

## THE PRIMARY CONTROL

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The phrase “primary control” is familiar to all students of the AT. This little paper summarises all Alexander’s references to it in his books, as well as in the collected edition of his *Articles and Lectures*. The first appearance of the term appears to be in the lecture delivered by Alexander to Child-Study Society in February 1925 which is quoted below.

This little exercise has been greatly eased by the meticulous work of Jean Fischer in annotating and indexing the works of Alexander in the beautifully produced Mouritz editions of *Articles and Lectures* and *Constructive Conscious Control of the Individual* from which the bulk of the quotations are taken.

Each reference is quoted fairly fully to provide a reasonable impression of what Alexander was talking about. Where italics are used in the quotations, they are in the original.

### **From Articles and Lectures (A&L)<sup>1</sup>**

From a letter published in the *British Medical Journal (BMJ)* 9 July 1932

**I emphasized (1) that my work is solely concerned with the restoration and establishment of a trustworthy sensory appreciation of the use of the psycho-physical mechanisms, by means of a technique which depends upon the employment of a consciously directed primary control, . . .<sup>2</sup>**

From later in the same letter

**In view of the gravity of the issue involved, I would ask that medical men should judge the procedures that I have set down in my book by the principle that underlies them, and prove the soundness of both principle and procedures by such tests as are consistent with their knowledge of physiology, anatomy and psychology. On the strength of forty years’ practical experience I am bold enough to believe that this would result in proof of the soundness of my technique as conclusive as has been the case with regard to my employment of the primary control, the existence of which has been conclusively proved by the experimentation of the late Rudolph Magnus of Utrecht.<sup>3</sup>**

From the typescript of lecture to the Child-Study Society given on 19 February 1925. The typescript was apparently prepared by Irene Tasker.

**Regarding the central control: in the technique I am using, it will interest you to know that during the past fifteen years, Magnus has worked to explain the scientific significance – as has been brought to our notice recently by Sir Charles Sherrington – in connection with that very control which I have been using for twenty-five years. The direction of the head and neck being of primary importance, he found, as I found, that if we get the right direction from this primary control, the control of the rest of the organism is a simple matter.<sup>4</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander (1995)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.p133

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p134

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.p141

The following quotations are from a lecture delivered to the Bedford Physical Training College delivered on 3 August 1934.

When people decided that the cause of the trouble was physical deterioration and said “Now we are going to do something to develop our muscles,” they were at a disadvantage in thinking out what to do, as compared with us today, for this reason: in the meantime the primary control of the use of the mechanisms by means of which you do your physical movements and exercises, has been discovered. Our predecessors did not know of this primary control. It was discovered at a much later period, some thirty years ago, and in recent years that discovery has been substantiated by the findings of no less a person than Professor Rudolph Magnus, of Utrecht, and generally recognised. Magnus found, by conducting experiments upon anaesthetized animals in the laboratory, that any interference with the controls concerned with the use of the head and neck in relation to the trunk modified and changed the use of the limbs.

Those of you who have read *The Use of the Self* will know how, after long experimentation on myself when I was trying to overcome my own difficulties, I found that a certain control of the use of my head and neck in relation to my back brought about a more satisfactory working of the musculature, and not only relieved my special difficulty but improved conditions generally. In working with my pupils I have used this experience and have found as soon as you can establish this “primary control,” as we call it, satisfactory control of the rest of the workings of the organism can be expected to follow in due time, according to the conditions present. I want you just to think for a moment of the difference this is going to make to all of us. Just compare the position of our predecessors who had to work in the dark, as it were, when they were trying to solve the problem of physical deterioration, with our position today now that the existence of this primary control is known and scientifically recognised. The primary control is there for anyone who cares to come along and use it. <sup>5</sup>

Our friend must have been a beautifully built man in his young days, but immediately he was told by his teacher to put his shoulders down, guided by his already untrustworthy sense mechanisms – as we all are – instead of putting his shoulder down, as he intended, he knocked the side of his chest right in. He went on playing golf for a number of years and became one of the champion golfers of this country. And all the time he was playing, he was pulling his head back and interfering with the primary control.<sup>6</sup>

I got a chair and asked him to sit down and he sat down very much like this. That is a complete interference with the primary control that Magnus has worked out. I pointed this out to him, and he knew enough of physiology to know that I was right.<sup>7</sup>

“Instead of sitting down,” I said, “I want you to give certain orders which will affect the primary control, and then let me, with my hands, do the activity side of it. Allow your knees to go forward and you will be sitting down.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.p164

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.p166

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.p166

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.p167

The next point is this. If there is such a thing as primary control, and if I have the habit of pulling the head back, which is a very common fault today, supposing you ask me to pull that finger up, I shall pull my head back to do it.

