

17 November 1975

## READING 6

(This paper is based on the recording of last Tuesday's Meditation Meeting which has however required revision and clarification as follows.)

Dr. R. I want to approach the question of meditation today in rather a new way because in preparing myself for this meeting I suddenly saw that its success depends on correcting our ideas about 'Consciousness.' Our troubles have been almost entirely due to the complexity of the Indian language and the difficulties our interpreters (who don't understand what Consciousness is) have had in finding the equivalent English words. In reality both our Russian Instructor P. D. Ouspensky and the Shankaracharya have been teaching us exactly the same thing.

So we may start with the fact that 40 years ago, Mr. Ouspensky gave a series of 6 'Psychological Lectures' to which we were asked to bring our friends, quite a number of whom are in this room now. At those lectures the subject was 'Consciousness', and four states of Consciousness possible for man were clearly defined: 1) *Deep Sleep* at night. 2) The daytime state which people call 'clear consciousness' but which he called 'waking sleep' or *Relative Consciousness*. 3) *Self-Consciousness*; and 4) what he then called 'Objective Consciousness' but which we had better call *Universal or Cosmic Consciousness* to avoid the confusion arising from defining the words 'subjective' and 'objective' today.

He stressed two points. First that most people pass their lives in the first 2 states only, but imagine that they already possess the two higher states so do not want to know more about them. Secondly that one must totally emerge from the lower state before we can experience the next one. For example we only come into the daytime state when we realise we have been asleep; in just the same way we cannot experience more than occasional glimpses of the 3rd state without realising that all our ordinary life is a form of sleep from which it is necessary to awake. In the 4th state people can know the world as it is, and strangely there are more first-hand descriptions of it in Western literature than there are of the 3rd state of self-consciousness. Of the 4th state Ouspensky collected many examples in Chapter 22 of his first book *Tertium Organum*.

Perhaps the most striking example is that of the German mystic Jakob Boehme (by trade an illiterate shoemaker) the first of whose 3 major illuminations was chronicled by his biographer as occurring in the year 1600 when he was 25:

Sitting one day in his room his eyes fell upon a burnished pewter dish, which reflected the sunshine with such marvellous splendour that he fell into an inward ecstasy, and it seemed to him as if he could look into the principles and deepest foundation of things. Believing that it was only a fancy, he went out upon the green in order to banish it from his mind. But even here he remarked that he gazed into the heart of things, the very herbs and grass, and that actual nature harmonised with what he had inwardly seen.

This example confirms Ouspensky's 3rd contention that:

In most cases in ordinary language, the word 'consciousness' is used as an equivalent to the word 'intelligence' (in the sense of mind activity) or as an alternative for it. In reality consciousness is a particular kind of awareness of man, awareness of himself (as a

whole) and of who and where he is at the moment. Only the man himself can know whether he is 'conscious' at the given moment or not. But opinions of modern psychological schools differ on the question of consciousness. Some recognise that man is conscious in at least part of his functions; others deny any kind of consciousness in man, deny even the usefulness or the necessity for the term 'consciousness'. I will analyse none of these opinions because, from the point of view of the system about which I speak, they are all wrong.

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The Shankaracharya also defines the same 4 states of consciousness if one can penetrate the veil of language. He adds two transitional states, the 'dream state' between 1 and 2, and 'Samadhi' between 3 and 4; and in addition he describes various abnormal states of consciousness – unconsciousness (or coma whether from head injury or disease); hypnotism and trance states; drug-induced states etc. We in this Society bypass all these completely for they are in the province of professional psychiatrists and mental health organisations.

In meditation he said when I first met him, 'We come out of what we *are not*, in order to realise what we are.' He constantly maintains that the 3rd state ('Self-Consciousness') is only to be attained by regularly *giving up* first the ordinary daytime consciousness and then all the dreams and memories of the sleep state, and only then will we begin to experience the inward ecstasy (Samadhi) that Boehme described. This he calls 'Realization of the Individual Self or Atman'. After regular daily practice of two half-hours of meditation over a considerable time, he says that the individual self comes to realize that it is of the same nature as the universal consciousness (Param-Atman); which means that we can 'Go out upon the green' like Boehme, still preserving this expansion of consciousness which in the East is called *Turiya* or 'enlightenment' (literally the 'Fourth').

The aim of human life according to both the Shankaracharya and Ouspensky is to attain *command* over the 4 states of consciousness. The fully Realized man can go to sleep in bed when he wants to, he can carry on his business in the ordinary waking state and yet he is never far from the 2 higher states which he can turn on 'at will'. I have myself seen the Shankaracharya do this under the very varied circumstances of our acquaintance over 14 years.

Another very fundamental point of agreement between them is one that is missed by all contemporary psychological schools, namely that a man's relationship to space and time and memory varies with his state of consciousness. Those who read Mr. Ouspensky's books, (especially *Tertium Organum*, *A New Model of the Universe* and *Strange life of Ivan Osokin*) will be well aware of his attitude; and they may want to be reminded of the story the Shankaracharya uses to emphasise this point. It comes from the epic of the *Ramayana* in which Rama is depicted as the ideal man with full command over consciousness; and he had a brother named Lakshman who was also fully realized except in respect of his Knowledge:

Once while returning from a bathe in the Sarayee river, Lakshman requested Rama to show him what Maya is because Rama was always talking about it and ordinary men appeared to be overwhelmed by it. Rama didn't answer at the time; he kept quiet, but later on when Lakshman had forgotten his question he asked him to dive and pick up his signet ring which had fallen into the river, he said, while bathing. So Lakshman dived into the river to retrieve it.

As he hit the water, his consciousness changed altogether, and under water

he completely forgot the world he had just left. He saw an altogether different world there – more beautiful than this one he had come out of. A young girl stood there telling him that she had no one to look after her, and asked Lakshman to take her under his protection and to marry her. Lakshman cheerfully agreed and lived with her a whole lifetime and had children and grandchildren. Finally he grew old, fell sick and died and (as the custom was) his sons submerged his body into the river.

At that touch of the cold water he came back to his former state of consciousness, and as he raised his head above the water he found himself again in this ordinary world with Rama standing on the bank in front of him. Lakshman, completely out of his wits, told Rama what he had seen under water and how he had spent a whole lifetime underneath.

Rama said, ‘You’ve been only under the water for about two minutes of earthly time. All you have seen was all that Maya you had wanted to know about, so now you know!’

A few moments on one level, a whole lifetime at another. This is how time and distance change with consciousness – time and space.

Dr. R. went on:

This story can be said to describe the transition between any of these big changes of consciousness; that is, he could have been in the daytime state and gone to sleep and had a dream. The dream would take only two minutes, but it would seem like a whole lifetime. That we’ve all experienced and know about.

The other inference is that if you get into the third state of consciousness, you hit the water, and all that you previously felt in the daytime life is just a dream, from which you emerge to find that only, perhaps, two minutes have passed. Rama all the time standing there represents Cosmic Consciousness – seeing that those worlds which Lakshman experienced were illusory limitations of the Real World.

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(Note: This has been rewritten in rather full form to clear up some of our confusion and chiefly for the new people. Groups of more experienced people can use what they want of it.)

