

17 May 1971

READING 3

The mind inevitably gets stale when it repeats the same things from the same point of view over the years. From time to time we need to change our point of view in order to get fresh answers to our questions. Perhaps this one will refresh some of you; but don't make heavy weather of it! Take it slowly.

While casting about for a means of uniting our teachings from Mr. Ouspensky and the Shankaracharya with the facts discovered by Western neurologists during the last two decades and the evolutionary theories of the 19th century, I had a gift in the form of a diagram which floated before my mind early one morning. This seemed to answer the questions we are now asking. As it evidently derives from our Universal Symbol which can answer all questions, we must be careful not to get lost, and must try to take the principal question first.

This question (for me) is:

Q.1. *What is real about the world, and what is artifact produced by the way our brains and sensory mechanisms are made?* We are told by the Shankaracharya that the only reality in the Universe is the pure Consciousness of the Creator, and that everything else belongs to Maya – the illusion of the play He creates.

The diagram is as follows (Figure, overleaf): Taking it first on the scale of *individual states of consciousness* (Reading 1), we start at the bottom with the primitive brain stem which alone is in operation in keeping us alive during deep and dreamless sleep. When we begin to dream, more evolved parts of the brain come into play, consisting chiefly of those cyclical processes (the 'reverberating circuits') which are characteristic of the 'central headquarters' within the forebrains of all vertebrates. When we wake into the daytime state, these are partially suppressed by our logical minds which all day are interpreting the sense data from our environment in terms of standard and rigid ideas of other people. We are told however that the most active physical state is only deep sleep on the psychological or spiritual levels.

The diagram shows how this is true. For the Pure Consciousness exists as a central axis, which is independent of the circular motion of the three states of consciousness which we have just described. We begin to see that it is the circular motion (the spin of the mind) which causes the illusion; and we come at once to Mr. Ouspensky's teaching on Eternal Recurrence as our prison, and escape from recurrence, our liberation.

Q.2. *Is there any observable evidence of this circular motion in the Universe?* Yes, whenever the physical sciences can observe or calculate the motion of bodies sufficiently removed from us on the space-time scale, the circular motion is very apparent. Stars revolve in spiral galaxies like our Milky Way; planets revolve round suns, electrons revolve round atomic nuclei, etc., etc. This circular motion is apparently of two chief kinds – there is orbital motion and there is spin. The earth travels round the sun in 365.3 days, but it spins on its own axis every 24 hours; electrons are contained in orbits, but their spin must also be taken into account. In the Biosphere there are the fixed life cycles of individuals and the evolution of species.

Q.3. *Is there any evidence for similar circuits within individual organisms?* Yes, again, the evidence is being rapidly assembled, and some of it is summarised in an article from the