I cannot get any direction from my brain through to my arm until it comes through my torso, and the movement of the arm will be affected by whatever sensory and other conditions are present in my torso as the direction is sent through to my hands. So much so, that if we have a person with some trouble with the use of the arms or fingers, we do not need to touch the use of the arms or fingers. This we can demonstrate. All we have to do is to restore the use of the primary control, and the use of the arms or fingers will come right in the process.<sup>9</sup>

I admit, of course, that you can make a change in the use of the arm and hand by various methods, but in order to see what you have really done, you must come back and examine what you have done with the use of the primary control and the torso.<sup>10</sup>

Now I want her to come forward. She would have to make an effort to come forward from there, you might think. But she is not going to make any effort. As I take her forward, watch the relativity of this head and neck to her body, and see how I get her up. I am simply going to show here how to use this primary control.<sup>11</sup>

Now I want her to go back, but she says “no.” You see how the head is adjusting itself, as I put her body back. That is due to the work of the primary control.

I see my time is up. May I show you just once again? This primary control is made up of the processes which control the use of the head and neck in relation to the body and enables us to use ourselves in the right way...The working is all antagonistic. When the head is put forward, the body is pulled back; when the head is pulled back, the body is put forward. This is the way the primary control usually works.<sup>12</sup>

That is because you are not using this primary control. I know it is difficult but it must be given to the pupils.<sup>13</sup>

This quotation is from Alexander’s draft notes for lecture he gave St Dunstan’s school for blind ex-servicemen. In the discussion Alexander remarks that ... **the primary control “knows” more about the human organism than he or anyone else does.**<sup>14</sup>

This is one of Alexander’s teaching aphorisms from the 1930s

I am going to bring you as few details as possible because of the primary control.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p170

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.p171

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.p175

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.p176

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.p180

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.p190

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.p193

## From The Use of the Self<sup>16</sup>

Another omission on the part of my correspondents is that nowhere in the account of their difficulties do they refer to the primary control of use. This is particularly significant, because it was my early recognition of the need for preventing what was wrong that led me to the discovery of the primary control of my use, and I emphasized this discovery as the all-important one in my efforts to teach myself. I ask those readers, therefore, who are anxious to teach themselves, to re-read this chapter, in which I give not only an account of my difficulties but also of the means whereby I freed myself from them. They will then see that the discovery of the primary control opened up a road by which I could make a safe passage from "idealistic theory to actual practice," as long as I relied upon a conscious instead of upon an automatic sensory guidance. We cannot do this securely while relying for guidance on "feeling" and the will-to-do motivated by instincts, many of which have outgrown their usefulness, and which are associated with untrustworthy experiences which "feel right."<sup>17</sup>

This led me to a discovery which turned out to be of great importance, namely, that when I succeeded in preventing the pulling back of the head, this tended indirectly to check the sucking in of breath and the depressing of the larynx.

*The importance of this discovery cannot be overestimated, for through it I was led on to the further discovery of the primary control of the working of all the mechanisms of the human organism, and this marked the first important stage of my investigation.*<sup>18</sup>

...in short, that to lengthen *I must put my head forward and up.*

*As is shewn by what follows, this proved to be the primary control of my use in all my activities.*<sup>19</sup>

Such direction, being as unreasoned as that of the animal, cannot be compared with that conscious reason direction which is associated with a primary control of the mechanisms of the self as a working unity.<sup>20</sup>

(2) project in their sequence the directions for the primary control which I had reasoned out as being best for the purpose of bringing about the new and improved use of myself in speaking.<sup>21</sup>

Another point of importance in relation to the control of human reaction is that it was through my discovery of the primary control that I was able to bring about the improvement in the sensory appreciation of the use of my mechanisms which was associated with the improvement of functioning throughout my organism. By the time I had reached the stage when a new manner of use had become

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<sup>16</sup> Alexander (1932) p

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.p18-19

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p27-28

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.p30

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.p37

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.p45

established through my conscious employment of this primary control, I was able, when the stimulus came to me to use my voice to recite, to inhibit my instinctive misdirection leading to the old harmful use of my head and neck and vocal organs, and so to my hoarseness, and to substitute for it a conscious direction leading to a new use of my head, neck and vocal organs which was not associated with my hoarseness.<sup>22</sup>

That fact that I was able, through my employment of the primary control, to bring about such an improvement in my reaction to the stimulus to use my voice that vocal activity did not result in hoarseness, is proof that quite early in my experiences a practical means had been found whereby my habitual reflex activity was "conditioned" as a natural consequence of the procedure adopted, since the new reflex activity to which it was changed *in the process* was associated with new and improved general conditions of use and functioning.<sup>23</sup>

