

15 May 1974

READING 4

(A continuation of Reading 2, mainly for New Groups)

TIME BARRIERS IN THE HUMAN BODY

Although it has been said that 'Knowledge begins and ends with the teaching on Cosmoeses', you must realise that forty years of research on our part (following much previous work by P. D. Ouspensky and others) has been needed to bring our contemporary Western Knowledge into right relationship with that general framework. For example: during World War II several of us worked out with Mr. Ouspensky a complete classification of the sciences (and even several branches within each science) in relation to Cosmoeses, and it can, if need be, be brought up-to-date today, But Mr. McClelland and others must realise that they cannot learn it all at one or two meetings; they should listen carefully, and learn to ask the right questions in a certain order, if they want to go on with it.

At the present moment we need only to understand a little of the practical significance of those four components built in by the clock systems of the human body: First, the *threshold basis of sensation* – $1/10,000$ second. Though the various sense organs (like the retina and organ of Corti) can detect and distinguish a very great range of frequencies, yet Lord Adrian and other leading neurologists have established that the nerve impulses which code and relay those frequencies to the brainstem occupy a much narrower range – a few milliseconds to a limit at $1/10,000$ of a second or $1/10$ th of a millisecond.

Though these are the cause of all those inexplicable changes in bodily sensation and *mood* which we experience as the basis of our desires and thoughts – they have to be slowed down even more before we can have any choice in the matter. Anything less than 3 seconds is, for the roof-brain, instantaneous. A couple of examples will illustrate what is meant:

1. It was reported in last Monday's *Daily Telegraph*:

A four months old baby had a fit; its breathing stopped and it went very blue, and was rushed to hospital in a police car showing no signs of life at all. While one policeman was fruitlessly applying first-aid, the other – while driving the car – switched on the two-tone siren and 'the baby jumped and then coughed its way back to consciousness' – recovering completely. Though the baby, of course, knew nothing about it, yet the shock of the siren 'switched on' its breathing centre in the brainstem.

Such sensory events affecting our autonomic nervous system in less dramatic ways are governed by the millisecond time-clock.

Now about our mental perceptions governed by the breathing clock which measures breath cycles at rest. To know and appreciate the significance of the few impressions which enter consciousness, the roof-brain requires at least 3 seconds. Below that everything seems to be instantaneous, so this is the *threshold of conscious perception*. Colin Lucas, who has worked with me for years in this field, last week sent me the following example:

2. 'I remember that a long time ago at Bourne End, I was lying in bed in the early morning when suddenly the cat jumped in through the window on to my stomach. I remember

quite distinctly noticing two things: first, a feeling of acute fear (autonomic reaction), and then, what seemed to be a long time afterwards, the realisation 'Oh, it's the cat!' (mental perception).

Many of you can produce examples of these two ranges of time – one between 1/10,000 second and 3 seconds, which is in the field of study of neurology and physiology, and is continuously changing the background of the unconscious as a result of impressions received from within or without. This mechanism the Shankaracharya calls 'Manas' (for every species has its own clocks, and these are the time-units for man). It is quite outside the range of our attention.

The other range of time based on perception and attention, only begins at 3 seconds, and our reactions to events in the time-range between that and a day of 24 hours are the proper subjects of *psychology*. The power of selection arising at each 'present moment', the Shankaracharya calls Buddhi, a faculty peculiar to man.

If attention in the moment is practised often enough today, tomorrow will be different. A lifetime is made up of repeated days; it's no good dreaming of decades, or even of some after-life. It is only within our power to change the here and the Now.

What is so striking among the discoveries of modern science, is that the effects of all these nerve impulses depend entirely on the course by which they are conducted through the nervous system to a particular patch of the roof-brain, and are entirely habitual, depending on habits formed during one's life from infancy. Each of us, therefore, determines our individual reaction, and it takes a long time to change these habitual responses. But Meditation, observation, and true Knowledge provide us with this great new opportunity.

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