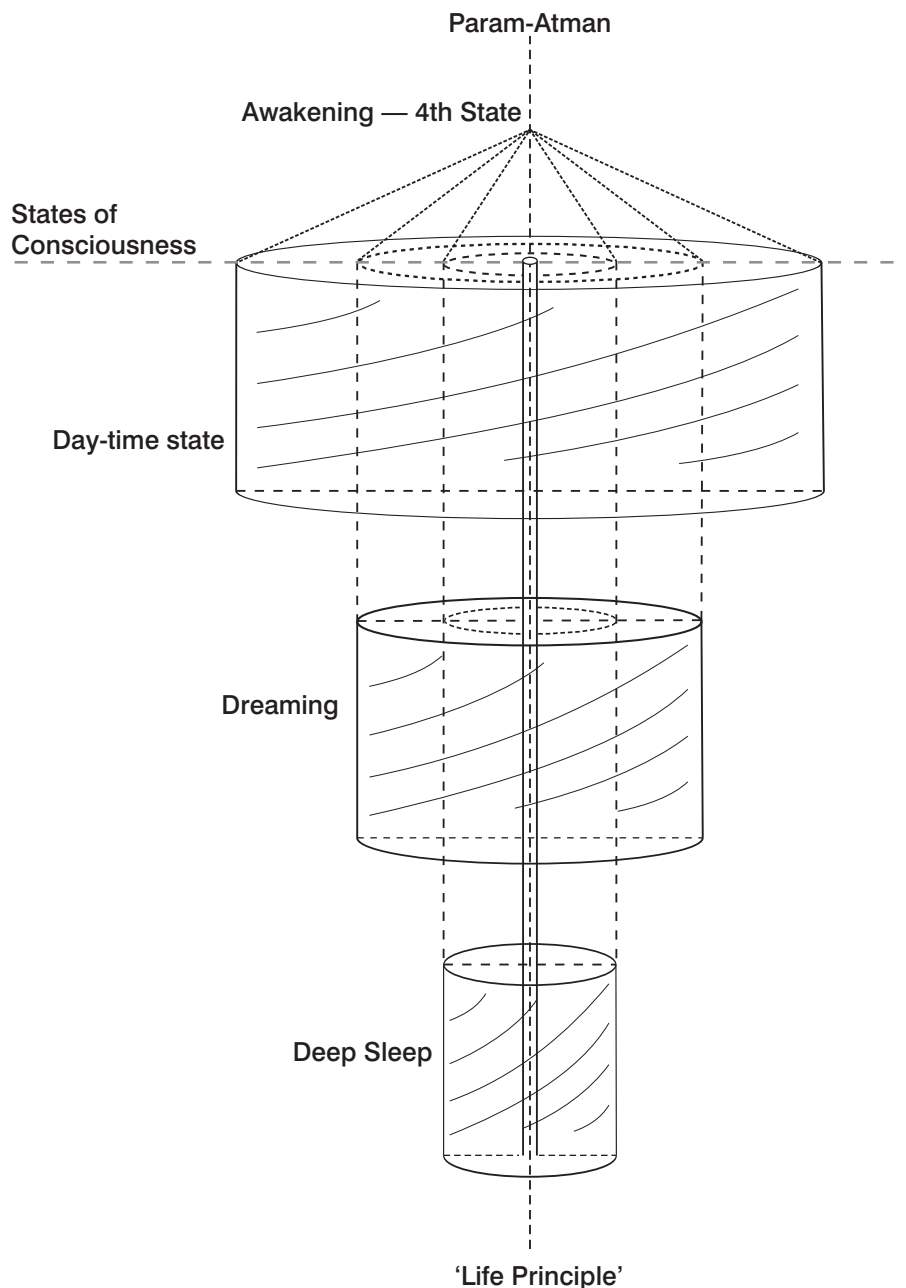
University of California in the April number of the *Scientific American*, of which I quote the opening paragraphs:

'Annual Biological Clocks' (p.72)

Many organisms have a system of built-in *daily* clocks. It has now been demonstrated that some also have an *annual* system of clocks that operates even when environmental signals are eliminated.

As the days become shorter and the temperature drops, birds migrate to a warmer climate, plants become dormant, and hibernating animals store up fat and go into their winter sleep. By the same token, the lengthening day and rising temperature in spring bring on the return migration of birds, the budding of plants, arousal of hibernation and (for many animals) the season of mating and breeding.

The timing of these yearly events is so obviously related to the passing seasons that until recently it was assumed that environmental changes directly supplied the cues for



changes in plant and animal behaviour. With the increased interest in studying biological phenomena under controlled conditions... some surprising discoveries have emerged concerning the (innate) cyclical behaviour of plants and animals. One major finding is that many organisms show cyclic behaviour even when the physical environment is kept constant.

After summarising the supporting facts, this article concludes with some evidence that man also has both daily and annual clock-systems, but these are mostly 'release phenomena' evidenced when the more recently-evolved part of the brain is in abeyance (as in the rhythm of manic-depressive attacks accompanied by changes in bodyweight).

All right then. Let us say that we must accept the evidence of circular motion on the level of coarse physical bodies, but the next question is:

Q.4. *Do our minds and souls have to be subject to the same circular motion, any more than they have to be subject to the gravity of the Earth and the tidal pull of the moon?*

For the answer to this question we must turn to our own direct experience aided by the formulations of seers like St. James in his Epistle (1:17): '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*'.

This brings us back to the diagram with its central axis of Pure Consciousness. At the top this Consciousness can be seen in the awakened state as the Param-Atman (or Universal Self) which is of the same substance as the eternal Self in each individual, though in lower organisms is only manifest as the 'life principle'.

