

13 May 1963

READING 2

PART 1

We want you this week to see how our System unites everything in the Universe into one vast living organism by means of two (and only two) great Cosmic Laws – the ‘Three in One and One in Three’ and the Law of Octaves.

It does this by means of a Universal Symbol to which you will be introduced tonight – the Enneagram or Circle of Nine Points – and from this Symbol all the material you have at these meetings is ultimately derived. (Figure 1)

Round the circle we first put the big Cosmic Octave – our Ray of Creation. At the Centre is the Absolute where all is One – indefinable, and inconceivable. We are reminded of these words from St. James:

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights, with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning.

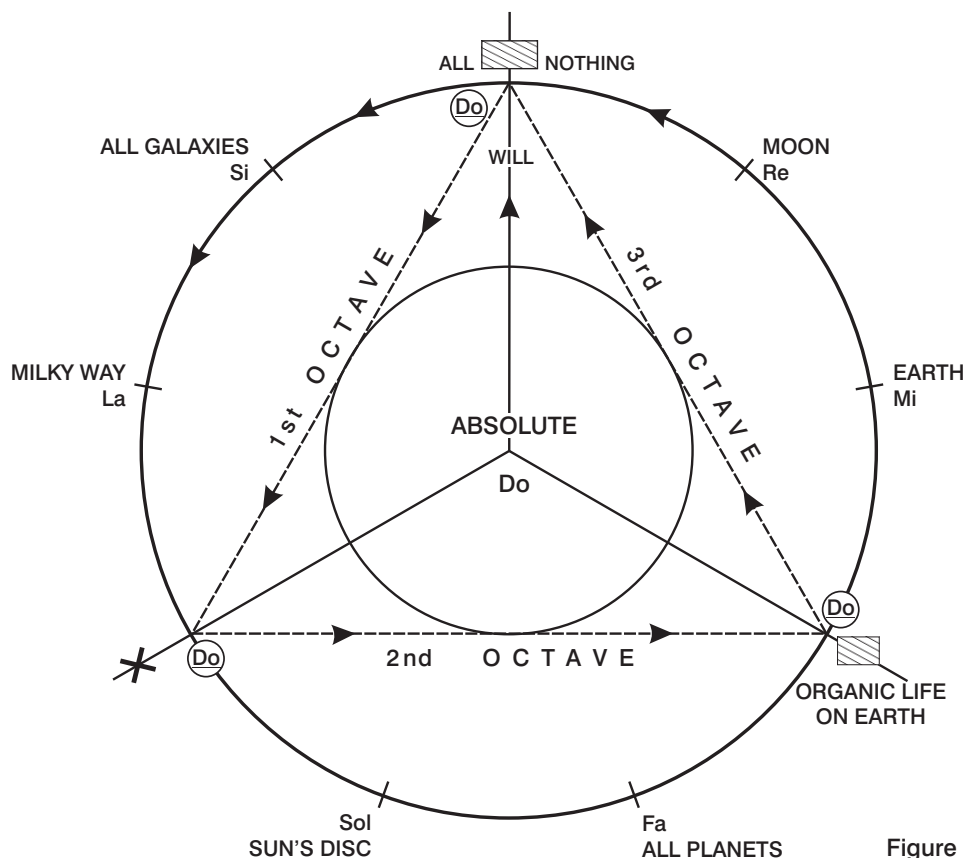


Figure 1

This is Do, the first note of the Octave of Creation. Round the circle we put Si (All Galaxies), La (our Galaxy, the Milky Way), Sol (our Sun), Fa (our Planetary System), Mi (this Earth) and Re (Earth's satellite, the Moon). This leaves two major 'intervals' where additional 'shocks' are needed, one between Do and Si, and the other between Fa and Mi. There is still one point on the circle (between La and Sol) where a process is started which will provide the shock at that Second Interval. This process is the Creation of Organic Life on Earth.

If Sol represents the visible Sun that we see, the point X must be some creative principle in the Invisible or Spiritual Sun of which we have no idea. We notice that mankind does not appear

at all on this vast scale. It is possible that *Homo sapiens* might blow himself off the Earth without making much difference! Why all the fuss?

