

9 November, 1976.

TIME

(FOR PRIVATE USE)

In this account I am interpreting P. D. Ouspensky's central theme (as expressed in the chapter on 'Eternal Recurrence' in his book, *A New Model of the Universe*) in terms of a *day of 24 hours* because it can be verified by every one of us since we repeat the cycle of a day, every day in the longer cycle of a lifetime of the physical body.

In our physical life we are, and *have* to be, governed by a conventional 'time' established for convenience; otherwise our social life would be impossibly chaotic. But we forget that our clocks and calendars *are only a convention* based on the movements of our small planet earth as it turns on its axis every 24 hours, and moves in orbit round the sun in an earth-year. In England this is 'Greenwich Time', but as we all know it ceases to be true as we travel East or West and have to keep altering our watches. This artificial 'time' is even less true for our personal inner life on the subtle and causal levels. The active (left) outward-looking half of the brain is of course geared with the body and equally tied to the clock; but the inward-looking quiet side (the right) has its own 'time' geared to its own units and rhythms – heartbeat, breathing, digestion, sex rhythms and so on.

In Figure 1, I give a picture of my own average 'day' as governed by Greenwich time; where half an inch represents 2 hours; it begins and ends at about 7 a.m. So much for the horizontal line Before – After; but each moment has its own continued existence (labelled 'Now') in our memory systems. We only learn what these 'Now lines' really mean when we treat the cycle of a day as our watches do with their 3 hands (hours, minute and second hands) moving round a circle. Figure 2 shows my day in this way – each 2-hour period being represented by 30° or 1/12th of the circle of 24 hours. Each 'Now Line' is directed towards the centre of the circle where *I live perpetually*, unaffected by such mundane considerations.

This circle shows certain chief realities:

1. That each day (and successive days) is governed by a *principle of symmetry*. I tend to work at the same times, sleep at the same times, feel hungry at the same times and so on. In several universities of the USA voluntary students have lived for a month or more in a room completely shut off from all external stimuli and these rhythms have been found to continue indefinitely and to be entirely individual.
2. Figure 2 also shows (to our surprise) that each 24 hours is or should be divided into 3 periods of 8 hours. No one wants to work more than 8 hours or sleep for more than 8 hours; and this leaves *another 8 hours* for recreation, at least some of which should be spent on work for Self-realization. If we allow ourselves to be continually 'on the go' with no time even for two half-hours of meditation, we are just the slaves of habit.

This becomes of importance when we enlarge the time-scale to a physical life-time – say 72 years on average. Then each 30° represents 6 years; the moment of 'birth' corresponds with the moment of 'death' and we will live again and again repeating the same mistakes without knowing it.