When we come to our own experience, we notice at once the change in the feeling of 'I' which occurs whenever our reflection of that Pure Consciousness changes. In deep sleep we are not aware of anything, whether 'I' or not 'I'; in our dreams the 'I' usually exists as the hero of the play and is not subject to its usual limitations; in the daytime state our feeling of 'I' is changing all the time. It is only in the fourth or awakened state that we could be sure of distinguishing the Real 'I'.

Self-realization depends first on the finding of the true individual Self or Atman eternally unchanging and quite separate from all the illusion of movement; and secondly, it lies in this Atman looking upward towards the Universal instead of downwards into narrower and narrower spheres.

The following is part of an address we heard the Shankaracharya give to the crowds during last year's religious festival:

In reality a Being' (the 'Jiva') is nothing but a part of the Universal ('Param-Atman'). As such, whatever is present in the Universe is also present in the Jiva Atman or individual 'Being'. But the Jiva is under the influence of illusion (Maya), whereas the Param-Atman is not; for Param-Atman is the commander and the master of Maya, whereas the Jiva is a slave to it. At His own free will, the Param-Atman can make Maya give Him a shape, though He is shapeless, and can equally well give up that shape and merge into His natural state of shapelessness again when His purpose of having a shape is fulfilled. But the Jiva, being a slave of Maya, *has helplessly to revolve in the never-ending cycle* of birth, death, pleasure, pain, etc. until it is free from the bonds of Maya.

As a Jiva, he is subject to three feelings, namely: 1) fear of death, 2) desire to know, 3) desire for happiness.

Dealing with the fear of death first, it can be said that it is most unnatural. This is why Nature herself has arranged things in such a way that, before death actually sets in, complete insensibility is produced and one cannot feel death taking place. Nor, by the way, can any creature feel being born. This fear of death, however, is so strong that, generally speaking, one wants to avoid death at any cost, although his living may seem worse than death itself. Similarly, in refusing to give up Maya, we invite all sorts of trouble.

As the Jiva is a part of the Param-Atman, it is fundamentally eternal. It is fundamentally all Knowledge; it is fundamentally all Joy. But look at Eternity fearing death! Look at knowledge missing all Knowledge! Look at joy missing all Joy!

It is the business of Maya to make things look just the opposite of what they are – and to deceive the Jiva – so that it can be kept in bondage as long as possible. But surrendering oneself to God removes the delusion of Maya. Then there is the dawn of true Knowledge, and we realise that there is no death for us, that no Knowledge is hidden from us, and that the fullest Joy is always with us.

(Record, 25 January 1970)

CONCLUSION

The diagram, then, can be seen in motion like a spindle. It would seem that this repetitive motion of the mind (which is mostly out of our sight) is the cause of the illusion. By its spinning motion, the wool (or ‘undifferentiated impressions’) is ‘organised’ by the mind into strong threads which have, of course, many uses, but which have become conditioned or artificially fixed. This simile was used in the Greek idea of the three Fates – Clotho feeds in the wool, Lachesis spins it into thread, and Atropos cuts it. The Gunas, too, can be seen as operating in a similar way over the 24 hour cycle producing the conjurer’s show.

Q.5. *What is causing this spinning motion of our minds?* On the small physical scale of the Biosphere it looks to be the reproductive or sex energy with its recurrent cycles – ‘Nature filling her perambulators’ – the dynamo motivating all our desires. But the same energy (H.12), if directed towards the ‘Eternal Unchanging’ can also be the means of awakening and liberation from the repetitive illusion.

All of this is expressed poetically in Mr. Ouspensky’s pen pictures of the Tarot, e.g., *The World*, Card 21:

An unexpected vision rose before me: A circle resembling a wreath woven from rainbows and lightning revolved between sky and earth. It revolved with frenzied speed, blinding me with its brilliance and, in this radiance and fire, music sounded and soft singing was heard, and also the peals of thunder and the roar of a hurricane and the noise of mountain avalanches and the rumble of earthquakes. The circle whirled with a terrible noise, touching earth and sky, and in its centre I saw the dancing figure of a young and beautiful woman, wrapped in a light transparent scarf, with a magic wand in her hand...

(*A New Model of the Universe*, Ch.5)

How like this is to the Shankaracharya’s talks about ‘the woman (Prakriti or ‘Nature’) who assumes many forms, as contrasted with the One (Purush or Creator) who is the husband of the woman’!

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