Now it is inherent in the Law of Octaves that between any two notes, there is a smaller octave. There are really therefore eight octaves within the Large Octave which could be studied, but this would be making things very complicated for us. So the System describes just three octaves along the lines of the Triangle connecting the four chief points:

Absolute → Sun → Earth → Moon.

This is in accordance with the Principle of Relativity, for though far smaller, the Moon and the Earth are just as important for us as the Galaxies and Stars.

Now draw the three Octaves in a straight line in the usual way.

You ask, 'What is the meaning of the Inner Circle in the Symbol?' That's good, go on asking that question! Each must find his own answer. It can be the 'Noumenal' or Spiritual counterpart of the 'Phenomenal-Visible' world. And therein lies the great secret behind all religions and philosophies, the Knowledge of the Atman or individual Manifestation of God with the Seven Steps of the Ladder of Self-realization.

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PART 2

'Meditation Version'

The New Life of Ivan Osokin

A Sequel to P. D. Ouspensky's 'Kinemadrama'

The Magician is speaking his last words:

'I can only add one thing more. Like everyone else, you think that there are different ways of doing the same thing. You have to learn to understand that there is always only one way of doing a thing; there can never be two ways.'

I am now going to teach you that one way, a method of meditation. This way has always existed right back in the mists of pre-history when I revealed it directly by inspiration to the man who became through it the founder of a single Tradition from which all philosophies, all religions and all so-called practical methods have sprung. But whereas in the past it has always been practised by full-time specialists, I have arranged now that it shall become available in modified form for everybody. The spiritual and the material life must no longer be divided and in conflict. When we last met, I asked you to sacrifice fifteen years of your life; but now I demand only fifteen months.'

The Magician initiates Osokin into the method. Osokin tries it for two minutes. The Magician says, 'Open your eyes' and asks, 'Is it easy?' Osokin is speechless, but by the expression on his face it is very clear that things have begun to change. The Magician says, 'Now go and practise this for two periods in the day, a half-hour now when you get home and two half-hours the next day. Do what you have to do the rest of the time. Then come and see me again. For a long time you will have a great deal of inner argument. Just pay no attention to it, don't believe it. Remember me, and when you begin a half-hour's meditation leave all the rest behind you.'

Conclusion

Out in the street Osokin walks for a long time without looking where he is going and trying not to think. Then he sits down on a bench on some remote boulevard and remains motionless without thoughts... But gradually all that has happened comes back to him.

'I must come to some decision,' he says to himself. 'If I start doing this method I may lose Zinaida. If I don't start it I shall still lose her. If only I could have one talk with her! But no, that would be useless until I've given it a fair trial... (He remembers the Magician's final instructions). What's the use of all this argument? I'll just do what he says, leave it all behind and begin to meditate.'

Quite still he sits on the bench with his eyes shut; soon he loses all sense of the passage of time... When he opens his eyes again, dawn is breaking. [He slips his hand into his pocket and touches something cold and heavy. The revolver!] How far away, how unnecessary all that seems to him now! ['Yes, the three roads of the Russian fairy tale,' he says to himself.] 'But now I seem to have found the fourth road where you save yourself and your horse as well.'

He gets up and walks slowly along the boulevard on his way home.

Moscow is waking up. Church bells ring for early mass. Carriages rattle along. Dvorniks sweep the cobbled streets, raising clouds of dust. Two cats, one grey and white and the other tortoiseshell, sit opposite each other on the pavement, very intently, and seem to converse.

Osokin looks around, and suddenly an extraordinarily vivid sensation sweeps over him that, if he were not there, everything would be exactly the same.'

Chapter 3. A Year later

Osokin on one of his regular visits to the Magician is saying: 'You were right. This makes all the difference.' The old man smiles. 'Yes,' he says, 'you look well – and very much happier.' Osokin laughs, 'I'm full of questions now, of course, and I hope I shall listen to your answers! There is one all-important question which has been forming in my mind. You asked for fifteen months of my life. So I have another three months to go. What then? You have been making me realise, haven't you, that there is some decision I have to make?'

The Magician nods. 'How would you put it yourself?' he asks.

'Quite shortly,' answers Osokin, 'it seems to me that I have to choose between two alternatives. Do I escape from the wheel altogether, 'leave life without regret'? Or do I have to come back: go through it all again in order to pay the debts I haven't yet been able to settle?'

