

March 1960

READING 7

All Groups

[Introduction for the new meetings to material 60/17:

It is felt that some of you are using the ideas of the System in the wrong way and perhaps only giving yourselves a headache. Big and difficult ideas like 'Time' in relation to different cosmoses are only given at the beginning to bring us right up against the fact of our own ignorance and impotence; they are meant to show us that in the present state of our Being *we cannot understand anything important*. If we come imagining that we know all the answers or can know them through our intellectual excursions, we shall have no incentive to change!

The only way to understand these all-important things is, first, to listen and store in the memory exactly what the Teaching says about man's place in the Universe, and then to apply ourselves patiently to the *method* which is given us by means of which we can wake up and understand. That method will be described tonight. Later, when we have reached the first awakening, the teaching on Cosmoses will suddenly acquire meaning for us.

(Brief description of the brain and simplified Figure 2 of 60/16 – then tonight's reading 60/17)]

PART 1

An observation from Mrs. Ritchie at a meeting last week, can set us off in the right direction:

Referring to the double-headed arrow in the picture of the brain (Figure 2), she said: 'Can it also bring a feeling of peace? I was trying to see 'False I' and I seemed to stop and get outside myself and see myself writing, and it was peaceful.'

When we manage to save ten minutes from the day's hubbub to sit down quietly alone, what is it we try to get? It's some kind of *new feeling of oneself* variously described – (as 'freedom', 'peace', 'calm', 'confidence', 'at-one-ness') – but definitely a *feeling* first. We let the problems and worries and unpleasantnesses slide away. We sacrifice first one train of thought, then another, in order to get this feeling. And in proportion to how much we sacrifice for it, so the feeling becomes stronger. Then we try to make all of the mind mirror this feeling – becoming *fully aware* of it. And so it will come to be connected with the very act of sitting down to be quiet; and after a time whenever and wherever we come to ourselves, or realize that we are overburdened, distracted, or unhappy, it will become second nature to turn to it at once for refuge, as the Psalmist feels in that 91st Psalm.

For we mustn't forget that this is the Alchemy of Happiness; and that 'the one who is happy is happy everywhere; in a palace, in a cottage, in riches or poverty, for he has discovered the fountain of happiness which is situated in his own heart.'

This is thoroughly confirmed by a climber's account of the successful first ascent of the Eiger's North Face[†] (perhaps the most difficult climb in the Alps), and describes his third night out on the mountain:

The ledge was scarcely as broad as a boot and only just allowed the two of us to stand erect, pressed close against the rock; but we contrived to knock in a piton to which we could tie ourselves. However, we found a solution. We emptied our rucksacks and fastened them too to the piton, in such a way that we could put our feet in them and so find a hold. ... It was now 11 p.m., here on this tiny perch 12,300 feet up and 5,000 feet sheer above the nearest level ground... I could see that there were no stars in the sky and the weather was still bad; it looked as if it were snowing... I wasn't worried about the weather. I was possessed by a great feeling of peace; not resignation to our fate, but a certainty that, whatever the weather might be, we would reach the summit tomorrow, and after that regain the safety of the valley. This sense of peace increased to a conscious glow of happiness. We human beings often experience happiness without recognising it; later we realise that at such and such a moment we were happy. But here, in that tiny bivouac of ours, *I was not only genuinely happy; I knew I was.*

[†]*The White Spider*, Heinrich Harrer, p.113, Rupert Hart Davis, 1959, London.

PART 2

Yesterday (March 5th) being the birthday anniversary of the man who gave us the System so clearly and so carefully, it would be good to read again the account of his first discoveries about self-remembering; having the diagram (Figure 2) before us:

What I had just heard, and especially all that my attempts at self-remembering had shown me, very soon convinced me that I was faced with something entirely new which science and philosophy had not, so far, come across. But before making deductions I will try to describe my attempts to remember myself. The first impression was that attempts to remember myself or to be conscious of myself, to say to myself, 'I am walking', 'I am doing' and continually to feel this I, stopped thought. When I was feeling I, I could neither think nor speak. Also one could only remember oneself in this way for a very short time... I saw that the problem consisted in directing attention on oneself without weakening or obliterating the attention directed on something else. Moreover this 'something else' could as well be within me as outside me... It was a new and very interesting state with a strangely familiar flavour... I realised that moments of self-remembering do occur naturally, though rarely. Only the deliberate production of these moments created the sensation of novelty. Actually I had been familiar with them from early childhood... I saw that I really only remember those moments of the past in which I remembered myself. Of the others I know only that they took place. I am not able wholly to revive them, to experience them again...

Sometimes attempts at self-remembering were not successful; at other times they were accompanied by curious observations.

I was once walking along the Liteiny towards the Nevsky, and in spite of all my efforts I was unable to keep my attention on self-remembering. The noise, movement, everything distracted me. Every minute I lost the thread of attention, found it again, and then lost it again. At last I felt a kind of ridiculous irritation with myself and I turned into the street on the left having firmly decided to keep my attention on the fact that I

would remember myself at least for some time, at any rate until I reached the following street. I reached the Nadejdinskaya without losing the thread of attention except, perhaps, for short moments. Then I again turned towards the Nevsky realising that, in quiet streets, it was easier for me not to lose the line of thought and wishing therefore to test myself in more noisy streets. I reached the Nevsky still remembering myself, and was already beginning to experience the strange emotional state of inner peace and confidence which comes after great efforts of this kind. Just round the corner on the Nevsky was a tobacconist's shop where they made my cigarettes. Still remembering myself I thought I would call there and order some cigarettes.

Two hours later I *woke up* in the Tavrisheskaya, that is, far away. I was going by izvostchik to the printers. The sensation of awakening was extraordinarily vivid. I can almost say that I *came to*. I remembered everything at once. How I had been walking along the Nadejdinskaya, how I had been remembering myself, how I had thought about cigarettes, and how at this thought I seemed all at once to fall and disappear into a deep sleep.

At the same time, while immersed in this sleep, I had continued to perform consistent and expedient actions. I left the tobacconist, called at my flat in the Liteiny, telephoned to the printers. I wrote two letters. Then again I went out of the house. I walked on the left side of the Nevsky up to the Gostinoy Dvor intending to go to the Offitzerskaya. Then I changed my mind as it was getting late. I had taken an izvostchik and was driving along to the Kavalergardskaya to my printers. And on the way while driving along the Tavrisheskaya I began to feel a strange uneasiness, as though I had forgotten something – *and suddenly I remembered that I had forgotten to remember myself*.

(Pause)

In conclusion, try to connect your experiments along this line during the week with the fundamental Law of Three Forces. For any new event to take place three forces are necessary; action and reaction cancel each other – a Third Force is necessary. Why do we not remember ourselves? Because the necessary Third Force is absent at the point D.

In this System it is stated that force, or energy, can only manifest itself through the specific matter that can conduct it. In general, matter conducting the First or Positive Force is called 'Carbon'; matter which conducts the Second or Negative Force is called 'Oxygen'; and matter which conducts the Third or Harmonising Force is called 'Nitrogen'.

Looking at the diagram, we see that in this particular triad Carbon would be the energy of incoming impressions which alert the brain-stem and are felt as bodily desire or excitement. The slow action of the intellect in measuring, labelling and restraining is the brake, the Oxygen. But there is no Nitrogen. Nitrogen in this triad would be this new kind of *feeling of oneself*; it is emotion, but emotion bringing a strange detachment. So our preparatory work (before we can actually step into the new state of self-remembering) is to store up this Nitrogen just as the wise virgins 'put oil in their vessels with their lamps'.

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