More than this, my experience has shewn that in cases where the knowledge of how to direct the primary control has led to a change for the better in the manner of use of the mechanisms throughout the organism, the results of this 'conditioning' can safely be left to take their own form.<sup>24</sup>

The experiences I gained in dealing with my own difficulties have proved of the greatest value to me in dealing practically with the difficulties and requirements of my pupils. First and foremost, I learned from these experiences that I could not enable my pupils to control the functioning of their organs, systems, or reflexes *directly*, but that by teaching them to employ consciously the primary control of their use I could put them in command of the means whereby their functioning generally can be *indirectly* controlled.<sup>25</sup>

I would refer my readers back to Chapter 1 where I described the experiments which led to my discovering that there is a primary control of the use of the self, which governs the working of all the mechanisms and so renders the control of the complex human organism comparatively simple.

This primary control, called by the late Professor Magnus of Utrecht the 'central control', depends upon a certain use of the head and neck in relation to the rest of the body, and once the pupil has inhibited the instinctive misdirection leading to his faulty habitual use, the teacher must begin the process of building up the new use by giving the pupil the primary direction towards the establishment of this primary control.<sup>26</sup>

I began by giving him

- (1) the directions for the inhibition of the wrong habitual use of his mechanisms associated with the excessive muscle tension;

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.p49-50

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.p50

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.p51

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.p51

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.p65

- (2) the directions for the employment of the primary control leading to a new and improved use which would be associated with a due amount of muscle tension.<sup>27</sup>

After my pupil had shown me the exercises he had been told to do, I explained to him that in practising them he had been indulging in his old wrong habits of general use of himself, and thereby actually *cultivating* the wrong habits of use of his tongue and lips which had made him stutter. I impressed upon him once more that if he wished ever to be confident of saying T and D, and words in which these consonants occur, without stuttering, *he must refuse to respond to any stimulus either from within or without to say T or D*—in other words, whenever the idea of saying T or D came to him, he must inhibit his desire to try to say it correctly, until he had learned what use of his tongue and lips was required in his case for saying T or D without stuttering, and until he could put into practice the necessary directions for this new use of his tongue and lips *whilst continuing to give the directions for the primary control of the new and improved use of himself generally*.<sup>28</sup>

But where the use of the self is concerned, there is a standard which can generally be accepted, for it can be demonstrated that a certain manner of use of the mechanisms is found in association with a certain satisfactory standard of functioning and with conditions of health and general well-being. We are surely justified in considering a manner of use that is associated with such desirable conditions to be "natural" or "right" under all circumstances. But this is not a fixed standard of "right" in the accepted meaning of the word, for this manner of use being based upon a primary control of the mechanisms of the organism is one that can be applied and adapted to meet all circumstances, and its "rightness" may therefore be said to be relative to these circumstances.<sup>29</sup>

### From The Universal Constant in Living (UCL)<sup>30</sup>

The close connection which I observed to exist between the processes of use and functioning, and which worked as I saw from the whole to the part, was sound evidence to me of an integrated working of the organism; and when in working to this principle I discovered the existence of a control of this integrated working, which, according as it was employed, influenced for good or ill my general functioning, I realized that I had not only come upon the primary control of the integrated working of the psycho-physical mechanism in the use of the self that I needed to bring about a change in my own reaction, but that, by the objective proof emerging from my observations and the procedures I employed, the concept of the organism-as-a-whole had been placed upon a foundation that could be scientifically explained.<sup>31</sup>

...I discovered that a certain use of the head in relation to the neck, and of the head and neck in relation to the torso and the other parts of the organism, if consciously and continually employed, ensures, as was shown in my own case, the establishment of a manner of use of the self as a *whole* which provides the

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.p73

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.78

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.102-103

<sup>30</sup> Alexander (1946)p

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.pxxiv

best conditions for raising the standard of functioning of the various mechanisms, organs and systems. I found that in practice this use of the parts, beginning with the use of the head in relation to the neck, constituted a primary control of the mechanisms as a whole, involving control *in process* right through the organism, and that when I interfered with the employment of the primary control of my manner of use, this was always associated with a lowering of the standard of my general functioning. This brought me to realize that I had found a way by which we can judge whether the influence of our manner of use is affecting our general functioning adversely or otherwise, the criterion being whether or not this manner of use is interfering with the correct employment of the primary control.