'That,' replies the Magician, 'is the decision that has to be made by anyone who reaches a certain step on the Ladder that leads to Eternal union with me. Yes, you'll have to decide pretty soon, for on what you decide will depend how you spend the last three months of the time you give to me.'

Osokin gets up and paces the room. 'But,' he mutters to himself, 'I'm almost exactly in two halves on that question. Half of me longs to be rid of the whole thing for ever; this half can't bear the thought of all those missed opportunities, all this frustration, the boredom of all that time at school... But the other half longs to have a chance to put things right. Take mother, for instance. Couldn't I free her from all that suffering? Does she have to die so young and so unhappy? And Zinaida? Were we not meant for each other? Are we never to meet again?'

Sitting down and turning to the Magician he says, 'How can I decide? There's so much we don't know. Tell me what I need to know in order to decide?'

The Magician pauses a moment before replying: 'Nearly always in the past it was taken for granted that the Spiritual life and the ordinary life could not go together. The only possible Spiritual aim then was to escape from the wheel of bodily existence; and the longing for union with me made people neglect their duties in life. This escape was possible through this meditation and the discipline of the Tradition through which I taught it. But now two possibilities exist for the people who successfully practise the Meditation and live the good life (good thoughts, good feelings and good actions) that is to say, a life guided by me.

These two possibilities are needed because in this respect there are two kinds of people – those for whom it is possible to go away from this life altogether, those who would not be missed; and there are the people upon whose presence at a given time depend certain inescapable events. Children have to be born; the lives of other people may grow out of their life or may be inextricably mixed with it; though even here there is much that can be and has to be adjusted, for sudden, unforeseeable cataclysms and accidents often demand such adjustments. And why do you suppose that your relationship with Zinaida (for instance) would end if your body is not born again?

Finally, have you considered that if you are born at a different time you might be far more useful and enjoy far more success? Many able people owe their ill-success only to their coming on to the world's stage too early or too late. You still think in absolutes – either fade out or be born again in exactly the same place and time.'

Osokin appears animated and interested. 'How one-track our minds are! Certainly we are still blind kittens. It's Fate or some higher Consciousness, not me, that will do the deciding. It seems to me from what you have said that I might be one of the people who *could* escape altogether; and yet I'd dearly love to be useful for once! Suppose you decide that I could be useful to you and to my friends if I were sent back again to the same point in time and place, what would be necessary in my remaining three months with you?'

The Magician replies slowly and with emphasis: 'You have to learn to *do*. Things must not be allowed to *happen* to you any more. Now I give you a task. Devote yourself during this three months to silence and intensive meditation. Meditate as often and as long as you like; but whenever you are not meditating try to remember me. When you remember me I shall know it; if you ask questions they will be answered. And on what will you be spending your time? You will be learning to practise *Attention*, for Attention begins with devotion to me. Your inward thoughts and feelings and your outward actions must be worthy of me, even in detail – the *way* you sit, the *way* you stand, the *way* you walk and the *way* you speak.

'In the course of this time the cross-roads in your life (situations where you could be useful to me) will at times pass in front of your inward eyes, like motion pictures on a screen. You will try to decide what in your life *can* be escaped and what *has* to be gone through. If some sequence of events is inescapable, you must decide on a course of action that will take you through without deviation from your aim or loss of your intimate connection with me. If in doubt ask. But these chosen courses of action must be indelibly printed in your memory. And above all they must be possible, not impossible. Now go. We shall meet like this, for the last time, in three months. You'd better see Zinaida and tell her something about it – whatever she can understand.'

Chapter 4. At the Magician's in three months' time

Osokin comes in looking cheerful, like a man whose mind is made up. He has seen beyond doubt that there are just two cross-roads where if he does what the Magician has told him, he can change his life from failure to success. He moves surely and confidently and makes no unnecessary gestures. No words are spoken. He sits in a chair with straight back and begins to meditate.

