

CHAPTER V

THE FIVE SENSES

Science is wretched in its treatment of the human body as a sort of complex mechanism made up of numerous little machines working automatically in a rather unsatisfactory relation to one another. The body is the total machine; the various organs are the included machines; and the whole thing, given a start at birth, or at conception, trundles on by itself. The only god in the machine, the human will or intelligence, is absolutely at the mercy of the machine.

Such is the orthodox view. Soul, when it is allowed an existence at all, sits somewhat vaguely within the machine, never defined. If anything goes wrong with the machine, why, the soul is forgotten instantly. We summon the arch-mechanic of our day, the medicine-man. And a marvelous earnest fraud he is, doing his best. He is really wonderful as a mechanic of the human system. But the life within us fails more and more, while we marvelously tinker at the engines. Doctors are not to blame.

It is obvious that, even considering the human body as a very delicate and complex machine, you cannot keep such a machine running for one day without most exact central control. Still more is it impossible to consider the automatic evolution of such a machine. When did any

machine, even a single spinning-wheel, automatically evolve itself?

There was a god in the machine before the machine existed.

So there we are with the human body. There must have been, and must be a central god in the machine of each animate corpus. The little soul

of the beetle makes the beetle toddle. The little soul of the homo

sapiens sets him on his two feet. Don't ask me to define the soul.

You might as well ask a bicycle to define the young damsel who so

whimsically and so god-like pedals her way along the highroad. A young

lady skeltering off on her bicycle to meet her young man--why, what

could the bicycle make of such a mystery, if you explained it till

doomsday. Yet the bicycle wouldn't be spinning from Streatham to

Croydon by itself.

So we may as well settle down to the little god in the machine. We may

as well call it the individual soul, and leave it there. It's as far

as the bicycle would ever get, if it had to define Mademoiselle. But

be sure the bicycle would not deny the existence of the young miss who

seats herself in the saddle. Not like us, who try to pretend there is

no one in the saddle. Why even the sun would no more spin without a

rider than would a cycle-pedal. But, since we have innumerable planets

to reckon with, in the spinning we must not begin to define the rider

in terms of our own exclusive planet. Nevertheless, rider there is:

even a rider of the many-wheeled universe.

But let us leave the universe alone. It is too big a bauble for

me.--Revenons.--At the start of me there is me. There is a mysterious little entity which is my individual self, the god who builds the machine and then makes his gay excursion of seventy years within it. Now we are talking at the moment about the machine. For the moment we are the bicycle, and not the feather-brained cyclist. So that all we can do is to define the cyclist in terms of ourself. A bicycle could say: Here, upon my leather saddle, rests a strange and animated force, which I call the force of gravity, as being the one great force which controls my universe. And yet, on second thoughts, I must modify myself. This great force of gravity is not always in the saddle. Sometimes it just is not there--and I lean strangely against a wall. I have been even known to turn upside down, with my wheels in the air; spun by the same mysterious Miss. So that I must introduce a theory of Relativity. However, mostly, when I am awake and alive, she is in the saddle; or it is in the saddle, the mysterious force. And when it is in the saddle, then two subsidiary forces plunge and claw upon my two pedals, plunge and claw with inestimable power. And at the same time, a kind and mysterious force sways my head-stock, sways most incalculably, and governs my whole motion. This force is not a driving force, but a subtle directing force, beneath whose grip my bright steel body is flexible as a dipping highroad. Then let me not forget the sudden clutch of arrest upon my hurrying wheels. Oh, this is pain to me! While I am rushing forward, surpassing myself in an élan vital, suddenly the awful check grips my back wheel, or my front wheel, or both. Suddenly there is a fearful arrest. My soul rushes on before my body, I feel myself strained, torn back. My fibers

groan. Then perhaps the tension relaxes.