Unfortunately the great majority of civilized people have come to use themselves in such a way in everything they are doing they are constantly interfering in a greater or lesser degree with the correct employment of the primary control of their use....<sup>32</sup>

Whether they are being instructed in a school subject such as mathematics, French, etc., being coached for games or athletics, or being taught the specific technique of some art or craft, the adverse influence of any interference with the correct employment of the primary control of their use will tend constantly to lower the standard of their functioning and the quality of their output.

When on the other hand, a person's manner of use is such that there is no interference with the correct employment of the primary control, it means that an influence is constantly operating in his favour, tending always to raise the standard of functioning within the self, both in outside activity and during sleep.

The full significance of this will be apparent to those of us who have had experience of applying my technique consistently to the task of changing use by the indirect method of preventing interference with the manner of employment of the primary control, for this experience involves a practical demonstration that *our manner of use is a constant influence for good or ill upon our general functioning*.<sup>33</sup>

For many reasons I have refused up to the present to publish particulars of cases, but I am now tempted to quote from some of the medical evidence at my disposal, because it supports my contention that interference with the correct employment of the primary control of use is a potent factor in inducing and maintaining the harmful functioning accompanying conditions of ill-health. For many years I have demonstrated in my daily work with pupils that wrong employment of the primary control of use can be checked, and the evidence of my medical friends and supporters encourages me to believe that a fuller understanding of the nature of the working of the primary control, and of the influence of this upon the general working of the organism, will help us to understand more fully the nature of the interference with manner of use and standard of general functioning which is becoming an ever more determining factor in the growing incidence of defects and disease.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.p8

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.p9

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.p15

(These people)... were sent to me for help by their medical advisers because the medical or other remedial measures prescribed had not met with the success hoped for. The striking characteristic which I observed to be common to all these cases was a misdirection and misuse of the parts which was associated with an extreme interference with the subject's employment of the primary control of use, leading to such painful conditions as undue lumbar curve of the spine, undue tension of the neck, arms, and legs, and over-action of muscle groups of the organism.<sup>35</sup>

The abnormalities, so evident in his case, would not have been likely to develop if his use of himself had not been harmful, the fundamental influence constantly operating towards the development of these abnormalities being his habitual interference with the employment of his primary control in all the acts of life. Therefore only by changing his habitual manner of employing the primary control of his use of himself could a permanent improvement in these abnormalities be expected.<sup>36</sup>

This condition of overaction of muscle groups is not present in cases where there is correct employment of the primary control; but this is not taken into account by those who diagnose postural defects without consideration of the influence of use upon general functioning, and who prescribe the practice of exercises, remedial or otherwise.<sup>37</sup>

Dr Caldwell's next statement, therefore, that "Alexander teaches how to inhibit the reflex spasm, that is the real secret," is most significant, for it shows that he understands *why* the particular means employed in my technique in Mr B's case came about as an *indirect* result of the pupil's learning to inhibit the wrong employment of the primary control of his use.<sup>38</sup>

Later on, when I had learned through experience what a harmful influence wrong employment of the primary control of use, associated as it is with perverted sensory appreciation (feeling), can exert upon functioning, I came to understand why I had miscalculated the difficulty of my problem.<sup>39</sup>

It means that on the receipt of a given stimulus to perform some act which we have decided is necessary for the change of our habitual reaction, **CONSENT TO PERFORM THE ACT MUST BE WITHHELD, NOT GIVEN**, in order that our habitual reaction may be held in check, and the usual messages to the motor nerve and muscle mechanisms which determine our manner of employing the primary control of our use in our habitual reaction not projected. This clears the way for us to project new messages which in time will be associated with new and unfamiliar use of the mechanisms in activity, thus bringing about a change in the employment of the primary control, and thereby indirectly a change in the manner of our habitual reaction.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.p16

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.p20

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.p21

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.p22

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.p23

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.p25

This change, brought about by means which determine the manner of employment of the primary control, goes on throughout the organism, and brings about improvement in the use of the self in general.<sup>41</sup>

It is not possible to set down full details of the stages this pupil passed through before he learned to inhibit his end-gaining habit and to modify the undue and harmful tension which he exerted throughout his organism, and which impeded me in my attempts to give him with my hands the experience he needed for improving the employment of his primary control. The time came when the changes made in the relativity of the head to the neck, and the neck and head to the torso and limbs, and therefore in the manner of use generally, tended to reduce the pressure exercised by the old use on the cervical spine. These changes in relativity were the indirect means of correcting the wrong axis of the head, of modifying the reflex spasm of overaction of muscle groups....<sup>42</sup>

(The following quotation refers to a woman suffering from tic douloureux – now known as trigeminal neuralgia – in which intense brief stabbing pains are felt in the cheeks, lips, gums and chin on one side of the face)

