

17 May 1976

## READING 2

[At our last 'big Monday meeting' Dr. Roles used a tape-recorder to demonstrate certain aspects of the functions and relationship of the two hemispheres of the brain. Before leaving for America he edited and enlarged the record of that meeting. This provides excellent material for our group meetings during the weeks beginning 17th & 24th May.

In a note to me the Doctor says: 'If you use this material you could ask, "Suppose some magician sent *you* back to the age of 14 instantaneously, wouldn't *you* be a bit confused? And even more so if you went back from your deathbed to your cot as a newborn baby?" I myself was born in Ceylon with a native Ayah in attendance. What would this life at Colet seem to me then? No wonder we are advised by Mr. Ouspensky and by H.H. to achieve Self-realization *now* in *this* life.'

As there will be no Monday meetings on May 31st or June 7th we will try to distribute more material on Monday May 24th for use during the weeks beginning May 31st and June 7th. Dr. Roles plans to return to this country on May 30th so it is possible that additional meeting material may be available for distribution at the meditation meeting on June 8th.]

R.A.

### DREAM STATE AND DAYTIME STATE

The coming of the Meditation in 1960, and the teachings of the Shankaracharya ever since, have enabled us to confirm for ourselves many of the discoveries Mr. Ouspensky made in the course of his own experiments, as recounted for instance in Chapters 7 and 8 of *A New Model* – 'On the Study of Dreams' and 'Experimental Mysticism'. Now that the 'mirror image' relationship of the two hemispheres of the brain is becoming part of our scientific equipment, we can develop a reasonable explanation for much that was previously seen as 'mystical' or 'mysterious'. But the function of the right (silent) side remains unsolved, and all these observations and researches have so far missed his two most important discoveries from the point of view of future research: *first* that the daytime state is *superimposed* on the dream state, which is going on all the time by day as well as by night. Therefore, while it is impossible to make reliable observations on dreams during sleep at night, it becomes comparatively easy during half-dream states during the day. At every initiation one says to each candidate: 'Let the Mantra establish its own rhythm, then follow that rhythm through the region of current conversations and thoughts (dominant hemisphere) through the region of dreams and memories (quiet hemisphere) to the region where *both* are silent and there is complete stillness. Beyond that in the silence you will meet with the conscious Self which is always present but seldom noticed.' Many experience this in the first few minutes; some only fitfully later.

It is important to realise that experience of higher states through contact with this real unchanging consciousness is only to be reached by going 'through the looking-glass' and *not* as an extension of the busy daytime state. In other words it comes only when the left hemisphere with its speech centres is put to rest, and by letting the light shine on the deepest parts of the silent one which are ordinarily shrouded in the darkness of deep sleep in which one knows nothing.

Of course, during a half-hour of meditation one should observe nothing but the Mantra; at its climax in the ecstasy of Samadhi one knows nothing until one emerges. So any research must be done at other times than the half-hours.

*Mr. Ouspensky's second important discovery* was the fact that dreams are experienced in the reverse or anti-clockwise direction of time. I want this afternoon to give you a little demonstration of the process which is based on the same principle as our tape-recorders. On this little machine here the recording is done by depressing this red key plus the playback key (single arrow >). *During the day both the hemispheres are recording*: the left one is responding to and is forming short-term memories of the outer world, while the right is making its own emotional impressions of the same world and linking them with long-term memory mechanisms for its own amusement. The dominant left one knows nothing about this, unless its attention is disengaged and it goes into a daydream. As bedtime approaches the left hemisphere becomes quieter; we darken the room and slip into a half-dream state with the so-called 'hypnogogic images' of recent events. Suddenly we fall asleep, that is the outer sensory world is switched off altogether and the reverse key (<<) goes rapidly into operation. The right hemisphere goes into reverse from the end back to the beginning of the day, amusing itself by composing memories into dreams. For only short periods does it take a rest in deep and dreamless sleep. This fact can be observed electrically – but not the *content* of the dream from end to beginning.

