1 Recurrence / Dimensions - Introduction 1981 paper
2/1-2 Recurrence / Dimensions - Short version, double spiral of dimensions, pencil diagram, realizing possibilities.
3/1-4 Recurrence / Dimensions - Longer version, double spiral, real change as becoming oneself, two aspects of eternity.
4/1-4 Recurrence / Dimensions - Conversations about double spiral, mantra in all three time dimensions.
5/1-2 Recurrence / Dimensions - Double spiral, 'flavour' of sixth dimension, memory of the mantra.
5/3-4 Recurrence / Dimensions - Experiencing recurrence through the meditation.
6/1-3 Recurrence / Dimensions - Theory of morphogenetic fields explored in relation to dimensions and recurrence.

The Papers in 2,3 and 4 above are also found in Vol VI.
The one thing that seems to get left out of our discussions nowadays is the idea of recurrence. Is it that some people don't know of recurrence, or that they don't believe it, or simply that they don't like talking about it?

To one who has thought deeply about recurrence it seems impossible to see any purpose in life without it. And yet the idea is equally meaningless unless one understands about dimensions of time. Life without recurrence belongs to the fourth dimension - it is life as we ordinarily think of it, which moves along the line of time, from an unknown past into an unknown future. Recurrence itself belongs to the fifth dimension - it is life which repeats again and again - the same life over again. But the way out of recurrence belongs to the sixth dimension - it is life which is always new, life in which new possibilities are realised.

Probably many people take recurrence to mean the identical repetition of life. And without the sixth dimension that is of course what it is. But the real purpose of life is not like that - the purpose of life is fulfilment - the fulfilment of those possibilities which have not yet been realised.

Since we had the meditation our attitude has changed to many things connected with recurrence. We used to ask ourselves, if one had one's life over again, what would one want to change? And if one wanted to change anything, what would it entail? But we now realise that there is something wrong in the formulation of these questions. The truth of the matter is that nothing can be changed - and yet if we do the meditation, things will be different.

In order to prove this for oneself one has only to look at the effects of the meditation since one started doing it. Certain things are different - and yet it is not one's own doing. Certain things have come about in a natural way as a result of the half hour. And the interesting thing is that this kind of change has something new about it - something one has not met before. It comes from a different place in us, and has none of that feeling of effort and achievement which we usually associate with change.

So from certain points of view there is no need to worry about the past and the future, and the possibility of change. If the meditation goes deep enough, something will look after all this. What seems more important is to establish memory of the mantra. For the mantra, so we are told, can be remembered from one life to the next.
The idea that the world in which we live requires, for its explanation, a period of six dimensions - three dimensions of time and three of space - was developed by P.D. Ouspensky in his book, A New Model of the Universe. It is not known how he came to this idea, which was developed by him before he met the system. As far as one knows, the idea does not exist elsewhere, at least in contemporary writings. But he himself maintained that not only the complications of modern physics, but also our own individual life and work, and everything we see and do in the world around us would be enormously simplified if we understood its implications.

The three dimensions of time are in certain respects analogous to the three dimensions of space, and the period of dimensions can be shown as a double spiral (see fig). Starting at the centre with a point in space, the spiral moves outwards to form, in its first revolution, a line, a surface and a solid. A line can be thought of as an infinite number of points, a surface as an infinite number of lines, parallel to each other, and a solid as an infinite number of surfaces. In the same way the spiral, in its second revolution, moves still further outwards to form the fourth dimension (time), the fifth dimension (repetition), and the sixth dimension (eternity).

Time, or in other words the line of passing time, can be thought of as an infinite number of moments moving from the past into the future. In the same way repetition, the next point in the spiral, can be thought of as an infinite number of lines of time - the same time - our time - repeated again and again. This is not so easy to understand. As Pythagoras is said to have maintained, there are two kinds of repetition. There is repetition in time, when the same, or similar events repeat themselves, such as the days of the week or the seasons of the year. But there is also another kind of repetition - the repetition of the time we are experiencing now, at this moment - its repetition in eternity. This form of repetition is what we mean by eternal recurrence.

