Intellectual Center

<https://www.meditationsonthetarot.com/intellectual-center>

Conscious attention is dependent upon the part of the soul on which it impinges, as shown below:

Mechanical part: there is no attention or else attention is wandering. Thoughts, sensations, images, feelings, etc., arise spontaneously in an instinctive, mechanical or automatic way.

Emotional part: attraction is attracted to an object, thought, image, etc.

Intellectual part: attention is controlled by the will, i.e., directed attention and individual mental effort.

The intellectual soul itself has three parts. In spiritual combat, we try to control which ideas to harbor in our mind. Since such thoughts and images arise spontaneously, or from outside influences, it takes wakefulness and diligence to prevent negative thoughts, feelings, and fantasies from taking hold of our consciousness. Clearly, it is impossible to have directed attention (the intellectual part) and wandering attention (the mechanical part) simultaneously. You may find, too, that it is impossible to hold onto negative emotions when you control your attention.

Obviously, indulging in negative thoughts will have an adverse effect on our inner life. Bad books and, especially in our times, magazines, movies, TV, and other manifestations of popular culture are sources of negative thinking. The political season can really exacerbate negative reactions in people.

You can see that some New Thought ideas about positive thinking do have a sound basis. Actually, much of such teachings have Hermetic sources; they are just incomplete and really don’t explain exactly how to eliminate negative thinking. That is why attention exercises are necessary.

Keeping track of wrongs done against us has really negative consequences. How much of our inner life is dominated and motivated by keeping a mental account book of alleged (or even real) injustices done to us by others? This is why forgiveness is so important. Our memories can often rob our attention by replaying past events for no useful purpose.

Spending too much time in imagination and daydreaming can feed the emotional part of the intellectual center. I realize that such imaginings tend to spontaneously arise, but when they do, they need to be resisted. It is usually quite difficult because paradoxically we get intense pleasure out of our negative images.

Many people, I’m afraid, live mechanically and hence have no possibility of meaningful change or development. They don’t even see the need for it. Conscious will and efforts cannot be taught unless they are desired.

Maurice Nicoll describes the parts of the intellectual center as follows.

Mechanical Part

A mechanical part works almost automatically: it does not require any attention. But because of this it cannot adapt itself to a change of events and continues to work in the way it started, when circumstances have completely changed. In the Intellectual Centre the mechanical part includes in itself all the work of registration of memories, associations, and impressions. This is all that it should do normally—i.e. when other parts do their work. It should never reply to questions addressed to the whole centre, and it should never decide anything, but unfortunately it is always ready to decide and it always replies to all sorts of questions in a narrow and very limited way, in ready-made phrases, in slang expressions, in party-maxims, etc.

The mechanical part may be subdivided into three more parts:

Mechanical part: mechanical repetition of some words heard or read. These may include clichés, slogans, partisan propaganda, grammatical mistakes, speech disfluency, and the like.

Emotional part: curiosity, inquisitiveness and undirected imagination. This may show up as an interest in the personal lives and activities of movie stars and sports figures, for example. Sex fantasies or Walter Mitty type daydreams are other examples.

Intellectual part: shrewdness, craftiness, cautiousness. These are simulations of real intelligence.

Emotional Part

The emotional part of the intellectual includes:

desire to know, desire to understand, satisfaction of knowing, dissatisfaction of not knowing, pleasure of discovery. Work of the emotional part requires full attention, but in this part of the centre attention does not require any effort. It is attracted and kept by the subject itself.

Intellectual Part

The intellectual part of Intellectual Centre includes in itself a capacity for creation, construction, invention and discovery. It cannot work without attention, but the attention in this part of the centre must be controlled and kept there by will and effort

These parts are summarized in the following diagram.

Intellectual Center Intellectual Part Capacity for creation, construction, invention, discovery.

(works by controlled attention, kept there by effort.)

Emotional Part Desire to know and understand.

Pleasure of discovery.

Moving Part

(apparatus replies to questions, etc.) Intellectual Part Shrewdness, craftiness, cautiousness.

Emotional part Curiosity, inquisitiveness, undirected imagination.

Moving part Mechanical repetition of words and phrases