

November 1960

READING 6**ALL GROUPS****TWENTY YEARS AFTER (Continued)****PART 1****SECOND PSYCHOLOGICAL LECTURE**

Continuing our study of man, we must now speak with more detail about the different states of consciousness.

As I have already said, there are four states of consciousness possible for man, but he lives only in two. It is as though he had a four-storied house, but lived only in the two lower stories.

The first or the lowest state of consciousness is sleep. This is a purely subjective and passive state. Man is surrounded by dreams. All his psychic functions work without any direction. There is no logic, no sequence, no cause and no result in dreams. Purely subjective pictures – either reflections of former experiences or reflections of vague perceptions of the moment, such as sounds reaching the sleeping man, sensations coming from the body, slight pains, sensation of tension – fly through the mind, leaving only a very slight trace on the memory and more often leaving no trace at all.

The second degree of consciousness comes when man awakes. This second state, the state in which we are now, i.e. in which we work, talk, imagine ourselves conscious beings and so forth, we ordinarily call ‘waking consciousness’ or ‘clear consciousness’, but really it should be called ‘waking sleep’ or ‘relative consciousness’. This last term will be explained later.

It is necessary to understand here that the first state of consciousness, i.e. sleep, does not disappear when the second state arrives, i.e. when man awakes. It remains there, with all its dreams and dream impressions, only a more critical attitude towards one’s own impressions, more connected thoughts, more disciplined actions become added to it, and because of the vividness of sense impressions, desires, and feelings – particularly the feeling of contradiction or impossibility, which is entirely absent in sleep – dreams become invisible exactly as the stars and moon become invisible in the glare of the sun. But they are all there and they often influence all our thoughts, feelings and actions – sometimes even more than the actual perceptions of the moment.

In connection with this you must bear in mind that I do not mean what is called in modern psychology (or what is known as psychology) ‘the subconscious’ or ‘subconscious mind’. These are simply wrong expressions, wrong terms, which mean absolutely nothing and do not refer to any real facts. There is nothing subconscious in us because there is nothing conscious; and there is no subconscious mind for the very simple reason that there is no conscious mind. Later you will see how this mistake in regard to the subconscious mind occurred, and how this wrong terminology came into being and became almost generally accepted, at any rate in modern vulgarised forms of psychology.

But let us return to the states of consciousness which really exist. The first is sleep. The second is waking sleep or relative consciousness.

The first, as I have said, is a purely subjective state. The second is less subjective; man already distinguishes ‘I’ and ‘not I’ in the sense of his body and objects different from his body, and he can, to a certain extent, orientate among them and know their position and qualities. But it cannot be said that man is awake in this state because he is

very strongly influenced by dreams, and really lives more in dreams than in facts. All the absurdities and all the contradictions of people, and of human life in general, become explained when we realise that people *live in sleep*, do everything in sleep, and do not know that they are asleep.

It is useful to remember that this is the inner meaning of many ancient doctrines. The best known to us is Christianity or the Gospel teaching, in which the idea that men live in sleep and must first of all awaken is the basis of all the explanations of human life.

But the question is, *how* can a man awaken?

The Gospel teaching demands awakening but does not say how to awaken.

But the psychological study of consciousness shows that only when a man realises that he is asleep, is it possible to say that he is on the way to awakening. He never can awaken without first realising his sleep.

COMMENTARY (For new people)

This waking up is a strange and delightful experience! I remember as a boy drowsing in church on a Sunday morning. Suddenly I leapt almost out of my skin as I heard the parson say: 'Now it is high time to awake out of sleep.' (Could he have seen *me*?) 'For now (he went on) is our salvation nearer than we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.' I experienced first a physical and then a spiritual waking up and the excitement of it lasted the day, and has been repeated many times since and especially just now – 'for now our salvation *is* nearer than we believed.'

(Pause. Think back for examples of awakening from your own experience.)

The only place in the Gospels (as far as I know) where the word 'awake' is specifically used is in St. Luke's description of the Transfiguration: 'But Peter and those that were with him were heavy with sleep; and when they were awake they saw his glory' – which describes a still higher degree of awakening, perhaps into Cosmic Consciousness.

At all other times than those moments of waking up, the whole idea seems so far away that we find ordinarily no meaning in Mr. Ouspensky's words: 'Only when a man realises that he is asleep is it possible to say that he is on the way to awakening. He never can awaken without first realising his sleep.' Yet in the moment of awakening everyone testifies to the vividness of the realisation of sleep.