In this case there was extreme mal-coordination and maladjustment associated with undue and harmful interference with the employment of the primary control of the manner of use of the different parts of the organism.<sup>43</sup>

This will at least draw attention once more to a fact which cannot be too often emphasized – namely, that it is the whole psycho-physical self, the whole human organism with all its manifold functions, which gains in efficiency and well-being from the correct employment of the primary control of use in every activity of life.<sup>44</sup>

...employing the procedures of the technique which I have outlined one can help a person afflicted, for instance, with osteo-arthritis, or spasmodic torticollis to overcome gradually his habit of interfering with the employment of the primary control of the use of himself, and so indirectly bring about a constant improvement in the manner of the use of his general use. The pupil who, with the aid of his teacher, learns to employ these procedures as a means of gaining the end he desires, begins a process of change by starting with the inhibition of the misdirection of his habitual employment of the primary control associated with his harmful functioning.... At a certain stage of his work the pupil becomes able to project with confidence the new messages necessary to an improving employment of his primary control, and continues with this reconditioning process in his daily life.<sup>45</sup>

I was not concerned with the *curing* of osteo-arthritis, spasmodic torticollis, deformity, wrong axis of the head, reflex spasm, headache or pain *as such*;...My concern is always to try to re-establish as a *constant* that the employment of the primary control of use with its associated standard of functioning which is found

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.p26

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.p27

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.p31

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.p35

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.p39

present in people who are not in need of “cure,” but are instead in what can be described as good health.

I have yet to see a person afflicted with the conditions in need of “cure” which were present in such cases as those we have been discussing whose employment of the primary control is not having a *constant* harmful effect upon his manner of general use, and therefore upon the standard of his general functioning.<sup>46</sup>

...his unreliable sensory guidance will lead him to a wrong employment of the primary control of his use of himself which will be a constant influence working against him during the performance of his exercises, while in most cases the harmful effect of this influence upon his general functioning will be increased by any effort he makes TO DO the exercise “right,” because, as already explained, his “right” is wrong use of himself.<sup>47</sup>

That is to say, unless he has been taught the correct use of his primary control, his ‘standing up’ will only be another form of wrongness associated with his slouching.<sup>48</sup>

The idea of health cannot be disassociated from that of an optimum standard of functioning when, in all his activities, there is such interference with the employment of the primary control that his manner of use of himself is constantly lowering the standard of his general functioning. It is certain that the practice of the exercises advocated will tend to exaggerate any such interference with the primary control of use, and so lower still further the standard of general functioning.

...if specific effects are to be secured in accordance with scientific method and in such a way as to be lasting they must be gained not by direct but by *indirect* means which involve a knowledge of the use of the primary control. Any one who employs the technique described in my books can demonstrate this for himself, for the technique is based on the indivisibility of individual human potentialities in action, of which the primary control is the governor. But the committee makes no mention of such a control, despite the fact that the findings of the late Rudolph Magnus established its existence, and that a detailed description of my discovery and use of this control in a technique is to be found in *The Use of the Self*.<sup>49</sup>

When arriving at their conclusions they placed themselves at great disadvantage by ignoring

1. *The discovery of a primary control of use;*<sup>50</sup>

I then explained to him that a different result could not be expected, because it is highly probable that those for whom the games were planned were already interfering with the proper use of the primary control, and that they would exaggerate this misuse in playing games.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.p40

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.p43

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.p46

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.p48

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.p49

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.p50

If people who are in need of physical exercises are habitually interfering with the working of their primary control to the extent of upsetting their functioning, it stands to reason that any extra muscular tension they exert in the practice of exercises will increase this habitual interference...

As long as we adhere in everything we do to the principle of consciously inhibiting interference with the employment of the primary control, then our ordinary daily activities can be made a constant means of psycho-physical development in its fullest sense. The instinctive misdirection which led to interference with the employment of the primary control will be changed to a conscious guidance of the use of the self, associated with reliability of sensory appreciation.<sup>52</sup>

...I have found that in cases where such changes for ill have developed, the employment of the primary control is being interfered with in all activity, and there is a constant tendency towards wrong conditions, whereas, and equally beyond dispute, where this control is not interfered with, the tendency towards wrong conditions is changed to a tendency towards good conditions. From this we can postulate that the human being who would be a good subject for the application of the principle of prevention in the wider sense would be one in whom the employment of the primary control of use ensures the best possible standard of functioning of all parts and processes, as well as the healthiest chemical composition of the tissues.<sup>53</sup>

Therefore, even if he chances (though this is most unlikely) to be asked to give advice to a patient whose employment of the primary control has not been interfered with, he cannot pass on to him the knowledge which would enable him to prevent himself from doing anything that would interfere with this employment in carrying out his future activities, much less give to a patient who is found to be interfering with the employment of his primary control the means whereby the correct employment of this primary control could be restored. If in this latter case the doctor should attempt to improve the patient's health and well-being by means that do not include the bringing about of an associated improvement in the employment of the primary control of the use of himself, he will be leaving the constant harmful influence of this use upon the patient's general functioning as a legacy for future trouble.