But the culmination of the spiral, the sixth dimension, which we have called eternity, or the existence of eternity, is something quite different, both from the line of time and from its repeated existence in recurrence. It is in fact the solid of time, just as the third dimension is the solid of space, and it includes, not only those possibilities which are actualised in our lives, but also all the possibilities which could be actualised, but have not yet been so. These unactualised possibilities are the way out of recurrence.
The idea that the world in which we live requires, for its explanation, a period of six dimensions—three dimensions of time and three of space—was developed by P.D. Ouspensky in his book, A New Model of the Universe. It is not known how he came to this idea, which was developed by him early on, as with his writings on recurrence. But he maintained that not only the complications of modern physics, but our own individual life and work, and everything we see and do in the world around us, would be enormously simplified if we understood what it implies.

The three dimensions of time are in certain respects analogous to the three dimensions of space. It is possible to say, for instance, that a point in space corresponds to a moment in time, that a line corresponds to the line of time, that a surface corresponds, perhaps, to repetition, and a solid to the solid of eternity. But it is by no means clear why this parallel exists, or what it implies. It is possible that space and time are different aspects of the same thing—different aspects of reality—and that we tend to take them too separately. In any case it may throw further light on this question if we show the period of six dimensions in the form of a double spiral, as in the diagram, so that the three dimensions of space and the three dimensions of time correspond.

Starting at the centre with a point in space, the spiral moves outwards to form, in its first revolution, a line, a surface and a solid. In the same way the spiral, in its second revolution, moves still further outwards to form the fourth dimension (time), the fifth dimension (repetition), and the sixth dimension (eternity). Just as a line may be considered as an infinite number of points, so the line of passing time may be considered as an infinite number of moments stretching from the past into the future. And just as a surface may be considered as an infinite number of lines, parallel and adjacent to each other, so repetition may be considered as an infinite number of lines of time—the same time—our time—repeated again and again. But this is not so easy to understand. As Pythagoras is said to have maintained, there are two kinds of repetition. There is repetition in time, when the same, or similar events repeat themselves, such as the days of the week or the seasons of the year. But there is also another kind of repetition—the repetition of the time we are experiencing now, at this moment—it's repetition in eternity. This form of repetition is what is meant by eternal recurrence.

Eternal recurrence belongs to the fifth dimension, and is the same life again and again. But the sixth dimension, which we have called eternity,
is the way out of recurrence, for it consists of an infinite number of other lives which have never yet been actualised — in other words, new possibilities in life.

What is the real difference between the fifth dimension and the sixth? One has to realise that this life, which we are living now, with all its joy and suffering, its successes and failures, its aims and aspirations, is likely, in the ordinary course of events, to happen again. Certain tendencies may become stronger, others weaker, and it is always possible that larger events in the world may intervene and change things. But as far as one's personal intentions are concerned, one may try to alter certain aspects of one's life by thinking or willing, or one may even indulge in disciplines of various kinds, to achieve certain aims, but all these things belong to the fifth dimension only — they are all minor variations on the same theme. Real change is of quite a different order, and it comes in a completely different way.

Strangely enough, real change, in so far as one is aware of it, does not seem like change. There are probably two reasons for this. First, it comes from beyond one — from somewhere beyond one's ordinary level — and secondly, it is not actually changing anything: it is simply becoming oneself. If one was truly oneself, and could actualise all one's possibilities, that would be living one's life to the full. And that, actually, is what the meditation is designed to do. For the meditation works in the sixth dimension.

But to return to the diagram. If one studies it in greater depth one will see that each of these points, time, repetition and eternity, has two aspects. Time has two aspects — there is the straight line of time, moving from an unknown past into an unknown future, and there is the curved line of time, which implies by its curvature a beginning and an end. In the same way there are two aspects of repetition. There is repetition in time, and repetition in eternity, or eternal recurrence. The first is part of our everyday life, and easy to understand, the second cannot be explained logically, nor can it be proved — it has to be thought about, and then one day it may be experienced. And thirdly there are two aspects of eternity — there is eternity in relation to repetition — the eternal existence of 'now', and there is the moment, 'now' the zero dimension of time. The first has everything contained in it, the second has nothing, like the Juggler and the Fool, in the Tarot pack.

Finally, there is another point, way out in the right hand corner of
The diagram, called 'eternal duration'. This simply refers to those things which, from man's point of view, exist for ever, like the rocks and mountains of the earth, and the stars in the sky. As you see from the diagram, this point is really the beginning of another period - a period on a larger scale. The idea that it refers to something on our scale is wrong - it is a mistake which is often made, particularly over questions of life and death. Eternity does not exist somewhere else from where we are - it exists in every moment of our life - it is always there. For there is nothing outside these six dimensions of space and time - everything belonging to our life is contained in them.
Could you explain how the diagram works?