One of the writers in the *Philokalia*, St. Hesychius of Jerusalem, has a remarkable passage, the meaning of which is usually missed because the chief word is wrongly translated. This word in Greek is *neepsis* which means 'being sober, not intoxicated', as in the passage 'therefore let us not sleep as do others but let us watch and be sober.' To understand this one must know that *intoxication* stands for 'identification' – namely the state we live in all our days except at the moments of awakening. If we use the word 'wakefulness' for *neepsis*, the passage from St. Hesychius reads as follows:

Wakefulness is a spiritual art which if practised with incessant zeal and over a long period will, with God, help to free a man completely from all passionate thoughts and evil words and deeds. It will grant him who thus practises it a true knowledge of the ineffable God, as far as such knowledge is possible for us; and will give him a secret key to the sacred and divine mysteries. In itself wakefulness is purity of heart... and also the stairway leading to contemplation: and it teaches us to control rightly the movements of

the triune soul... Wakefulness is also called the silence of the heart and is the same as the guarding of the mind which keeps the mind free from all dreaming.

He who is born blind does not see the light of the sun; in the same way he who does not experience wakefulness does not see the radiance of grace descending abundantly from above, neither can he free himself from sinful deeds, words and thoughts.

Attention is the unbroken silence of the heart, free from every thought; in which the heart constantly and unceasingly breathes Jesus Christ the Son of God and him alone; in which it calls upon Him and valiantly arms itself with Him against enemies.

A good description of the same results as we are experiencing but reached by a different method – namely continuous silent prayer.

COMMENTARY (For people using the method)

If you have already experienced this awakening at moments in your life; if you experienced it at the moment of receiving the Meditation; or if you have experienced it from time to time since; then you will recognise that the two states of consciousness in which we ordinarily live do not disappear with the appearance of the new state of Self-consciousness. The dreams of sleep continue; the thoughts, words, habits and movements of the day-time state continue, but a new world is added.

Many people have tried to describe to me in the terms of the System their experiences of this new state. Examples:

1. It is the awakening of the Emotional parts of all the centres at once.
2. It is like 'coming to oneself' after a long separation.
3. It is the impressions octave going on – dull impressions → sharp impressions → very emotional impressions.
4. It is like suddenly being free of all the obstacles (imagination, identification, negative emotions).

One person puts this in his own way: 'A wonderful feeling that nothing else mattered; the richest experience I have had – like being gloriously drunk, though sober.'

If you had seen, as I have so often, the look of awakening on people's faces in the first minute of Meditation, you would say – as I do frequently to people who have not yet experienced it this way: 'Go on, go on. Patiently continue. One day it will come, but when you least expect it.'

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PART 2

We continue the Lecture:

These two states, sleep and relative consciousness or waking sleep, are the only two states of consciousness in which man lives. The two higher states of consciousness are inaccessible to him. He cannot make experiments with them, he cannot know what they are like. They may become accessible to a man only after a hard and prolonged struggle.

The two higher states of consciousness are called 'self-consciousness' and 'objective consciousness'.

We generally think that we are conscious of ourselves, or in any case that we can be

conscious of ourselves at any moment we wish, but in truth self-consciousness is a state which *we ascribe to ourselves without any right*, and objective consciousness is a state about which modern psychology knows nothing.

Self-consciousness is a state in which man becomes objective towards himself, and objective consciousness is a state in which he comes into contact with the real or objective world from which he is now shut off by the senses, dreams and subjective states of his so-called consciousness.

Another definition of the four states of consciousness can be made from the point of view of our possible cognition of truth.

In the first state of consciousness, i.e. in sleep, we cannot know anything of the truth. Even if some real perceptions or feelings come to us, they become mixed with dreams, and in the state of sleep we cannot distinguish between dreams and reality.

In the second state of consciousness, i.e. in waking sleep, we can only know *relative truth*, and from this comes the term 'relative consciousness'.

In the third state of consciousness, i.e. in the state of self-consciousness, we can know the full truth *about ourselves*.

In the fourth state of consciousness, i.e. in the state of *objective consciousness*, we are supposed to be able to know the full truth *about everything*; we can study 'things in themselves', 'the world as it is'.

This is so far from us that we cannot even think about it in the right way, and we must try to understand that even glimpses of objective consciousness can only come in the fully developed state of self-consciousness.

In the state of sleep we can have glimpses of relative consciousness. In the state of relative consciousness we can have glimpses of self-consciousness. But if we want to have more prolonged periods of self-consciousness and not merely glimpses, we must understand that they cannot come by themselves. They need *will action*. This means that frequency and duration of moments of self-consciousness depend on the command one has over oneself. So it means too that consciousness and will are almost one and the same thing or, in any case, different aspects of the same thing.

NOTE

We can only know the full truth about ourselves if we first find ourselves – penetrate to the depths of our being by means of a deep dive and then come up with this new knowledge and energy to enjoy the external life. 'Bring the contents of the Treasury into the market place.'

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