When a baby is born with a correct working of the primary control, the application of prevention will resolve itself into providing the means whereby this state of use and functioning could be maintained in living.<sup>54</sup>

Any interference with the right working of the primary control of the manner of use during our daily activities is certain to become exaggerated in learning to carry out new industrial work, or in practising physical or other exercises.<sup>55</sup>

I particularly noticed a bad curvature of the cervical spine, and undue tension in the muscles of the left side of the neck due to her wrong employment of the

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.p52

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.p60

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.p61

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.62

primary control, and the resultant misdirection was apparent in everything she did.<sup>56</sup>

But if he cannot diagnose those incipient functional troubles of which wrong employment of the primary control of use is the forerunner, it is not his own fault but that of his training.<sup>57</sup>

The control that is meant by reconditioning in my sense is made possible by that employment of the primary control which – again as Dewey puts it – “conditions all other reactions, brings the conditioning factor under conscious direction, and enables the individual to take possession of his own potentialities. It converts the fact of conditioned reflexes from a principle of external enslavement into a means of vital freedom.”<sup>58</sup>

...the teacher will ask the pupil to give the new messages necessary to carrying out the new "means-whereby" required for bringing about that employment of the primary control of the use of himself which is fundamental in reconditioning reflexes. At the same time the teacher will with his hands give the pupil the actual sensory experience of this new employment of the primary control, and thus will be able to help him to maintain the improving manner of use which results from this new experience in making any movement that may be required in the course of the lesson, such as that of moving from standing to sitting in a chair. By this means a real change, however small, will have been made, and it will be found that this is the beginning of a process of reconditioning leading in time to permanent change in use, functioning, and structural conditions.<sup>59</sup>

The habitual wrong employment of the primary control of the pupil's use of himself, responsible for his reaction in performing such acts as sitting in and rising from a chair, is *prevented*, and is gradually superseded by a new and improved manner of use which, by a reconditioning procedure, is associated with new reflex activity.

By steps more or less slow, according to the difficulties to be overcome, the pupil passes from the stage of preventing the repetition of the wrong employment of the primary control of the general use in such acts as sitting or standing to gaining those new experiences of use in which *the proper relativity* of the parts concerned is brought about.<sup>60</sup>

Up to this point it will be understood that all the pupil has been asked to do is to apply his principle to the circumstances of the lesson, but after some time the pupil can begin the inhibition of the wrong use of the primary control in all the simple and other acts of life, for this is largely a matter of that process of remembering which is involved in "thinking in activity" - a new way of living - and when once he has experienced the joy and satisfaction of this, it is difficult to believe that the old way could be reverted to.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.p67

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.p68

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.p74

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.p82

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.p83

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.p84

This misconception comes from failure to recognize that in the majority of people today misdirection has crept into the automatic working of guidance and control of the use of the self, and that it is necessary, as a preliminary to making changes, to restore reliable guidance and control, and to this end to employ a technique by means of which we can bring about that manner of employment of the primary control which has an *integrating influence* upon the mechanisms of the organism. <sup>62</sup>

Those who have established physiological data after observing the working of the human mechanisms in living subjects had not the knowledge which could have enabled them to assess either the influence of wrong employment of the primary control upon the muscle action, or of the manner of use upon the general functioning of the subjects they were observing, or of the effect of stimuli upon the latter or upon their own reaction during their observations. This would account for the serious errors and misleading information to be found in authoritative works on physiology. <sup>63</sup>

It calls for the unity in action of the psycho-physical processes in

1. conceiving what is required or desired to be done; and in
2. withholding or giving consent to doing it

- in other words, it means either refraining from, or giving consent to, sending the messages to the muscles to be employed in accordance with the subject's manner of employing them, this in turn being determined by his manner of employing the primary control. <sup>64</sup>

May it not be that the concept of separation which led to the study of the organism in parts – as in anatomy, physiology and psychology – is responsible for the failure of the work in these fields to discover the existence of a primary control of the organism, or to recognize the influence of use upon functioning in its fullest sense. <sup>65</sup>

My experience as a teacher of the technique is derived from demonstrating daily to every one of my pupils that there is a primary control of the use of the mechanisms of the self, and that in taking full advantage of the influence for good in correctly employing this primary control we hold the key to the bringing about of the 'normal working of the postural mechanisms' as a whole. Furthermore, the gradual influence for good exerted by the correct employment of the primary control on the general functioning throughout the organism can be readily appreciated by the least attentive observer...