As 7.00 a.m. approaches I come again into a half-dream state during which I may be dimly aware that I have been dreaming. Suddenly I wake right up and switch on the two recording keys, with the tape back at the beginning again ready for today's recording. The dominant left hemisphere starts trying to reconstruct the latest dream in clock time, and a torrent of thoughts submerges the passive right hemisphere altogether. So the busy hemisphere doesn't succeed very well with its attempted reconstructions in the Freudian manner, since it is totally unaware of the dream formation which, as we have said, is done rapidly and in reverse!

Though I myself have observed all this many many times (since my sleep at night is fitful nowadays) Mr. Ouspensky gives on p.288 the evidence of a famous dream described by L.F. Maury in his book *Le sommeil et les rêves*, Paris 1861, during a slight illness when he had been reading about the French revolution. He records the vivid dream occasioned when the detached rod of his bedhead had fallen on his neck (as would the knife of the guillotine) which his mother confirmed had all happened in an instant. Mr. Ouspensky comments: 'Maury's first impression was: Oh God, what has happened to me? Answer: I am guillotined. Imagination (right hemisphere) at once draws the picture of the execution, the scaffold, the guillotine, the executioner. At the same time the question arises (left hemisphere): how can all this have happened?' And the right hemisphere again gets going with its vivid pictures back to the start of the Revolution (Robespierre, Marat, etc.) when Maury opened his eyes after a short period (several seconds) in a half-dream state, and woke up fully.

Though the dreams that the Shankaracharya quotes to us from the Upanishads and the *Ramayana* do not mention the *reversal process*, they bear testimony to the great rapidity of dream formation. He also confirms what Mr. Ouspensky called 'the complementary colours' of dreams as in visual after images. One time when our groups were discussing these, we quoted to H.H. a remark made by a schoolmaster here: 'This reminds me,' he said, 'of a yarn I heard about a tramp

who slept rough on a bench in Hyde Park. A friend booked him a room at the Ritz. Asked next morning how he had slept, the tramp replied, "Very badly; I dreamt I was sleeping on that hard bench in Hyde Park!" H.H. commented that dreams run quite contrary to our daytime point of view, expressing unfulfilled desires and deep-rooted fears – the right hemisphere constructs its own world unknown to the daytime hemisphere.

\*

But now we come to a most important inference. Both Mr. Ouspensky and the Shankaracharya agree that the same principle underlies the big change of consciousness from birth to death and back again. Much evidence has also accrued from the witness of people who have 'died' and been brought back to life, describing how the whole of their lives passed rapidly before them in reverse order. Of course it is much more difficult to *explain* how the memory of a past life could have been preserved when the whole of the physical body, all its sensory apparatus and the brain with its two halves, have all alike crumbled to dust. Nevertheless, there *is* an explanation which lies in the 'double helix of the DNA molecule' – though there is no time to go into that now.

I would like to try out on you instead a demonstration (in practice for the group in New York) of how this same principle of reversal and playback could work on the long time-scale of physical birth and death. Suppose a film has been made with its appropriate soundtrack up to the end of this present life. At the appointed moment the physical body dies, and the film and soundtrack are switched, in very fast time, back to the beginning again ready for a re-recording of the next life. I cannot show you the film, of course, that Mr. Ouspensky describes in *Strange life of Ivan Osokin*, but I can play to you part of the soundtrack.

The drama begins one fine day, you will remember, in 1902 with Osokin reaching the end of his tether. 'He rises slowly like a blind man, takes a revolver and cartridges from the drawer of the table, loads the revolver and puts it in his pocket – and goes out. Next scene: Osokin goes to a magician whom he has known for some time. He is a good magician and always has excellent brandy and cigars.'

At a certain point we begin our recording:

**Tape:**

He walks up and down the room then stops in front of the old man. 'Listen, can't your magic do this for me? Can't you send me back? ... I shall do everything differently. I shall live in a new way. I want to go back ten years, to the time when I was still a school-boy. Tell me, is it possible?'

The old man nods. 'It is possible,' he says. Osokin stops in amazement. 'Can you do it?' The old man nods again and says, 'I can do it but it will not make things any better for you.'

'Well, that is my affair,' says Osokin. 'Only send me back ten, no, twelve years, but there must be a condition that I shall remember everything – everything you understand, including the smallest details. All that I have acquired these twelve years must remain with me, all my experience, all my knowledge of life, one could do anything then!'

