

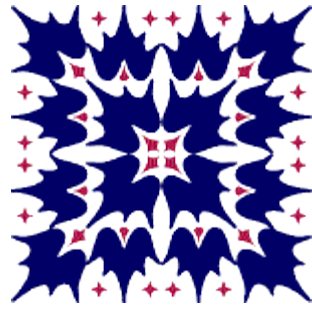


The Upper Triad Material

Topical Issue 3.72

The Fourth Way

of P. D. Ouspensky



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The Fourth Way

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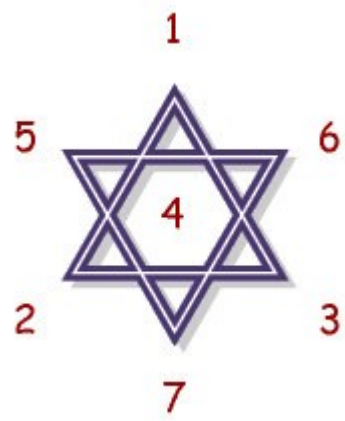
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Chapter 3.72

The Fourth Way



of P. D. Ouspensky

- *The Fourth Way* is a book by P.D. Ouspensky which provides "a lucid explanation of the practical side of G.I. Gurdjieff's teachings concerned with a new way of living, a way of inner development to be followed under the ordinary conditions of life." The fourth way is contrasted with Ouspensky's impressions of (and assumptions regarding) "the three traditional ways that call for retirement from the world, those of the fakir, the monk, and the yogi." In the more general sense, the fourth way refers to the entire scope of Ouspensky's philosophy.
- The scope of the metaphysical and psychological philosophy of P.D. Ouspensky includes the notions of the incompleteness of the human being (in practice), multiple personalities, false personality, eventual integration of the personality, the mechanical life or ordinary existence, sleep and waking from sleep, self-remembering (a method of awakening), the problem of identification, psychological buffers, etc.

The Fourth Way

The Fourth Way is the title of a book by P.D. Ouspensky which provides “a lucid explanation of the practical side of G.I. Gurdjieff’s teachings concerned with a new way of living, a way of inner development to be followed under the ordinary conditions of life.” The fourth way is contrasted with Ouspensky’s impressions of (and assumptions regarding) “the three traditional ways that call for retirement from the world, those of the fakir, the monk, and the yogi.”

Ouspensky was exposed to Gurdjieff’s teachings first-hand, as well as to theosophy and other approaches. He relied almost entirely on the concrete mind, rationalization, and his own first-hand experience, in reaching conclusions and developing the fourth way. And yet, even intellectually, Ouspensky has contributed substantially to the “field” of theosophical philosophy and psychology, by focusing on issues that really matter and ignoring much that is merely trendy, and introducing some quite valuable notions (as well as a few not-so-valuable (not substantiated) notions). In practice, the fourth way refers in general to the entire Gurdjieff-Ouspensky philosophical system, and in particular to those aspects of that system having significance for the evolution of consciousness and in the context of the spiritual path.

The scope (of particular value) of the fourth way includes the notions of the incompleteness of the human being, multiple personalities, false personality, eventual integration of the personality, four states of (lower, personality) consciousness ((1) the sleeping state, (2) the waking state, (3) the state of self-remembering, and (4) the objective state), seven types of “man” (the lower four of which correlate to physical, emotional, mental, and intuitional polarization in consciousness) (and associated schools), self-observation, self-remembering (a method of awakening), the importance and nature of honesty and the psychology of lying, the role of the emotions, attitudes, and imagination, the problem of identification (attachment), the problem of mechanicalness and will, psychological buffers (impediments to development of conscience),

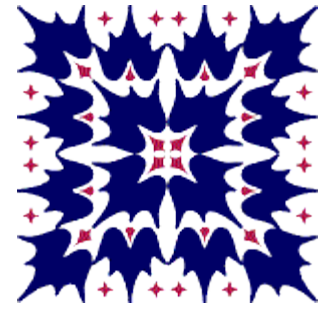
psychological conditioning, the principles of relativity and scale, the illusion of “doing” and the role of will, the role of psychological shock, and personality sleep.