Those who laid the foundations of our present knowledge of physiology and anatomy were ignorant of the existence of this primary control....Some twenty-eight years after I discovered this control and employed it in a technique the late Rudolph Magnus announced his discovery of it and its function, and Sir Charles Sherrington referred to this announcement in his Presidential Address to the Royal Society.

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.p92

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.p105

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.p106

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.p107

(referring to a psychologist who) writes that 'the underlying basis of anatomy and physiology is a complex business,' I would point out that where the employment of the use of the mechanisms is satisfactory, complexity in the workings of these mechanisms presents no difficulty. I contend that that this would apply equally to the physiologist's inquiries and experimentation if he had had a theoretical and practical knowledge of the use of the primary control of the mechanisms he is concerned with. It is only when the use of the mechanisms is misdirected, so that there is interference with the employment of the primary control, that the working of the complex mechanisms becomes complicated and gives rise to difficulties...<sup>66</sup>

It has not surprised me that physiologists, anatomists, physical cultureless, and others should not have troubled to examine the facts concerning my discovery of a primary control of manner of use of the self even after I had demonstrated its existence in practical application, for, after all, I am an outsider. <sup>67</sup>

...I do wish to point out, however, that the dissociated action of the auricles and ventricles which Mackenzie observed was not really dissociated, any more than any other function can be dissociated from the indirect influence of the use of the primary control. So far as I can judge, Mackenzie was unaware of the existence of a primary control, and of its influence upon the working of the mechanisms of the organism functioning as an indivisible unity. Consequently, he is not likely to have been aware of the nature of its influence upon the functioning of the auricles and ventricles in the living human being.

Curious, is it not, that failure or comparative failure to solve important problems in a given sphere has not led physiologists to suspect that in making the deductions upon which they based the means employed for gaining their ends they had overlooked essential premisses? A re-examination on these lines today would surely lead them to admit the existence of the primary control, and that this is the fundamental premiss on which to base the solving of the problems.<sup>68</sup>

Further, may I point out that my practice and theory is not affected by the question as to whether or not reflexes are primary and integration of the "total pattern" secondary in behaviour, for the employment of the primary control in my technique is inseparable from the inhibitory procedures necessary to the reconditioning of the reflexes and to the integration of the "total pattern" involving the same procedures in a unified process. <sup>69</sup>

For it can be demonstrated that wrong use, which is always associated with wrong functioning, can be changed indirectly to right use by changing the employment of the primary control, and that in the process wrong functioning is restored to right functioning; whereas any attempt to restore right functioning specifically by direct means can only be palliative, because it still leaves the patient beset with the constant harmful influence of use which will consistently tend to lower the standard of his general functioning.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.p109

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.p110

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.p111

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.p116

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.117

These "means-whereby" are all-important, because upon them depends that employment of the primary control of the use of ourselves by means of which we learn to know *how* we do the thing we are doing. Moreover, we come to a standard by which we recognize the "right degree of action" and "co-ordinative management" of the psycho-physical mechanisms in the performance of any act, whether that of "standing" or any other. Further, when for any reason the integrated and complex working of these mechanisms is interfered with so that this working becomes complicated and disintegrated, it is by the knowledge of the "how" of the conscious employment of the primary control of our use that we are enabled to restore the "right degree of action" and "co-ordinative management" to the mechanisms.<sup>71</sup>

The reasoned procedures employed for this purpose are described in my books, together with a detailed account of the discovery that the primary procedure in activating the integrating and reconditioning process throughout the human organism (total pattern) was a certain employment of the primary control of the manner of use of the self.<sup>72</sup>

I can assure Dr Carrel that unless his superman has a conscious knowledge of the procedures which activate the integrating and reconditioning process involved in bringing about that relationship in the working of the parts of the organism which constitutes the employment of the primary control, he will be without the fundamental knowledge essential in preparing himself for his task of effectively directing "the construction of the human being and of a civilization based upon his true nature."<sup>73</sup>

It is, moreover, unfortunate that in his description of my technique he does not refer, even in passing, to the essential part played by the right employment of the primary control in bringing about an improving use of the self, together with a gradual restoration of sensory trustworthiness. In the first chapter of my book *The Use of the Self* I related how attempts which were made with the aim of correcting certain defects by direct control led through their failure to the discovery of the existence of a primary control of the use of the self, and then to the further discovery that when once the habitual wrong response to the stimulus to activity was inhibited, the right employment of this primary control led *indirectly* to the gradual disappearance of the defects; that, indeed, these defects were found to be by-products of a wrong employment of the primary control.