So the bicycle will continue to babble about itself. And it will inevitably wind up with a philosophy. "Oh, if only the great and divine force rested for ever upon my saddle, and if only the mysterious will which sways my steering gear remained in place for ever: then my pedals would revolve of themselves, and never cease, and no hideous brake should tear the perpetuity of my motions. Then, oh then I should be immortal. I should leap through the world for ever, and spin to infinity, till I was identified with the dizzy and timeless cycle-race of the stars and the great sun...."

Poor old bicycle. The very thought is enough to start a philanthropic society for the prevention of cruelty to bicycles.

Well, then, our human body is the bicycle. And our individual and incomprehensible self is the rider thereof. And seeing that the universe is another bicycle riding full tilt, we are bound to suppose a rider for that also. But we needn't say what sort of rider. When I see a cockroach scuttling across the floor and turning up its tail I stand affronted, and think: A rum sort of rider you must have.

You've no business to have such a rider, do you hear?--And when I hear the monotonous and plaintive cuckoo in the June woods, I think: Who the devil made that clock?--And when I see a politician making a fiery speech on a platform, and the crowd gawping, I think: Lord, save me--they've all got riders. But Holy Moses! you could never guess what

was coming.--And so I shouldn't like, myself, to start guessing about the rider of the universe. I am all too flummoxed by the masquerade in the tourney round about me.

We ourselves then: wisdom, like charity, begins at home. We've each of us got a rider in the saddle: an individual soul. Mostly it can't ride, and can't steer, so mankind is like squadrons of bicycles running amok. We should every one fall off if we didn't ride so thick that we hold each other up. Horrid nightmare!

As for myself, I have a horror of riding en bloc. So I grind away uphill, and sweat my guts out, as they say.

Well, well--my body is my bicycle: the whole middle of me is the saddle where sits the rider of my soul. And my front wheel is the cardiac plane, and my back wheel is the solar plexus. And the brakes are the voluntary ganglia. And the steering gear is my head. And the right and left pedals are the right and left dynamics of the body, in some way corresponding to the sympathetic and voluntary division.

So that now I know more or less how my rider rides me, and from what centers controls me. That is, I know the points of vital contact between my rider and my machine: between my invisible and my visible self. I don't attempt to say what is my rider. A bicycle might as well try to define its young Miss by wriggling its handle-bars and ringing its bell.

However, having more or less determined the four primary motions, we can see the further unfolding. In a child, the solar plexus and the cardiac plexus, with corresponding voluntary ganglia, are awake and active. From these centers develop the great functions of the body.

As we have seen, it is the solar plexus, with the lumbar ganglion, which controls the great dynamic system, the functioning of the liver and the kidneys. Any excess in the sympathetic dynamism tends to accelerate the action of the liver, to cause fever and constipation. Any collapse of the sympathetic dynamism causes anæmia. The sudden stimulating of the voluntary center may cause diarrhoea, and so on. But all this depends so completely on the polarized flow between the individual and the correspondent, between the child and mother, child and father, child and sisters or brothers or teacher, or circumambient universe, that it is impossible to lay down laws, unless we state particulars. Nevertheless, the whole of the great organs of the lower body are controlled from the two lower centers, and these organs work well or ill according as there is a true dynamic psychic activity at the two primary centers of consciousness. By a true dynamic psychic activity we mean an activity which is true to the individual himself, to his own peculiar soul-nature. And a dynamic psychic activity means a dynamic polarity between the individual himself and other individuals concerned in his living; or between him and his immediate surroundings, human, physical, geographical.

On the upper plane, the lungs and heart are controlled from the cardiac plane and the thoracic ganglion. Any excess in the sympathetic mode from the upper centers tends to burn the lungs with oxygen, weaken them with stress, and cause consumption. So it is just criminal to make a child too loving. No child should be induced to love too much. It means derangement and death at last.

But beyond the primary physiological function--and it is the business of doctors to discover the relation between the functioning of the primary organs and the dynamic psychic activity at the four primary consciousness-centers,--beyond these physical functions, there are the activities which are half-psychic, half-functional. Such as the five senses.

