another set denies, and there is a certain friction created; the result of this clash is perceived as a new understanding (which may be either according to knowledge or according to essence and thus be either temporary or permanent, and that is decided by whether the individual makes effort when the clash occurs).

If effort is not made, the new understanding is perceived only according to the specific gravity *of the words* and this is at random and thus mixed with uncorresponding items; but when effort is made, each direction of the clash is appreciated consciously (through the effort) and the final result will be *directed*. So it is that people can not be *told* anything of value but must first get the necessary substance and then make effort to achieve understanding.

Because external events which unwind us do not fit into a recognizable order, we have the illusion of freedom. This is why we do not learn from experience. According to the Law of Association, all things seek their level in the scale of being. Ordinarily, experiences are automatically distributed according to former associations; but when effort is made, they can go to their correct places in the centers.

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The harmonious development of man: an "all-round" man according to the original definition, is one who is equally at home in all three centers, a man who is really in occupation of his house; that is, all three stories of it. To produce such men is the purpose of the Gurdjieff teaching, which rules out the three forms of monstrous genius.

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The states of consciousness are Sleep, Waking, Self-Consciousness, Cosmic Consciousness. *Waking* is a pseudo-state of consciousness; there are really only three forms and our waking state is abnormal among states of consciousness. *Self-Consciousness* is consciousness of self; self is that amount of the original conceptual seed that has been actualized, and its form is the body; therefore Self-Consciousness is consciousness of our body. *Cosmic Consciousness* is consciousness of the Cosmos, it is the awareness that there exist other planets than our own, other suns and the Sun Absolute, and that they are the centers of a being; it is thus a consciousness of the body of God.

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Consciousness is an electrical phenomenon which arises from a state of being which we can *feel*.

In our usual opinion there are two forms of electricity, positive and negative; but there is also a third form; namely, the field within which the positive and negative forms are related to each other. Any manifestation of positive and negative electricity implies a fulcrum; that is, a point of resistance over which they balance.

Every existing thing (or being) is ultimately composed of three forces, positive, negative and neutralizing; insofar as the thing is developed, these three are separated into three centers instead of being blind; thus development is the increasingly separate organization of these, together with the provision of organs for each.

The neutralizing force is non-existent except by definition, since it is the *field* wherein phenomena take place; neutralizing force is difficult to define because we are third-force-blind. There is the same difficulty in defining consciousness because it is the *field* of its content.

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We are completely mechanical with the exception of self-observation and what that makes possible. Self-observation is the letter, 'A', of consciousness; it is the first conscious ability that can be attained; if you cannot observe your self, you are completely unconscious.

Unless we remember ourselves, we are completely mechanical. Self-observation is possible only through self-remembering. These are the first steps in self-consciousness and to become self-conscious in our highest part is to become a part of God. But the fruit arrived at is never attained; it is always—if any—an unanticipated by-product. It is more even than unanticipated, it is usually not realized for a long time after it has been attained. Our friends may see it, a crisis may prove it to us, but, as a rule, our development from self-observation is imperceptible to ourselves. I know this would sound like an act of faith, but it is not credulity. Truly a tree is known by its fruit, but the seasons must pass before the fruit appears.

The aim of self-observation, however, apart from its results, is clear; to see ourselves as others. When I can be, for myself, my neighbor, and my neighbor, for me, myself, I shall have attained the objectivity of a normal human being. Thereafter the development of the spirit and soul will be as normal as is now the growth and development of the body.

After all, it is very strange that we do not grow spiritually as a matter of course and time. We have to make no effort to mature bodily from infancy to adulthood. Why does not the same law govern our psychic development? Gurdjieff's reply is the old religious reply: it is because Man has fallen; that is, has become psychically abnormal; and hence it is that in his psyche the laws governing bodily growth cannot apply.

Self-observation is simply (!) a means of attaining normality, and this is a prime condition of subsequent normal development. Once normalized the psyche can take care of itself; but its normalization is the stumbling-block. Therefore, said Paul, "I labor till Christ be born in ye."

Christianity has always insisted upon the mystery of the Incarnation; namely, how does a spirit which is the son of God, have the use of a physical body? Self-observation is only a survey of the body; Participation is practice in making it work; Experiment is seeing what you can do with it; and all these are the preliminaries of Incarnation.

Churches may encourage our confinement to one center but religion is a means for expanding being, for enlarging consciousness. Religiousness is an emotional attitude to the question, 'Why was I born?' and prayer is wish in three centers expressed as effort in three centers. Religion is the study and practice of perfection. This is expressed by Matthew [5:48] as "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

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The reason of ordinary beings is the reason of knowledge. The reason of normal beings is the reason of understanding. Knowledge is a temporary part of being and can change; understanding is a permanent and unchangeable part of the being.

A man can behave otherwise than his knowledge; he cannot behave otherwise than his understanding, which circumstances can never overcome. Knowledge must be repeated often in order to be permanently gained; understanding is incorporated into essence forever.

Instinctive reason we share with the animals but have a higher type of it; associative reason functions according to verbal associations; of objective reason we know practically nothing—it can be acquired only by voluntary conscious labor and intentional suffering.

Objective reason is that which is immortal. It is developed by going against habits and repetition; by following a legitimate whim; by not doing as others do. The effort I make to become objective transforms substances which thereby become permanent, immortal. I acquire a permanent 'I' which is independent of the vicissitudes of life, aware of a conscious purpose, which persists through ups and downs, through runs of good and bad luck.

Contemplation is contact with thought-forms left by other beings interested in objective reason but no statement can be understood without the effort of conscious assimilation. When that which is known is also felt and sensed, we have realization.

We are a passion for understanding the meaning and aim of existence but we have only instinctive passions and thus fail to understand. Not one in a million has any interest in man as differentiated from himself; or else he is interested only in some happiness-reform. Being 99% abnormal, the-meaning-and-aim-of-existence means only instinctive advantage; and it is therefore an academic question. We are not on a plane where these questions have any real meaning for us.

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Of the three lines of evolution perceptible to man (and hence attributed by him to nature), the highest, because the most inclusive, is spiritual evolution defined as the self-perception of self. But between, first, this verbal definition and the

realization of its meaning; and secondly, the realization of its meaning and its actualization in being—there may be aeons of difference. From merely understanding that the highest value is self-objectivity (the ability, that is to say, to see everything thought of as self exactly as if it were not self) it does not follow that we have it, any more that it follows that if we understand that gold is of more value than silver, we necessarily possess gold. The attainment of the state of self-objectivity is something totally different from its understanding just as acquiring gold is something totally different from the appreciation of its value.

What I am therefore disposed to say of the problems already referred to is that their understanding and appreciation need to be supplemented by something entirely different before they can be solved; and that, in fact, the modern mind, even when desirous of objectivity, is incapable of solving such problems for the simple reason that the modern mind is not, in actuality, self-objective.

I beg myself as well as my readers not to mistake understanding for attainment; and not to imagine, on the strength of their realization of certain truths, that they possess them, or still less, that they can use them. Our being, in which alone truth is possessed, is still a long way behind our understanding. Is then, Progress a "myth"? I do not know. Is it, on the other hand, a fact in Nature? Again, I do not know. Nor do I find it necessary to settle the question one way or the other for my peace of mind. To understand what the question implies, to be satisfied that one can not answer it now, but to *hope* to be able one day to answer it, that, I think, is enough. . .

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There is more joy in heaven over one of us perfected,
than over ninety-nine naturally evolved angels.

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There is a complete protection available to you—silence.

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