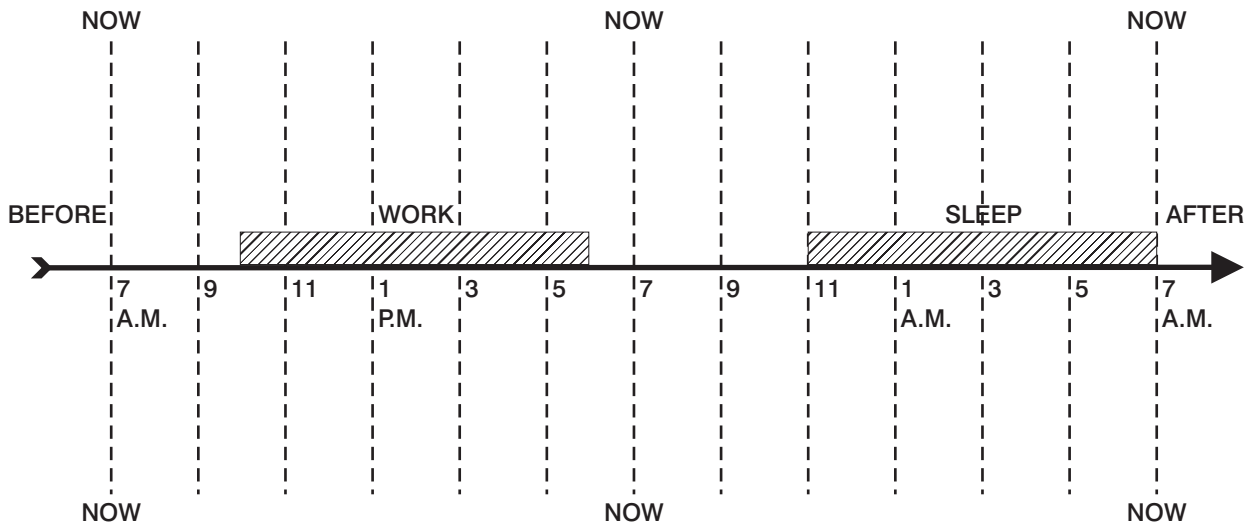


Figure 1. 'Greenwich Time'