Of the five senses, four have their functioning in the face-region. The fifth, the sense of touch, is distributed all over the body. But all have their roots in the four great primary centers of consciousness. From the constellation of your nerve-nodes, from the great field of your poles, the nerves run out in every direction, ending on the surface of the body. Inwardly this is an inextricable ramification and communication.

And yet the body is planned out in areas, there is a definite area-control from the four centers. On the back the sense of touch is not acute. There the voluntary centers act in resistance. But in the front of the body, the breast is one great field of sympathetic touch,

the belly is another. On these two fields the stimulus of touch is quite different, has a quite different psychic quality and psychic result. The breast-touch is the fine alertness of quivering curiosity, the belly-touch is a deep thrill of delight and avidity.

Correspondingly, the hands and arms are instruments of superb delicate curiosity, and deliberate execution. Through the elbows and the wrists flows the dynamic psychic current, and a dislocation in the current between two individuals will cause a feeling of dislocation at the wrists and elbows. On the lower plane, the legs and feet are instruments of unfathomable gratifications and repudiations. The thighs, the knees, the feet are intensely alive with love-desire, darkly and superbly drinking in the love-contact, blindly. Or they are the great centers of resistance, kicking, repudiating. Sudden flushing of great general sympathetic desire will make a man feel weak at the knees. Hatred will harden the tension of the knees like steel, and grip the feet like talons. Thus the fields of touch are four, two sympathetic fields in front of the body from the throat to the feet, two resistant fields behind from the neck to the heels.

There are two fields of touch, however, where the distribution is not so simple: the face and the buttocks. Neither in the face nor in the buttocks is there one single mode of sense communication.

The face is of course the great window of the self, the great opening of the self upon the world, the great gateway. The lower body has its own gates of exit. But the bulk of our communication with all the

outer universe goes on through the face.

And every one of the windows or gates of the face has its direct communication with each of the four great centers of the first field of consciousness. Take the mouth, with the sense of taste. The mouth is primarily the gate of the two chief sensual centers. It is the gateway to the belly and the loins. Through the mouth we eat and we drink. In the mouth we have the sense of taste. At the lips, too, we kiss. And the kiss of the mouth is the first sensual connection.

In the mouth also are the teeth. And the teeth are the instruments of our sensual will. The growth of the teeth is controlled entirely from the two great sensual centers below the diaphragm. But almost entirely from the one center, the voluntary center. The growth and the life of the teeth depend almost entirely on the lumbar ganglion. During the growth of the teeth the sympathetic mode is held in abeyance. There is a sort of arrest. There is pain, there is diarrhoea, there is misery for the baby.

And we, in our age, have no rest with our teeth. Our mouths are too small. For many ages we have been suppressing the avid, negroid, sensual will. We have been converting ourselves into ideal creatures, all spiritually conscious, and active dynamically only on one plane, the upper, spiritual plane. Our mouth has contracted, our teeth have become soft and un-quickened. Where in us are the sharp and vivid teeth of the wolf, keen to defend and devour? If we had them more, we

should be happier. Where are the white negroid teeth? Where? In our little pinched mouths they have no room. We are sympathy-rotten, and spirit-rotten, and idea-rotten. We have forfeited our flashing sensual power. And we have false teeth in our mouths. In the same way the lips of our sensual desire go thinner and more meaningless, in the compression of our upper will and our idea-driven impulse. Let us break the conscious, self-conscious love-ideal, and we shall grow strong, resistant teeth once more, and the teething of our young will not be the hell it is.

Teething is strictly the period when the voluntary center of the lower plane first comes into full activity, and takes for a time the precedence.

So, the mouth is the great sensual gate to the lower body. But let us not forget it is also a gate by which we breathe, the gate through which we speak and go impalpably forth to our object, the gate at which we can kiss the pinched, delicate, spiritual kiss. Therefore, although the main sensual gate of entrance to the lower body, it has its reference also to the upper body.