'I can send you back as far as you like, and you will remember everything, but nothing will come of it.'

'How *could* nothing come of it?' says Osokin excitedly. 'The whole horror of the

thing is that we do not know our way. If I know and remember, I shall do everything differently. I shall have an aim... Do you think I shall play all those tricks with my life? Certainly not!

The old man sits down slowly and continues to look at him. 'You will go back twelve years as you wish. And you will remember everything as long as you do not wish to forget. Are you ready?'

'Quite ready', says Osokin. 'In any case I cannot go back home again now.'

The old man claps his hands three times and performs a bit of magic in the course of which he throws a handful of powder into the brazier and at the same time he takes the hourglass from the table, shakes it and turns it over... the whole room fills with smoke and in it can be seen many moving forms... When the smoke clears away the old man is sitting in his armchair holding the hourglass in his hand. There is no Osokin.

The film and sound track have gone into reverse.

### Chapter 6. Morning

An early morning in October 1890. A dormitory in a boys' school. A school servant begins to ring a large bell... the dormitory comes to life at once. There is movement and noise... 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'll test this at once. What shall I try to remember? I know! *That* time I did not know English. I learned it later. If I know it now, it means that everything has been real, that I have been abroad and all the rest of it. How does that fable of Stevenson's begin, about a King's daughter who had no power over the morrow? *The Song of the Morrow*? Yes, that's right – "The King of Duntrine had a daughter when he was old, and she was the fairest King's daughter between two seas..." so it's all true, I *do* know English. I can remember how it goes on... But, then, that means that all *this* is a dream.' 'Osokin, Osokin.' shouts his friend Memorsky. 'Why are you sitting there like an owl? Have you fallen asleep? Don't you hear, the housemaster is taking the names of those who are not dressed. Wake up; you devil's puppet!'

Osokin seizes the pillow and throws it angrily at the laughing Memorsky who neatly dodges it. At that moment the German housemaster comes out from behind the archway and the pillow, flying over Memorsky's head, hits him full in the face. He staggers with the unexpectedness of the blow, then rushes furiously at Osokin.

#### End of Tape

\*

So Ivan's brave new life has not started too well! And from now for over 146 pages of the story, effect follows cause inexorably until he comes again to the magician twelve years later.

I will now press the reverse button and time the reversal process.

It took just ten seconds and now the tape is ready for the replay.

#### Repeat tape

\*

What is the moral of all this for us now? As long as we are confined to the physical level and try to explain everything in terms of the physical body we can change nothing. But if we pay attention to the unchanging Consciousness manifesting *from within* through the causal and subtle bodies, we have infinite power and infinite choice. We can instantaneously go into the past or the future (Circle of Time) at any moment. We can switch off for half-an-hour, or make a new film each day!

Let's demonstrate this. Here on this tape I have recorded a poem written twenty-five centuries ago – by a contemporary of the first Shankara. He lived from 490–430 BC, dying three years before Plato was born. He was Empedocles, lawgiver, physician, poet and priest of the Agrigent in Sicily. He had been a Pythagorean and was the first we know to formulate the doctrine of the Four Elements as governed by the two opposing forces of Love and Strife. One of his poems is known to us in Matthew Arnold's translation. This poem seems as fresh and true in London or New York today, as it did in Sicily in the 6th century BC:

### Hymn of Empedocles

Is it so small a thing  
 To have enjoyed the sun,  
 To have lived light in the Spring  
 To have loved, to have thought, to have done,  
 To have advanced true friends, and beat down baffling foes?

That we must feign a bliss  
 Of doubtful future date,  
 And while we dream on this  
 Lose all our present state,  
 And relegate to worlds yet distant, our repose.

But thou, because thou hearest  
 Man scoff at Heaven and Fate;  
 Because the Gods thou fearest  
 Failed to make blest *thy* state,  
 Tremblest, and wilt not dare to trust the joys there *are*.

I say, Fear not! life still  
 Leaves human effort scope;  
 But since life teams with ill  
 Nurse no extravagant hope!  
 Because thou must not dream, thou needs't not then despair.

\* \* \*

