

12 June 1978

READING 6

'SEVEN COSMOSES'

On this occasion we want to give this part of the System in such a way that it will unite the two sides of man's structure – the outward-looking and the inward-looking – thus helping the individual to find unity in the midst of all the apparent diversity.

You remember the story of the two artists who wished to demonstrate their art to a king; and at their request he supplied them with a hall and put a partition down the middle. One painter proceeded to cover his wall with pictures in colour, using all the arts of fresco-painting. The other man only kept cleaning and polishing his wall. After a given time the partition was removed, the hall illuminated, and the king was surprised to see that the two walls showed the same picture, for the polished wall gave a perfect reflection of the other.

Such harmonious work of the two halves of the brain is the way to achieve unity and this is the way to study Cosmoses.

One needs knowledge (like the fresco-painter) and one needs to polish up one's psychology, ridding it of turning thoughts, conflicting desires and negative emotions.

PART 1

When this teaching was first given to the St. Petersburg group during the winter of 1915–16, these were the main points:

Knowledge begins with the Teaching of the Cosmoses for this is necessary for the true understanding of the Principle of Relativity. It is essential to know that the full teaching speaks, not of one world or of two, but of Seven Cosmoses included one within the other.

These had at some time or other acquired Greek names which signify:

1. The First world (Protocosmos)
2. The Great or the Holy world (Megalo or Hagiocosmos)
3. The Big world (Macrocosmos)
4. The Second world (Deuteroscosmos)
5. The Middle or Intermediate world (Mesocosmos)
6. The Third world (Tritocosmos)
7. The Little world (Microcosmos)

Note. There have always been doubts about the exact definitions of these, and this is natural because it has been found to be a sliding scale or a period (Octave) repeating on different scales. At first the teacher insisted that man was the Third world (Tritocosmos) and the Microcosmos was the 'atom' in the sense of the smallest unit which contains *all* the properties (physical, chemical, biological, psychological and cosmic) of the world next above it. Later the group persuaded him to call the Tritocosmos the Biosphere (organic life on earth) and the Microcosmos man. Still later Mr. Ouspensky showed that if you took man as the first (or Protocosmos), there was the same period of seven worlds – cells, bio-molecules, atoms or ions, nuclear particles, electrons and cosmic ray particles – again one within the other.

At the time however (in 1915) a few more important things were said:

Each cosmos is a living and intelligent being which lives, breathes, feels, is born and dies. There is no exact analogy between any two worlds; it is only three cosmoses taken together that are similar and analogous to any other three. Again each world must be studied not only in itself, but as a unit of the world above and the world for the 'atom' below it.

(*In Search of the Miraculous*, Chapter 16)

[In our language just now, the Vyashti—Samashti relationship holds good between any pair of cosmoses. Our earth, for example, is the world or vehicle of the units or species of the Biosphere and is itself an essential unit of the Solar System as the only 'life-bearing' planet.]

The division into cosmoses is different from any other descriptions of the universe, because the overall ratio of time and magnitude between successive cosmoses is constant and permanent; one cosmos is incommensurable with the next.

[**Note.** The relationship used to be called that of 'zero to infinity', but since the word 'infinity' has changed so greatly for mathematicians today, we should do better to avoid the term.]

Finally, take note that *time is different in different cosmoses*, and it can be calculated exactly. I will add only one thing more – *Time is Breath* – try to understand this.

[Pause. Please try to memorise this data rather than to modify it or introduce ideas of your own at this stage.]

PART 2

We have still about thirty descriptions of (or references to) Cosmoses from Mr. Ouspensky's subsequent meetings when he came to London; and we ourselves made several attempts to take the subject further. The most productive of these was in 1961 (the year of my meeting with the Shankaracharya) – here is part of a paper written then by Helen Wright about the above data which she called 'Thoughts on Time in Different Cosmoses'. It began like this:

Here are some thoughts which arose from a moment of deeper understanding one summer evening:

As the sun fades below the horizon a stillness falls over the fields, and from within the wood the twitterings and rustlings of small animals and bird life come to a standstill. The faint daytime breeze drops as the air cools, so that even the leaves are silent. Everything is still, hushed, waiting – and then slowly, almost imperceptibly, like the turn of the tide, nature begins to let out her breath.