Starting at the centre with a point, the spiral moves outwards to form, at point I, the extension of this point into a line, at point II, its further extension from a line into a surface, and at point III, its still further extension from a surface into a solid body of three dimensions.

So this inner spiral represents the three dimensions of space?

Yes, the space solid at point III becomes the zero dimension of the outer spiral, or in other words a moment in time.

And the outer spiral represents the three dimensions of time?

Yes, at point IV the moment of time becomes extended into a line - the line of passing time - which one thinks of in the ordinary way as a straight line extending from the past into the future. But the line of time can be curved, in fact every line of time is really curved, for somewhere it has a beginning and an end.

So when it has passed point IV it becomes a circle?

Yes, it becomes the circle of time - and by point V this circle has become a circle of repetition - it repeats again and again.

You mean, it repeats in time?

Yes, like the days of the week or the seasons of the year. But beyond point V time exists no longer, and the circle is repeated in eternity.

But how can it be repeated in eternity - where does it actually go? The circle of our life, for instance, where is it repeated?

Strictly speaking there is no need for it to go anywhere other than where it is now - it simply means that a further dimension is added to it - a dimension at right angles to the line of passing time.

You mean that not only every moment of our life, but the whole of life itself has a continued existence in eternity?

Yes, if it were not so life would have no meaning, for everything in it would disappear. But that is where all the confusion arises. We think of eternal life as another existence after this one, and in another place, but really it is the same life - this life, where it is now, and every moment of it exists in eternity.

Then is that eternal recurrence?

Yes, but it is not all of life, or all of time - there is still a further dimension.
ETERNITY
VI
solid of time = eternal now
SOLID III
space solid = moment in time
POINT
II surface
I line
IV line of time
TIME
circle of time

V
REPETITION
repetition in eternity

V
REPETITION
repetition in time
- You said there is a still further dimension - could you explain what it is?

- In the sixth dimension, the solid of time, everything we are and everything we could be exist together. Unlike the fifth dimension, the sixth dimension contains, not only everything in life as we know it, but everything that could be realised - that never happened before.

- Then where does this exist?

- It exists here and now - there is nowhere else.

- Then is it possible to reach it through the meditation?

- Well, it depends on what one actually experiences. When one does the meditation one thinks of it as occupying a certain length of time - say half an hour. And during this period the mantra is repeated in time, for that is how one experiences it. But the mantra is also being repeated in eternity - it must be, for one finds often enough it is still there, when one thought it had gone away. And deeper still, when it is properly established, it has a permanent existence in eternity, which explains why one can wake up from sleep, or from an anaesthetic, and find it is still present.

- So you think the mantra can be going on in all three dimensions simultaneously?

- Yes, and what one actually experiences depends on where one's attention happens to be.

- Then what makes one's attention follow it?

- Eternity, by its very nature, is attractive to the mind - that is why the mind goes in that direction. There is nothing the mind wants more than to escape from time into eternity.
Sooner or later we must all come to the same conclusion — that recurrence is something one has to experience — one cannot understand it logically. On the other hand Mr Ouspensky used to say that it helps to think about it — that thinking in the right way about recurrence will make a difference next time.

So how do we think about it — where do we begin? One needs, first of all, to get hold of the idea of dimensions of time. If you remember, we said that there are three dimensions of space and three of time, and that they are analogous, one to the other. The inner spiral in the diagram contains the three dimensions of space, and the outer spiral the fourth, fifth and sixth dimensions — the three dimensions of time. It is the three dimensions of time which really concern us, and you will see that each of them has two aspects. Time has two aspects — the line of time, from the past into the future, and the circle of time, a succession of events where the end coincides with the beginning. This is the fourth dimension. But the fifth dimension also has two aspects — repetition in time, where events are repeated again and again like the days of the week or the seasons of the year, and repetition in eternity, in which time itself is repeated again and again, and the same situations and the same events, the same feelings and the same thoughts have that strange, yet familiar flavour of having happened before. In contrast to this the sixth dimension contains all those possibilities in one's life which were never realised in the fifth dimension — all those events, thoughts, feelings, ideas and achievements which never happened before. These have a completely different flavour from events of the fifth dimension — they are quite new, and usually accompanied by an inner happiness which is unexpected, if only because it bears no relation to current events.

