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CHAPTER 2
***Further Insights,
Impulses and Purposes***

These early insights and influences were conceptions of a mentative art, but it took over a quarter of a century to understand their significance by means of further discoveries which more fully interpreted and justified them.—ELMER GATES

Insofar as the result of mentation was an insight that illuminated a subject to make it more interesting to him and arouse his whole disposition, its actual value was in its directive effect, for until validated, Gates cautioned, such insights and ideas are not knowledge and are otherwise valueless. But these intellectual insights and esthetic uplifts and exaltations were often “sun-clear beacons” leading in the right direction, he wrote in Volume 1, so it did not matter whether they were fully true or not as later analyzed. Only a few are given—just enough, he hoped, to convey somewhat of an understanding of the influences and conditions that led to the new methods of research successful in making discoveries and inventions—such a rapid succession that the method became more significant than any or all of the discoveries.

One insight that continued to grow in clearness and force

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was that there is an actual Reality. You know and feel it to be so, else you would not be feeling and knowing. The mind as part, by its Reality nature, ought to be able to know something about that Reality by the mind’s intrinsic mode of knowing as well as by its inductive experience with phenomena and objects.

Another insight was that the mind must find within itself by a study of itself the rock-bottom fact of Reality, and that fact must be the fundamental cause of knowing. “Objective science must derive its sanctions from subjective science” was one of his maxims at the time. Another was “Scientific method is mental method.” He was profoundly convinced that the method by which the sciences are created consists in the mental processes of states by which new and true states (scientific knowledge) are discovered, by which like states are segregated (classification), by which true states are sifted from untrue (validation), by which the world’s fund of states is acquired (education), and by which this knowledge and feeling are applied (practical life). The study of scientific method therefore resolves itself into a study of the mental states and processes by means of which a science is created, learned, and applied.

Another insight was inextricably coupled with an imperative impulse-to-do, which he at once began to carry into deed, and continued throughout his life. It was that the mind having gained such knowledge about itself as that which he had acquired by experimental introspection and other scientific observation and by insight should continue to study itself to get more information about this inner manifestation of Reality and then utilize this information as a guide to more knowledge and experience of the same kind. By introspecting the ways and modes by which this further knowledge is obtained, the mind ought then to discover the true mental method of discovering. A vague glimpse indeed, but an actual beginning of the art of mentation.

If during the past, man's mind has attained any true knowledge whatever, then that proves that the mind can discover knowledge; but first the knowledge must be proved actually true, and how is that to be done? As we do not know, the alternative

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is to take that part of our alleged knowledge that we have most reason to believe true-and not merely hypothesis or theory, tentatively accept it, and proceed to study how the mind attained it. Inasmuch as by that mind man has been able to survive, it presumably is in sufficient harmony with Reality. If there is any true knowledge in those sciences and arts upon whose practical truth modern civilization is based, it must have been put there by the mind of man, and any additional knowledge must be discovered by the activities and functionings of the mind.

Reaching these conclusions was a long and arduous process, animated at every step by the most intense feeling and prayerful eagerness to know the truth. The result of this thinking was that like Socrates, Gates did not know anything for sure. Can the mind ever come to know even one fact for sure? How often during those memorable years did he eagerly wish for just one unquestioned fact! How uncertain everything seemed whenever he realized that neither science nor philosophy had given certainty of one such fact!

"Reality manifests itself to me in two ways," he said: "as my own mind and as the objective world, but that is knowable to me only by means of my mind, and perhaps incompletely and inaccurately and even illusorily. Both of these manifestations constitute the whole Reality as I know it." He had done enough experimental introspection to satisfy himself that this Inner World looks as if seen through glasses, as he said, that are given definite colorings by the mind's own nature out upon the Outer World, and that the distortions, limitations, tintings, and shadings of these glasses add their own modifications to what is seen. Thus by

mental steps of his own he had independently arrived at Kant's doctrine that the mind impresses its own constitutive nature upon the knowledge that is obtained of outward things. But he saw, he believed, a little further: ". . . while the mind impresses its own nature upon outward things, it happens that the nature of mind and the nature of outward things are one and the same nature, because both are manifestations of the same Reality, constituting two forms of that which exists, and therefore these

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natures must be alike and corroborative of each other. The mind puts its stamp on what is known of outward things and on them (insofar as it purposively modifies them), and the outward world puts its stamp on the mind, and this mutual modification is all a causal and functional part of one cosmic process. These are objective and subjective factors that are both produced by an activity of a Reality of which the inner and outer worlds are symptoms, and the method which, as a result of the interaction of the two worlds produces knowing, may be discovered by an introspection of that which does the knowing; by an observation of that which is known; and by effecting a synthesis of the two kinds of data."

His conclusion, also otherwise arrived at, was that the Outer World cannot be known without the Inner World, and the Inner World cannot know itself without the Outer World, and neither can exist without the other, nor can the two worlds exist without the hitherto unidentified Third World.