Taste, the sense of taste, is an intake of a pure communication between us and a body from the outside world. It contains the element of touch, and in this it refers to the cardiac plexus. But taste, *quâ* taste, refers purely to the solar plexus.

And then smell. The nostrils are the great gate from the wide atmosphere of heaven to the lungs. The extreme sigh of yearning we catch through the mouth. But the delicate nose advances always into the air, our palpable communicator with the infinite air. Thus it has its first delicate root in the cardiac plexus, the root of its intake. And the root of the delicate-proud exhalation, rejection, is in the thoracic ganglion. But the nostrils have their other function of smell. Here the delicate nerve-ends run direct from the lower centers, from the solar plexus and the lumbar ganglion, or even deeper. There is the refined sensual intake when a scent is sweet. There is the sensual repudiation when a scent is unsavoury. And just as the fullness of the lips and the shape of the mouth depend on the development from the lower or the upper centers, the sensual or the spiritual, so does the shape of the nose depend on the direct control of the deepest centers of consciousness. A perfect nose is perhaps the result of a balance in the four modes. But what is a perfect nose!--We only know that a short snub nose goes with an over-sympathetic nature, not proud enough; while a long nose derives from the center of the upper will, the thoracic ganglion, our great center of curiosity, and benevolent or objective control. A thick, squat nose is the sensual-sympathetic nose, and the high, arched nose the sensual voluntary nose, having the curve of repudiation, as when we turn up our nose from a bad smell, but also the proud curve of haughtiness and subjective authority. The nose is one of the greatest indicators of character. That is to say, it almost inevitably indicates the mode of predominant dynamic consciousness in the individual, the predominant

primary center from which he lives.--When savages rub noses instead of kissing, they are exchanging a more sensitive and a deeper sensual salute than our lip-touch.

The eyes are the third great gateway of the psyche. Here the soul goes in and out of the body, as a bird flying forth and coming home. But the root of conscious vision is almost entirely in the breast. When I go forth from my own eyes, in delight to dwell upon the world which is beyond me, outside me, then I go forth from wide open windows, through which shows the full and living lambent darkness of my present inward self. I go forth, and I leave the lovely open darkness of my sentient self revealed; when I go forth in the wonder of vision to dwell upon the beloved, or upon the wonder of the world, I go from the center of the glad breast, through the eyes, and who will may look into the full soft darkness of me, rich with my undiscovered presence. But if I am displeased, then hard and cold my self stands in my eyes, and refuses any communication, any sympathy, but merely stares outwards. It is the motion of cold objectivity from the thoracic ganglion. Or, from the same center of will, cold but intense my eyes may watch with curiosity, as a cat watches a fly. It may be into my curiosity will creep an element of warm gladness in the wonder which I am beholding outside myself. Or it may be that my curiosity will be purely and simply the cold, almost cruel curiosity of the upper will, directed from the ganglion of the shoulders: such as is the acute attention of an experimental scientist.

The eyes have, however, their sensual root as well. But this is hard to transfer into language, as all our vision, our modern Northern vision is in the upper mode of actual seeing.

There is a sensual way of beholding. There is the dark, desirous look of a savage who apprehends only that which has direct reference to himself, that which stirs a certain dark yearning within his lower self. Then his eye is fathomless blackness. But there is the dark eye which glances with a certain fire, and has no depth. There is a keen quick vision which watches, which beholds, but which never yields to the object outside: as a cat watching its prey. The dark glancing look which knows the strangeness, the danger of its object, the need to overcome the object. The eye which is not wide open to study, to learn, but which powerfully, proudly or cautiously glances, and knows the terror or the pure desirability of strangeness in the object it beholds. The savage is all in all in himself. That which he sees outside he hardly notices, or, he sees as something odd, something automatically desirable, something lustfully desirable, or something dangerous. What we call vision, that he has not.