Now it is the meditation which works in the sixth dimension, and this fact may explain why our attitude has changed to many things connected with recurrence since we started doing it. We used to ask ourselves, if one had one's life over again, what would one want to change? And if one wanted to change anything, how would one set about it? But we realise now that there was something wrong in the formulation of those questions. The truth of the matter is that there is nothing we can change, and yet if we do the meditation, things will be different.

In order to prove this for oneself one has only to look at the effects of the meditation since one started doing it. Certain things are different, and yet it is not one's own doing. Certain things have come about in a natural way because of the half hour. And the interesting thing is that this kind of change has something new about it — something one has never met before. It
comes from a different place in one, and has none of that feeling of effort and achievement which we usually associate with change.

So from certain points of view there is no need to worry about the past and the future, and the possibility of change. If the meditation goes deep enough, something will look after all this. What seems more important is to establish memory of the mantra. For the mantra, so we are told, can be remembered from one life to the next.
One of the things which came from our last discussion on recurrence was the realisation that all three dimensions of time actually exist, and are true on their own level, just as all three dimensions of space actually exist. But for some reason or other the fifth and the sixth dimensions elude us. The fourth dimension - time - is something we can all understand, but the repetition of this time, or the fact that it exists in eternity, is something the ordinary level of mind cannot grasp. And the fact that each moment of time contains other possibilities, or in other words that life could in certain respects be different, is something which few people realise or have ever heard about.

The idea of recurrence is simply this, that the moment of death coincides with the moment of birth, and when one dies one returns again to the same house, and is born of the same parents. And so the same life is lived again. Distortions of this idea exist in many religions. Reincarnation, for instance, which may appear to have certain things in common with recurrence, implies that life is repeated in time - in the continuation of time after death - and in this sense it is totally different. The Christian idea of eternal life is again a completely different thing, for it implies that life as we know it disappears, and no other possibilities exist. Recurrence is perhaps the only theory which takes into account the possibility of man's evolution - the fulfilment of his life. That is why it is of particular interest to us, for like the meditation, it contains within it the whole meaning, the whole purpose of man's existence. And if one really understood recurrence everything one said or thought or did at every moment of one's life would be different.

The first point we have to realise is that time really does exist. It is an essential part of us and we cannot escape it. On a larger scale it is part of the nature of things, and has a special function in holding the fabric of the universe together and giving it a certain order. Each cosmos has its own time, and for each cosmos there is nothing outside this time - its possibilities exist within it, not outside it. The second point is that even if the repetition of time is accepted, the fact that this repetition is not always the same is what people do not realise. The possibility of things being different - of this life being different now - of this moment being full of unbelievable joy and happiness, instead of boredom - of one's work being creative and fulfilling instead of sterile - all these things belong to the sixth dimension - they exist within the repetition of time, not in some other place outside it.
So there is time - the fourth dimension - and within time is the fifth dimension - the repetition of time itself. And within repetition is the sixth dimension - the realization of new possibilities - the possibility of things being different. As a matter of fact there are two ways in which things can be different. As Mr Ouspensky has said, it is very unlikely that anyone's life is ever exactly the same in each recurrence, except for short periods or during early childhood. Most of us probably have many things in our lives which change, for reasons outside us and beyond our control. These are all on one level, and fortuitous. But the sixth dimension implies change from a lower to a higher level. Almost inevitably, it comes from within. The interesting thing is how closely this relates to the meditation. The meditation, and recurrence, are almost the same thing.

When we do the meditation we start, often enough, on what was called the gross level of experience. This corresponds to the four dimensional world - the world of time. Presently the mantra changes its quality - becomes very easy to repeat and goes on its own. That is the five dimensional world. But at some point or other it becomes very delightful and attractive, and its action becomes alchemical, in the sense that it changes the quality of the mind. That is the six dimensional world. And then it transcends, and takes us beyond dimensions altogether, into the universal world.

Of course, it is never exactly like that - it is always different. Sometimes one goes straight into the six dimensional world, sometimes one never gets beyond the five dimensional. And once it has become established it seldom needs to be pushed along in the four dimensional world. But one knows the difference between these levels, and it is thanks to the meditation that one can sometimes get a moment of understanding.