The Magician claps his hands three times. A Chinese, the Magician's servant, comes noiselessly into the room. He has a long pigtail, and is dressed in a blue silk gown trimmed with fur, and shoes with thick felt soles. The Magician speaks to him in a low voice. The Chinese, moving silently, brings in and places before the Magician a small brazier of burning charcoal and a tall vase. The cat jumps down from the back of the Magician's chair and walks out behind the Chinese. The old man dips one hand into the vase and with the other hand waves Osokin to the armchair. Osokin sits down.

Looking into the fire, the old man slowly pronounces some incomprehensible words, then, taking his hand out of the vase, he throws a handful of grey-green powder into the brazier. At the same time he takes the hour-glass from the table, shakes it and turns it over. Aromatic and pungent smoke rises in a cloud above the brazier.

The whole room fills with smoke, and in it can be seen many moving forms as though the room were suddenly full of people.

When the smoke clears away, the old man is sitting in his armchair holding the hour-glass in his hand.

There is no Osokin.

Chapter 5. Morning

An early morning in October 1890

A dormitory in a boys' school. Rows of beds. Sleeping figures rolled up in blankets. Through an archway another part of the dormitory can be seen. Lamps are burning. Outside it is still dark. A clock strikes six. A school servant nicknamed 'Frog', a veteran of the Caucasian wars, appears at the far end of the dormitory and begins to ring a large bell as he walks along the wide centre passage between the beds.

The dormitory comes to life at once. There is movement and noise. Some of the boys jump up, throw off their blankets and others try to snatch another half-minute's sleep. A boy about thirteen jumps on his bed and begins to dance. Someone throws a pillow at him from the other end of the dormitory. The housemaster, a lanky German with a red beard, in a blue tailcoat with brass buttons, walks from one bed to another giving a tug at the blankets of those who are not getting up.

In a bed by the wall Ivan Osokin is sitting up staring about him in amazement. He looks like a boy of fourteen.

'Did I dream all that and what did it mean?' he says to himself. 'And what I see now, is this too a dream?'

'I went to the Magician and asked him to send me back. He said he would send me back twelve years. Is it possible that this is true? I took a revolver and went out of the house. I couldn't stay at home. Is it really true that Zinaida is going to marry Minsky? What a queer dream! The dormitory looks absolutely like a real one. I am not sure whether I want to find myself here in reality or not; it was pretty beastly here too. But how can I go on living? There is no Zinaida for me any more. I can't accept that: I never shall.'

I told the Magician I wanted to change my whole life and that I must begin again, a long way back. But supposing he really did send me back? It is impossible! I know it's a dream. But I will try to imagine that I actually am at school... Is it better now or worse? I don't even know what to say. Why does it make me feel so frightened and so sad? After all, it can't be so... But Zinaida... no, it really is a vicious circle, and I am indeed a schoolboy, which means I dreamed it all – Zinaida and everything else. Can that be true or not? Well, there are a thousand things I did not know and could not have known when I was at school...'

'But wait a moment. Didn't the Magician teach me something, a word – a sound to repeat? What was it – yes, there it is with the same rhythm. I will sit up straight and say it.' (He sits meditating for perhaps a minute as the Mantra slows and the peace comes.)

'Osokin, Osokin,' shouts his friend Memorsky. 'Why are you sitting there like an owl? Have you fallen asleep? (Osokin opens his eyes.) Don't you hear, the German is taking the names of those who are not dressed? Get up, you devil's puppet!'

(Osokin jumps out of bed and begins to dress as the German housemaster comes out from behind the archway – but this time there is no pillow! So all the old events of that first morning disappear!)

Osokin pauses for a moment on the landing between the junior and senior dormitories.

A broad iron staircase leading to the lower floor. A round yellow clock on the wall. Under the clock stands Osokin, looking agitated and bewildered. Boys pass by him as they go the and fro. No one takes any notice of him.

'Am I going mad or am I mad already?' thinks Osokin.'

'I am haunted by a nightmare – yet I cannot wake up. It is impossible that I'm really back at school. All this is too stupid. Yet when I look at that clock I have this nightmare, that I was told to stand there during breakfast, that I was attacked by a lot of boys and broke Klementieff's nose which bled all over the place. (The Mantra comes into his mind again.) But why am I standing here at all? The Magician said, "Do what you have to do." I'll go down to breakfast – after all there's nothing to stop me now.'

Chapter 6. Thoughts

For a while after breakfast Osokin is left alone...

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