

From *G.I. Gurdjieff – Paris Meetings 1943*, p. 53-55, Tuesday, June 8.

GURDJIEFF: We have two kinds of impulses: organic impulses and psychic impulses. Each of these impulses takes a different form. Organic impulses arise from our functions. No sooner has an impulse arisen than it progresses by waves, exactly as when a stone is thrown into water: it becomes amplified, reaches the thorax, then the head.

Psychic impulses follow a different kind of process: they proceed by slight pulsations. Organic impulses are always automatic and unintentional; psychic impulses are always conscious and intentional. In fact, 'psychic' means 'conscious', because the essential nature of the psyche is consciousness. So you see that impulses coming from feeling can be organic or psychic. They are organic if they are unintentional, and psychic if they are conscious and intentional. You will see the difference yourself by noticing whether they proceed by waves or by pulsations.

Pity, for example. You can have a mechanical, unintentional pity. It cannot be otherwise; it is stronger than you. It is an organic impulse that proceeds from its origin by waves, rises and invades the head. But you can have another kind of pity. You can put yourself intentionally in the place of another, and be conscious of his situation. Your pity is intentional; it progresses by slight pulsations and has a quite different inner taste.

Once your head is invaded, it no longer exists; it has become the function of your function. There is no more you. For example, fear: I can always be afraid, but this fear must not take over completely. It must remain localized somewhere in the function where it appeared. It must not have any influence over the rest. My body was afraid, but not me; whereas you, you yourself become fear – your whole presence is nothing but fear.

This happens because your head is not independent, not detached, not free from the rest. Your head is your 'self'. It is your Reason. That is where your intelligence is. This is your individuality. Everyone has a body, everyone has feeling, but rare are those who have a head that gives an independent life – free, never influenced. Only the head can be just; only the head can be impartial. The head must have the initiative, whereas with you at present, it's all the rest that has the initiative. And the rest is shit, a piece of meat.

For you, at present, the head must be like a policeman, a watchman, always turned inward to see with inner sight and to know these two parts: body and feeling. It must watch with strong attention, but without tensing, and know where the impulses come from. Are they organic or psychic? Only then will it be able to play its role, which is to direct, to initiate.

You must understand that the strength of the different parts is directly proportional: the more you put attention on seeing and knowing the impulses, the stronger they will be. And, similarly, the stronger your impulses are, the more intensity you will have if you make an effort of attention.

To learn how to distinguish between your impulses, I will give you an example. There is no better example of organic impulses than sexual ones. Try to produce this movement (*he clenches and unclenches his fist*) in your sexual organs and you will immediately see that waves are produced and extend up to the head. This is a prototype of an organic impulse.

For psychic impulses, the best example is pity. Picture to yourself someone for whom you have already felt an impulse of pity, and now intentionally try putting yourself in his place and observe the strength of the manifestation of the impulse. Be careful that your psychic impulse does not degenerate into an organic one. If this happens, stop and begin again.

Work on this exercise: the head free, not influenced, self-affirming, concentrated, turned towards the impulses, in order to see them, and to know them. When you have enough material or questions to ask, write to me.