Still another insight was accompanied by such an inexorable impulse- to-do that it immediately became his Life-purpose: to select someone with a good mind and set it to work on these problems and then keep it at work from earliest youth to fullest maturity, so that by trying longer and harder than ever before attempted, it might attain a wider experience and a higher knowledge in that domain. This mind should be systematically trained in introspection from childhood to adulthood to create an introspectional specialist, just as a violinist must be trained from early youth. Furthermore, this introspector should have inherited a special aptitude or genius for introspecting, just as the great violinist must begin with a special musical aptitude. If this plan were conscientiously and ably carried out, notable results might be anticipated. If a mind thus set apart and consecrated to the special task of studying itself were to attain the highest results, it should not be unnecessarily disturbed or interrupted during its great attempt, requiring such a selection and regulation of environmental, bodily, and mental conditions as would not divert or retard its natural development.

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Gates decided to immediately select an average mind like his own, or better, and put it to work, not so much for the new knowledge as to discover the mental methods by which it was attained. That knowledge would then be applied to the improvement of mental methods and the perfection of mental states and processes so that ultimately, by knowing how more skillfully and efficiently to use itself in mentating, the mind might be better able to discover enough more knowledge about itself to still further improve its methods, states, and processes, and so on, until by perpetual improvement it would attain such skill and knowledge of the art of mind-using as would enable it to discover a sure and certain basis of knowledge—if such was within the limits of human possibility.

“With an irresistible impulse-to-do that swept me from every mooring and with a conviction that knew no alternative,” Gates wrote, “I concluded to select my own mind for this great task. I deliberated, trying to find sufficient reasons for a course in life I knew I was bound to take. I had a wholesome attitude towards my lifework, took deep joy in it, and desired to use it for the good of others. I had taken steps in the study of the mind, much bigger ones than I could then describe. I knew that I knew many new things about the mind that were of utmost importance. I was actually engaged in psychologic research, and all that was necessary was to continue my training until the maturity of middle life to make me a technically-equipped specialist along that line; and along with this training I could make a serious lifework of the study of the Inner and Outer Worlds and their relations. Had it been possible to find anyone else willing to put his whole life to this task I would gladly have supported him, guarded him, and supplied experimental facilities, but as I could find no one that seemed to have anything like my own introspective skill or enthusiasm, I rejoicingly accepted or rather usurped the task for myself; or unfortunately I accepted both tasks, that of making the researches and the money to support them.”

Otherwise stated, a study of the mind to determine something

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definite about its inner nature and the nature of its relation to the Outer World, its possibilities, its modes of functioning and the methods of mind-using, the reliability and validity of its knowledge, was the life-work he most ambitiously undertook.

A further development of this purpose led to a determination to start with a knowledge of all that the world already knew about these subjects—to glean from every domain every fact, law,

principle, incident that might promote mental activity, improve mental methods, and augment vital energy. He planned a course of reading with assistants to collate whatever information might be obtained, but was disappointed. He found very little, and concluded that the required knowledge would be found not in books but in a scientific study of his mind by experiment in his own laboratory. The human race had not had its attention called to methods of mental functioning from the standpoint of an art of promoting it, he observed; consequently literature was practically silent on the subject.

His close associate at the time was his uncle, Jesse Franz, and with a dry humor to match. Gates enjoyed telling this story about him. "One day my uncle remarked that I would surely die of old age before I could collate the sum of human knowledge; that I would have to confine myself to my specialties, physics and psychology. I replied, holding a little book towards him, 'I have already found a beginning.' Looking at the diminutive volume he gave me a questioning glance and I mentioned the name of the book, 'Watts On the Mind.' Misunderstanding, he replied 'Nothing much, but there will soon be plenty on my mind if I learn all you collate if you get that lightning activity of yours focused on the job.' "But soon all the subjects like planets were revolving around the central sun of my scheme as I outlined it, and he gave me considerable money and helped at the work until he died soon after. Just before his death he jocosely remarked that 'If your work is destined to have a like effect on helpers, you would do well to insure their lives in your favor.' And dear Uncle Jesse died in my arms."

"Words cannot convey how deeply I regretted not having a

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gigantic intellect of an Aristotle or a Newton," he despaired, "so I might be able to better cope with the difficulties of my task." He felt cheated, that out of the infinite opulence of existence there had not been given him equal facility in every line. Feeling sorely the weight of his responsibility, he resolved not to shirk the opportunity, hoping that his excessive love of the work and his unbounded desire to accomplish it might in a measure supply whatever abilities he might lack; and he believed an art of mentating would soon make up for any deficiencies.

"These insight-urgings and impulse-plans," he emphasized, were not mere intellectual understandings but very much more; events in a life that amount to a crisis. The emotive concomitant is intense, like emotion in a dream, with the unswerving urge and responsibility of the work felt as a mission, as a 'call' in the evangelical sense, and this change in a life is psychologically like a

religious ‘conversion.’ The intellectual part of an insight-impulsion is like the flash of a firefly while the emotive impulsion is like illumination of the morning sun.”

In addition to the money his Uncle Jesse had given, Gates had some of his own, and he made some more. So began two other lines of research in which he was “almost breathlessly interested”: an experimental study of introspection, and an experimental study of the effects of bodily and environmental conditions on mentation. His laboratory notes on these two subjects were so mixed, he pointed out, and their mutual bearing so intimate, that it was not easy to segregate them.

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