This we can feel and understand, being ourselves part of nature. Our day and night of twenty-four hours is the breath of nature. Sometimes her breath comes deep, in the long summer days, and there seems hardly time to let it out before she inhales deeply again; and later, in the short dark days, her intake of breath is shallow – while she rests, as it would seem – preparing for a new surge of life in the spring.

But what of the earth? The time of a breath for nature can be only the blink of an eye for the earth, for in twenty-four hours the earth's surface receives one pulsation of the life-giving rays of the sun...'

Comment. But here, perhaps, we had better leave her further account because in the seventeen years since that was written, quite a lot has been discovered about the earth and the other planets,

about the sun and other stars, and about the Milky Way and other galaxies. Anyway our minds cannot keep on one subject for long without getting tired and tangled. So it is recommended that you switch at this point to another approach altogether.

PART 3

Apart from Knowledge, what effect should the Study of Cosmoses have upon our Being?

At one of the last meetings Mr. Ouspensky held at Colet before going to America (April 1940) someone said:

I have been trying to think about cosmoses and, in practice, I have found it very useful as a help against negative emotion. When I am worried or annoyed the thought of our relative position compared with the cosmoses above and below seems to put the negative emotion into its right perspective, and then at once it seems a very trifling thing.

Mr. O. Can you say how that comes? It is a very interesting observation, but do you know why? It is important to know what you do to yourself by thinking about cosmoses.

[When pressed in private for an answer to this question, he would say: 'We own a house of three storeys but prefer to live in the basement where we see and hear nothing. Thinking of cosmoses and of the cosmic laws lifts us so that we move freely between the upper rooms of our house.']

But only since the Meditation have we come nearer to answering that question or of realising the truth of the claim 'Knowledge begins with the Teaching on Cosmoses.'

Current thought (including all the sciences) is obsessed with the idea of *speed* – movement of bodies from place to place. Looking and listening through telescopes at bigger and bigger worlds, they appear to move faster the further out in space we go; similarly smaller worlds appear to move faster the smaller the units. Today we are like Alice's white rabbit 'hurrying along and taking a watch out of its waistcoat pocket before it popped down the rabbit-hole', followed (like us) by Alice without ever considering 'how in the world she was to get out again'.

Today's 'restless universe' is an artifact due to the perpetual movement of our mental processes, and the answer lies in increasing inner *stillness*. For in relation to Consciousness the Period of Cosmoses shows that the present moment (which is the time-limit of Consciousness) can be expanded to the point where, in the 'Great' or 'Holy' Cosmos there is 'Time no longer'.

PART 4

What is needed in order to experience the Cosmoses? It is certainly not *thinking* only. It was best expressed by Prue de Lotbinière in her now famous question we took to the Shankaracharya in 1970:

Where does the feeling of wonder at Creation come from? It seems so strange that we do not feel this more. One would have expected it to be the main feeling of people on earth – amazement at being here at all. Is it connected with memory of something different?'

To which he replied:

S. The feeling of wonder is a pure feeling; because with this, immediately the question arises in the beholder: 'What is the cause of the creation of such beautiful scenes in the

drama of the Absolute?' He immediately enters into the realm of the Causal world, thus reaching to the source of creation itself.

And he quoted at that same visit a verse from the great fifteenth century Sikh poet Nanak:

When the light of the soul blends with the universal light,
And the human mind commingles
With the Mind of all beings,
Then our petty being, with its violence, doubt and sorrow disappears.
Through the Grace of the Guru (Atman)
Such spiritual union can take place;
Blessed are they in whose hearts the Lord is living.

Since that year of 1961 he has been patiently training us in the way to bring this state within our own experience through meditation, which was especially designed to take us to what he calls the Causal level, a state of 'profound stillness or total immobility'. It is clear that this corresponds with the Cosmos called Great or Holy, another name for which in our western System is 'The Eternal Unchanging'. All we need now if we want to understand the real meaning of Cosmose is to experience more of this state.

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[Note: There is enough here for several weeks and since it gives various approaches to this vast subject each group should feel free to take deeper those parts which interest them.]