We must compare the look in a horse's eye with the look in a cow's. The eye of the cow is soft, velvety, receptive. She stands and gazes with the strangest intent curiosity. She goes forth from herself in wonder. The root of her vision is in her yearning breast. The same one hears when she moos. The same massive weight of passion is in a bull's breast; the passion to go forth from himself. His strength is in his

breast, his weapons are on his head. The wonder is always outside him.

But the horse's eye is bright and glancing. His curiosity is cautious, full of terror, or else aggressive and frightening for the object. The root of his vision is in his belly, in the solar plexus. And he fights with his teeth, and his heels, the sensual weapons.

Both these animals, however, are established in the sympathetic mode. The life mode in both is sensitively sympathetic, or preponderantly sympathetic. Those animals which like cats, wolves, tigers, hawks, chiefly live from the great voluntary centers, these animals are, in our sense of the word, almost visionless. Sight in them is sharpened or narrowed down to a point: the object of prey. It is exclusive. They see no more than this. And thus they see unthinkably far, unthinkably keenly.

Most animals, however, smell what they see: vision is not very highly developed. They know better by the more direct contact of scent.

And vision in us becomes faulty because we proceed too much in one mode. We see too much, we attend too much. The dark, glancing sightlessness of the intent savage, the narrowed vision of the cat, the single point of vision of the hawk--these we do not know any more. We live far too much from the sympathetic centers, without the balance from the voluntary mode. And we live far, far too much from the upper sympathetic center and voluntary center, in an endless

objective curiosity. Sight is the least sensual of all the senses. And we strain ourselves to see, see, see--everything, everything through the eye, in one mode of objective curiosity. There is nothing inside us, we stare endlessly at the outside. So our eyes begin to fail; to retaliate on us. We go short-sighted, almost in self-protection.

Hearing the last, and perhaps the deepest of the senses. And here there is no choice. In every other faculty we have the power of rejection. We have a choice of vision. We can, if we choose, see in the terms of the wonderful beyond, the world of light into which we go forth in joy to lose ourselves in it. Or we can see, as the Egyptians saw, in the terms of their own dark souls: seeing the strangeness of the creature outside, the gulf between it and them, but finally, its existence in terms of themselves. They saw according to their own unchangeable idea, subjectively, they did not go forth from themselves to seek the wonder outside.

Those are the two chief ways of sympathetic vision. We call our way the objective, the Egyptian the subjective. But objective and subjective are words that depend absolutely on your starting point. Spiritual and sensual are much more descriptive terms.

But there are, of course, also the two ways of volitional vision. We can see with the endless modern critical sight, analytic, and at last deliberately ugly. Or we can see as the hawk sees the one concentrated spot where beats the life-heart of our prey.

In the four modes of sight we have some choice. We have some choice to refuse tastes or smells or touch. In hearing we have the minimum of choice. Sound acts direct upon the great affective centers. We may voluntarily quicken our hearing, or make it dull. But we have really no choice of what we hear. Our will is eliminated. Sound acts direct, almost automatically, upon the affective centers. And we have no power of going forth from the ear. We are always and only recipient.

Nevertheless, sound acts upon us in various ways, according to the four primary poles of consciousness. The singing of birds acts almost entirely upon the centers of the breast. Birds, which live by flight, impelled from the strong conscious-activity of the breast and shoulders, have become for us symbols of the spirit, the upper mode of consciousness. Their legs have become idle, almost insentient twigs. Only the tail flirts from the center of the sensual will.

But their singing acts direct upon the upper, or spiritual centers in us. So does almost all our music, which is all Christian in tendency. But modern music is analytical, critical, and it has discovered the power of ugliness. Like our martial music, it is of the upper plane, like our martial songs, our fifes and our brass-bands. These act direct upon the thoracic ganglion. Time was, however, when music acted upon the sensual centers direct. We hear it still in savage music, and in the roll of drums, and in the roaring of lions, and in the howling of cats. And in some voices still we hear the deeper resonance

of the sensual mode of consciousness. But the tendency is for everything to be brought on to the upper plane, whilst the lower plane is just worked automatically from the upper.