

## TOWARDS A PRACTICE

## PART 2. SELF-REMEMBERING

The following quotations say what self-remembering is *not* and they point to what it is supposed to be:

FCR in 1980 recalling a conversation with Ouspensky:

Mr. O. starts again. Who is my neighbour? Next meaning is one's teacher; for you, I am your teacher; I pulled you out of the ditch.

R. Indeed you did! You have to keep pulling!

(A long silence with a subtle change of atmosphere which became more quiet and more emotional.)

O. But there are higher meanings still, and you will meet greater man than me, but first there must be inner experience of 'Real I'. It is 'Real I', (we're now calling it the Atman) which is the "man who fell among thieves"—for all humanity the microcosm, Man, individual Man, Self-remembering is remembering this as often as possible, particularly at important moment, and later all the time. Then Macrocosm comes to help and guide him at crossroads. Universal helps individual. Each of us *is* Real 'I', Permanent 'I'; no other 'I's' are anything more than transient. Here one minute, gone the next. That is why we repeat Lord's Prayer 'Paternoster qui es in Caelis'—'Our Father which art in the Heavens, Thy will be done on earth'. Never forget Gospels have ordinary meaning, but Psychological and Cosmic meanings too.

[80/44]

FCR in 1981:

I've realised myself in being put through the hoop, as I am at the present moment, that what we used to call remembering oneSelf is in fact forgetting the Param-Atman. We misunderstood the old system. It's not that there was . . . not that all of it was inherently wrong. But it was misunderstood. Mr. Ouspensky used to say, "You have first of all to forget yourself completely." . . . You have first of all to forget yourself completely, all that you call I; and only then will the real consciousness come in. All the exercises we used to do—I mean when I first learnt the system somebody was put on to teach me and he said if you are going to shake hands with somebody, you have to stop and say, "I am shaking hands," and that will be Self-remembering. . . . There was a great deal of self-deception about this.

[81/16]

Rodney Collin Smith in around 1956:

Self-remembering is awareness of the presence of God.

[Rodney Collin *The Mirror of Light*]

We have all tried to remember ourselves and for some of us making efforts to remember ourselves is a daily practice. Real Self-remembering, as described in the quotations when the ordinary self retreats, seems mostly to happen spontaneously; so does that make the efforts worthless?

And why is it *exactly* that we cannot remember ourselves by an effort of will? We often talk about this in terms of not having the right energy, but something happens in the mind as well which we need to understand.

Self remembering begins with self-observation. Attention is directed to observing ourselves in the moment 'now'. Who am I? Where am I? What am I doing? If we persist we are likely to observe aspects of ourselves we do not like—thoughts, feelings, actions which we habitually hide from ourselves—and the knowledge is uncomfortable.

It's astonishing that I can deny I. That I can take parts of my self, my I-ness, and push them to the other side of the boundary of awareness, in effect denying ownership of those aspects of myself that are either too negative, or too positive, to accept. Yet denial does not dissolve them, it just converts them into neurotic symptoms, 'shadows' of a disowned self that hover continually just outside the range of experience.

Having disowned these aspects of ourselves, we can only acknowledge them by projecting them onto others: the people we hate, or revere. We hate the man next door; he is so boorish, so noisy, so insensitive to his children and his wife. Or we love someone who seems to know, to be, more than we are ourselves, we build a pedestal for this person, who enshrines what we tell ourselves we can never be—or perhaps we do not wish to allow ourselves to be, because it might limit our indulgence in other things we are convinced we like.

In making efforts to remember ourselves we have to be careful not to make things even worse. We need to maintain an impartiality, an indifference to what can sometimes be a distressing awareness. Equally, if self-observation finds us in a sunny mood, the effort may lead nowhere if we join the lotus eaters. Neither sadness nor happiness is the real thing. But if we can be impartial, self-observation can be maintained. And the key to this impartiality is to know that what we see is not in fact ourselves. If this impartial observation of our mechanical existence can be sustained, together with the conviction that this is not who we really are, then the memory of the true self may arise spontaneously. The principle is that *when attention turns back until it finds itself passing into the source of attention, it begins to behave differently.*

Consciousness already contains self-awareness; consciousness is both the light and awareness of light. The nearer we come to the source of consciousness, the more is self-awareness present.

If we regard Real I, the only thing we cannot lose but which paradoxically we do not know, if we regard Real I as the source of the light, then one way to understand what is happening in the mind is to see that our minds are somehow constantly convinced that the objects and phenomena the light illuminates are more real than the light itself. Herein is hope; for it is only an illusion which needs to be given up.

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