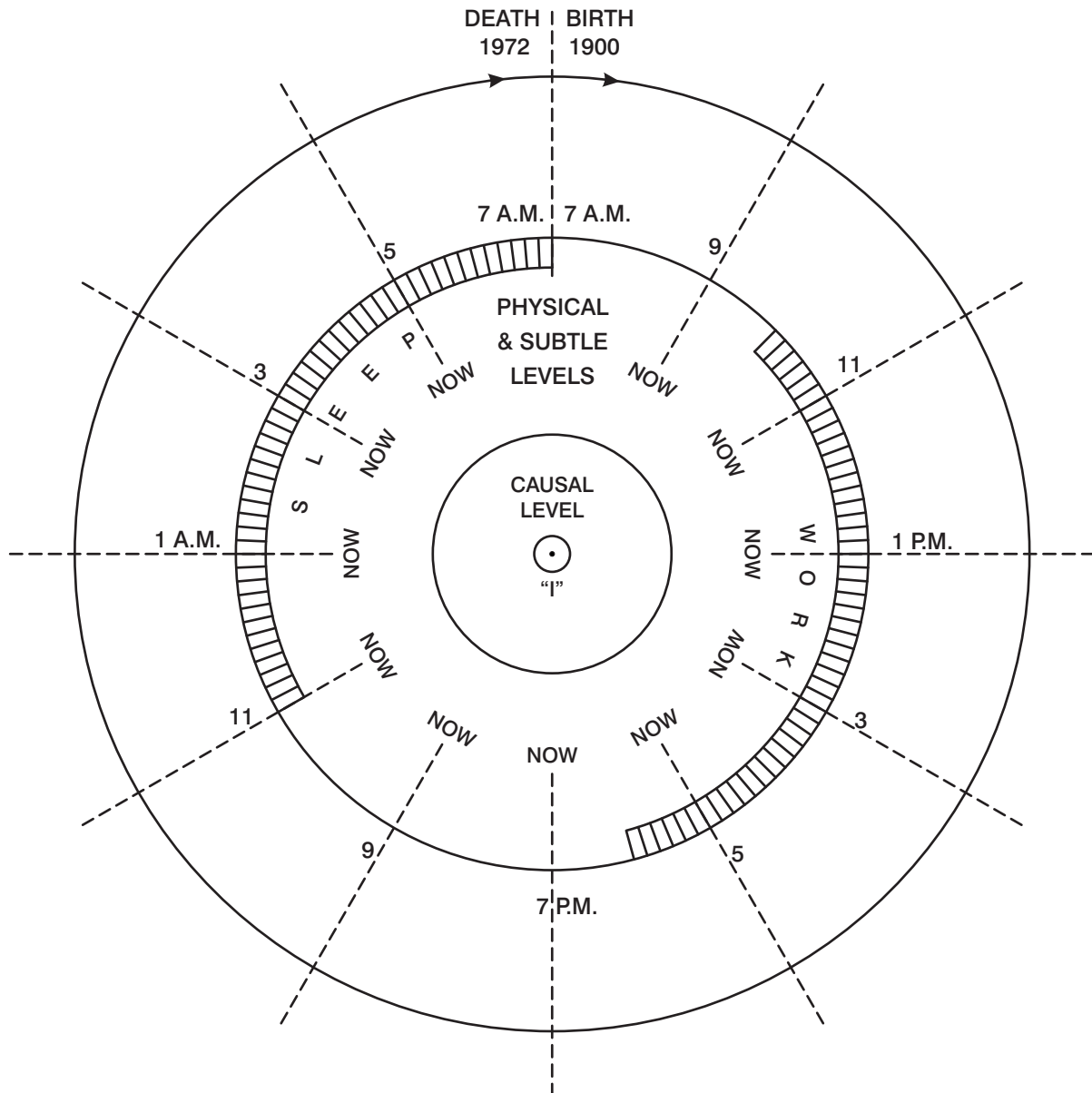


Figure 2. 'Personal Time'

3. But 'lives' are *not* always the same just as days are not the same; in both there are degrees of freedom for the individual, and big differences between different individuals.

In those American experiments it was found that individual 'days' were either shorter or longer than 24 hours – that is, people run at different rates (which explains one cause of insomnia). The innermost circle of Figure 2, representing the Causal level, lasts just 3 seconds or one breath-cycle – which we feel as a 'present moment' – Now. Some breathe faster, some breathe more slowly than that 3 seconds. The 3 circles are inter-gearred, so that people's lives, being lived at different rates, differ greatly in duration. Mozart (who composed his music during the night and wrote it down by day) lived at twice the ordinary rate and completed his life's work in half the time, dying at 36. Old people's homes are full of people who have lived at a slower rate, some even last longer than a hundred years.

With regard to Self-realization people have to learn to practise what St. Paul called 'redeeming the time', i.e. salvaging some of that spare 8 hours shown in Figure 2. This in practice means resolving the conflict between 'artificial time' and 'psychological time'. This conflict was expressed by Sir Arthur Eddington in his usual light-hearted manner at the beginning of Chapter 3 of his first popular book about Relativity and Quantum Theory – *The Nature of the Physical World* (1928):

Astronomer Royal's Time

I have sometimes thought it would be very entertaining to hear a discussion between the Astronomer Royal and, let us say, Professor Bergson on the nature of time. Professor Bergson's authority on the subject is well known; and I may remind you that the Astronomer Royal is entrusted with the duty of finding out time for our everyday use, so presumably he has some idea of what he has to find... There would probably have been a keen disagreement and I rather think that the philosopher would have had the best of the verbal argument. After showing that the Astronomer Royal's idea of time was quite nonsensical, Professor Bergson would probably end the discussion by looking at his watch and rushing off to catch a train which was starting by the Astronomer Royal's time.

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It would be better to give copies of this account to anyone interested in the subject – notably those newcomers at last week's meeting at 5, Onslow Square – rather than attempt to explain it by word of mouth. They would see that, after studying Figure 2, they will be able to find their own answers to their questions.

For this idea of repetition as a law of the universe is not merely a philosophers' dream, but has (and always has had) far-reaching implications. Thus in the early Christian collection of writings called the *Philokalia*, the following is to be found:

Imagine a circle (says Avva Dorotheus – 7th century), in the middle, its centre, and radii rays going out of this centre. The further these radii travel from the centre, the more divergent and distant they become from one another; and the other way round, the closer they are to the centre, the nearer they approach one another.

Imagine now that this circle is the world, the very middle of it, God, and the radial lines going out from or approaching the centre from the circumference, are the paths of men's lives. And here also, the further the Saints penetrate inside the circle towards the

middle of it, desiring to approach God the closer, according to the depth of this penetration, they come to God and to each other...'

This is the idea of a group of people connected at their centre with a great tradition headed by a fully Realized man – which is called by our friend the Shankaracharya 'a Satsang' or 'gathering'. Any of you who are sufficiently interested in the idea of time as a circle can hear how the Shankaracharya solves the problem in terms of the physical, subtle and causal levels.

Here are the questions as reported to me from the new group on November 4th at 5, Onslow Square.