The discovery of this control made possible the evolution of a technique, and the understanding of the right employment of this control is fundamental, therefore, to the application of my technique and indeed to that of any other that could meet the needs outlined by Mr Allen...changes in the manner of use of the self brought about through my technique emerge as an indirect result of means which are conditioned by, and dependent upon, the right employment of the primary control.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.p119

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.p128

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.p136

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.p141

From this it follows that the inhibition of the "immediate response" which Mr Allen quotes as "my solution" of the "predicament" in which his colleagues find themselves is *primarily the inhibition of the habitual response to any activity which results in the wrong employment of the primary control*. This point has been missed by Mr Allen else he would surely have recognized that if those who have no knowledge of the working of the primary control try to follow out my procedures from his verbal descriptions, they can only be said to be making one more trial-and-error attempt to gain an end regardless of the right "means whereby," and one which is bound to land them still further in their predicament

When once he has gained this knowledge of the working of the primary control and has learned to put it into practice, the osteopath, like anyone else, will be able to use himself to the best advantage in the carrying out of the technique, or in anything else which he may wish to do, and this knowledge is essential to his success in any attempt to put the technique into practice in his osteopathic work or any other occupation. <sup>75</sup>

It can be demonstrated that the person who learns to use himself properly by relying upon the correct employment of the primary control of his use of himself will breathe to the best possible advantage in singing or speaking, as well as in all the other activities of life. He will not need the help of specific "breathing exercises" for doing anything that is necessary in carrying out his activities...

...(Mr Allen) has missed the point that in the recognition and conscious employment of the primary control lies the fundamental difference between the theory and practice of my technique and that of osteopathy and that the two methods of approach, the direct method of osteopathy as described by Mr Allen and the indirect method as exemplified in my procedures, cannot be combined or brought into line with each other, as they are based on principles of working that are irreconcilable.<sup>76</sup>

...he has overlooked the important – the all-important – part played in the practice of my technique by the primary control of use, and has not seen that if the influence of the right employment of this primary control is unrecognized or ignored in the practical working out of my theory, my technique cannot prove more useful than any other in extricating his colleagues from their 'predicament.'<sup>77</sup>

No treatment given under the osteopathic method includes the "means-whereby" of restoring that right employment of the primary control which is associated with a manner of general use of the self that ensures a constant influence for good upon the patient's general functioning. <sup>78</sup>

...it will be seen that the principle upon which the "means-whereby" of change is based will be the same, whether the object be to gain new experiences in the development of potentialities or to prevent the development of some functional trouble by learning *how not* to interfere with that working of the primary control

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.p142

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.p144

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.p145

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.p146

which restores a manner of use associated with a satisfactory standard of functioning.<sup>79</sup>

This can account largely for the fact that professional athletes can and do play at times like second-class amateurs, and so often fail to do their best when the occasion most demand it. It is probable that anyone with a knowledge of what constitutes interference with the employment of the primary control of use would be able to observe in these players such varying interference with this control as could account for the variation in the standard of their play at different times.

This is not surprising seeing that experts in games, as in arts and craftsmanship of all kinds, do not recognise the existence of a primary control of their use or that the manner of the employment of this control is indirectly responsible for the manner of working of all other parts of the mechanism.

In such circumstances the people concerned will be aware of the impeding influences, but will be unaware that they are the result of their harmful interference with the employment of the primary control of their use of themselves.<sup>80</sup>

Compare the chances of success enjoyed by the human machine working as an integrated whole with that of a person in whom energy is being more or less misdirected, as it must be in all those who do not have a knowledge of the employment of the primary control of the use of themselves.<sup>81</sup>

The time has come for realizing that by means of a conscious employment of the primary control of use we can with confidence ensure the best possible manner of use of ourselves at all times and in all circumstances, and that by this indirect means our psycho-physical self can be energized and controlled to the best advantage, no matter what our activities may be.<sup>82</sup>

However resourceful, for instance, a man may be who has learnt to play cricket in the orthodox way, any interference with the working of the primary control that was present when he began will have tended to increase as time went on.

On the other hand, if he had known how to employ the primary control of his use so that it would tend to raise the standard of the general functioning of his game, he would have shown a constant tendency to improve in his manner of employing it, and his success would have been the greater because of this.<sup>83</sup>

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## **Acknowledgement**

Many thanks to Conrad Brown whose eagle eyes spotted a further six references I had missed from the previous version of this list.

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.p158

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.p161

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.p162

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.p163

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.p164