So experiencing recurrence comes through the meditation. But we have to think about it, know what it is and what it implies, or our experience would simply evaporate. Even knowing that recurrence exists already makes a big difference - for some people it is a revelation. But we are all different, and others take it more gradually. Yet sooner or later we must all come to the same conclusion.
Tell me, how do you understand Sheldrake's theories about morphogenetic fields?

I would think the whole thing can be explained in terms of time. If we could understand time, we should understand how these things come about.

What aspect of time do you mean?

Well, we said if you remember that there are three dimensions of time - dimensions which are analogous to the three dimensions of space.

I remember this was said.

Yes, we said that space has three dimensions - a line, a surface and a solid. In the same way, time has three dimensions - the line of time, or passing time, the surface of time, or repetition, and the solid of time, which contains all unrealised possibilities.

You mean, in the second dimension the line of time is repeated?

Yes, there are two ways in which it can be repeated. Things can be repeated in time, as for instance when we carry out the same action again and again, or they can be repeated in eternity.

What do you mean by 'repeated in eternity'?

I mean in eternal recurrence. What I am doing now, at this moment, may, or may not have occurred in another time, parallel to this one, and it may occur again.

You mean life repeats itself again and again?

Yes, but only in certain respects. There are things in life which do not repeat. Some may be due to accidental circumstances outside one's control. But there is another kind - a very important one.

What kind is that?

When something new is created.

You mean, like a work of art?

Yes, or a great discovery. Things which are truly creative belong to the third kind of time - they never happened before.

And this might apply to new forms in Nature?

Yes, very probably. Nature has many new possibilities available to her, just as we do. But they are not often apparent, if only because we never see them at their inception - only in their recurrence.

Then how do these three dimensions of time help us to understand Sheldrake's ideas?

Well, the first dimension - the line of time - refers to successive generations, where the same form is repeated with certain modifications,
from one generation to the next. This only explains certain features of morphogenesis, along strictly Mendelian lines. It would not explain the inheritance of newly acquired characteristics, for instance.

- You mean it could never explain the experiments with rats?

- No, those experiments are connected with the second dimension of time. When a person learns some new skill, like riding a bicycle or playing the violin, he obviously has to learn it again and again in recurrence, and every time it gets easier. There are many examples of this - infant prodigies, for instance.

- But surely, learning to play the violin doesn't get any easier for you and me, just because it has for Yehudi Menuhin?

- No, but riding a bicycle might. The more people in the world get used to riding bicycles, the easier it gets...

- I am getting a bit confused...

- Yes, we are confusing two things, the individual and the species. With man, no two individuals are the same - everyone is different. But with Nature it is: each species which is different - the individuals in a species are all much the same. To put it in another way, the species in Nature corresponds to the individual in man.

- You mean, each animal behaves in a certain way according to its species, but each man behaves in a certain way according to his individuality?

- Yes, that's right. And of course a species is subject to recurrence just as an individual is. Some things get easier for the species to learn, just as other things get easier for the individual. The experiments with rats described by Sheldrake were experiments on the species, not the individual. So the whole species benefited, not just each individual rat.

- Then it wouldn't work for man as it does for rats?

- Some things would work - those which belong to man as a species - to homo sapiens.

- What kind of things do you mean?

- Mass behaviour - new fashions, new forms of expression, new styles in art, even possibly new inventions like the motor car - everything which becomes popular...

- And what kind of things belong to man as an individual, not to man as a species?

- Things which distinguish one man from another - things which are strictly his own - creative art, for instance. No real artist is like another - when people start copying a great artist it is no longer art.
And would the same thing be true of man's spiritual growth?
Yes, very much the same. Spiritual growth is concerned with becoming oneself - realising what one really is. This is a matter for the individual - it is not for the masses.
Things would be a lot easier if it was...
Maybe, but there is a mistake here somewhere. For instance, when people start copying a great spiritual leader, it never works.
Why is this?
Because in trying to become like him they forget to become themselves. A great spiritual teacher belongs to the third dimension of time, not the second. He brings something new with him, never the same thing again and again.
What do you conclude from all this?
That Sheldrake's theories may apply to rats - always provided further evidence can be obtained. But one has to be very careful in applying them to man. They might possibly apply to certain forms of imitative or mass behaviour, but little else....