1. Nicholas Granby. When thinking of it afterwards, which I quite often do, I find I have difficulty in relating what was said to ordinary life.
2. Edmund Piercy. I find that the ideas do remain around even while ordinary life activities are going on.
3. Nicholas Granby. But aren't they really just memories? I am puzzled by levels. Some seem to have emotional attachment and I have a feeling of warmth about them.
4. Mark Tyou. Is the individual 'I' the same as the ego? The 'ego I', I mean. There are so many aspects about this question of 'I'. What is the observer part and where is that? I had an example as to how good states can be spoiled by describing them. I had specially good impressions – very strong and delightful – walking on Hampstead Heath. Describing them to my companion made them disappear but they came back again later when I was quiet.
5. Ann Keck. I understand. One can think of this in terms of the two sides of the brain.
6. Jane Shaw. (her first meeting) I am interested in the idea of cycles, because I have seen that I just cannot get out of a thing till the cycle is broken by something else. Perhaps our lives are like that?
7. Ann Keck. Can you not control it at all?
8. Jane Shaw. Perhaps by remembering what has caused it helps. It never goes in a straight line.
9. Edmund Piercy. Perhaps the only way we can learn to see something clearly is because of its repetitive nature.
10. Nicholas Granby. I have read *The Strange Life of Ivan Osokin* and was very interested. It says that though you have a chance to live again it is the same life.
11. Jane Shaw. Different types of energy seem to come; in everyday things.
12. Mark Tyou. It worries me that the adjustment to recurrence was *exact*. It goes against the grain. It is fatalistic.

The question by Mark Tyou about 'I' will be answered separately. But he can see in Figure 2, that there would be differences:

- a) between an observer situated on the circumference of the circle and revolving with it, and an observer on one of the radial lines of 'Now'.

- b) between the direction of view of that second observer – i.e. whether he is looking inwards or outwards.
- c) between the permanent Observer at the still centre of the concentric circles and any other ‘I’ which would be trying to observe while in motion and subject to change.

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How to use Figure 2 to answer your own Questions

Draw 3 concentric circles about a centre to represent the causal, subtle and physical levels. Let any radius represent an individual Observer at any moment NOW. This line refers to his ‘Attention’; one end is based on the centre, Permanent ‘I’, or some point on the way to it. The other (outer) end is his attention when focusing on what is going on around him at the moment. When one is doing something – household chores, getting to and from work, work in the office or some favourite recreation – one’s attention should be entirely on what one is doing, doing it economically and efficiently with help of previous experience. When meditating or at ‘spare’ moments, one’s attention should be entirely on the centre – ‘Self-remembering’.

It is a common mistake to try to do both at once; that’s impossible anyway, and attempts to do it only spoil both our efficiency and our meditation. Hence the two half-hours a day when you dive ‘into the Treasury’ to get the energy and self-confidence needed for ‘the Market Place’. Don’t be impatient, it’s an art that takes a bit of time to acquire, but one that will remove all conflicts like: ‘I find difficulty in relating meditation or new ideas to practical living.’ Don’t try! Just enjoy applying to ordinary life the energy acquired.

Now relate Figure 2 to what was said about the great difference between the time units of the 3 worlds – causal, subtle and physical. The whole inner circle (causal world 3) lasts just one *moment* – 3 seconds – the period of one breath cycle. While at rest there are 20 breath cycles per minute as you can see on any hospital patient’s chart. That means each cycle lasts 3 seconds; there are 3,600 seconds in an hour and therefore 1,200 breath cycles in an hour. In one day there would be 24 x 1,200 or 28,800 moments of breath if at rest all the time.

Using the same ratio as Mr. Ouspensky did, a full human life-time of 28,800 days comes to just under 80 years. What takes a lifetime in the physical world can all happen in one day in the subtle world; while on the Causal level it is all there every moment. While we have little spare ‘time’ for anything important as we rush around in the physical world, we have quite enough time in the subtle world and infinite ‘time’ in the Causal world!

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