Another element of Ouspensky’s tradition involves multi-dimensional reality, higher dimensions, and ordering. Of particular value is the attempt of the student to conceptually embrace notions that defy the conditioning of the human personality, e.g., the conventional notions (delusions) of physical reality (as the only reality), the relative illusions of self-consciousness, self-will, cause-and-effect relationships, etc. Ouspensky’s approach to the fourth and fifth dimensions is particularly useful in this regard, even though it is essentially a conceptual extension of conventional reality rather than a realization of higher dimensions. Even though much of the Gurdjieff-Ouspensky system has a largely rational (rationalized) basis and rejects much that is true, there is still a great deal of value, both in many of the notions presented as well as in the psychological methods suggested [being rational and being true are not necessarily mutually consistent (one can be rational and true, rational and not true, non-rational and true, as well as non-rational and not true)].

In the final analysis, the value of any philosophical or spiritual system lies in its ability to facilitate the evolution of consciousness, i.e., does it help or hinder? The Gurdjieff-Ouspensky system does facilitate the evolution of consciousness, as it focuses substantially on the process of awakening.



Section 3.721



The Fourth Way 1

- This section consists of nine commentaries on various issues considered in Ouspensky's Fourth Way.

Ordering

As part of the great illusion of materialism (egoism), the sense of separateness in time and space, there is for many people the false notion that cause precedes effect, that the ordering of things is sequential in time (and space), that such ordering can only occur in one direction (forward in time and outward in space). However, in general, ordering is possible in virtually any direction. It is only our conditioning as personalities imbedded in time and space that inhibits our perception (and consequent realization) of multi-dimensional and multi-directional space-time.

Some, like P.D. Ouspensky, have quite usefully considered the spatial-temporal dimensional nature of things, reasoning from one-to-two-to-three-to-four dimensions and seeing how space and time can be perceived in various ways (e.g., in the form of angles in the absence of depth (higher-dimensional) perception) (e.g., how time can be viewed spatially and vice versa) and how one's spatial-temporal limitations condition us to think along certain lines (and ultimately, how one can or should proceed to overcome those limitations). But reasoning is not realization. And assuming that greater (higher) dimensions are merely extensive is misleading. Yet if one integrates in consciousness, over all of space and time, one can approach the reality (realization) of that (within us) which lives beyond mere space-time.

This notion of integrated time (space) is crucial to approaching the consciousness of the soul, for the soul is not as imbedded in space-time as the personality (mind) (ego). The mind-brain perceives only very dimly (partially) and is almost hopelessly conditioned by the habits developed by virtue of involutory and evolutionary experience. The mind tends to see things sequentially, and if the mind is able to reason then the mind tends to correlate things (naturally and usefully but incorrectly) according to perceived (assumed) sequential cause and effect. All of the present circumstances can be rationalized on the basis of previous (perceived) experience. And yet, from the standpoint of the soul, all of time (and space) has already been revealed. There is not at that level any notion of time or space. For the (integrated) whole is, necessarily, something else entirely.

The perception or realization of order (sequential or unidirectional flow) is based entirely on convenience (conditioned reality). Things are ordered only from this (worldly, personal) perspective. This is not to exclude any underlying causation, of action and consequence, of cause and effect, but to broaden one's perception of these things and processes. What is greater (more real) than cause and effect is quality and relationship. To approach the soul one must necessarily become like the soul, e.g., more refined and less personal (free from coarseness or materialism), more free (from conditioning) and less inhibited by space-time and the notions of individuality and separateness. In short, the soul can only be approached on its terms and on its level.

It does not really matter whether or not any or all of this is true (the actual truth will not change by virtue of one's agreement or disagreement (and the actual truth will be realized eventually)). What matters is that we remain open-minded, that we allow our minds to embrace the possibilities of things and processes that are not biased or conditioned by our experience, our beliefs, our habits of thinking. Thus only is there the possibility of learning, of growing, of realization. And as one rises above the limitations of spatial-temporal consciousness, then only is there real appreciation for the ordering of things (as one realizes that beyond the spatial-temporal realm there is no ordering).

† Commentary No. 907

Self-Remembering

In the Gurdjieff-Ouspensky philosophical "system" there are four (lower or personality) states of consciousness, (1) the sleeping state, (2) the waking state, (3) the state of self-remembering, and (4) the objective state. In this context, the sleeping state is that of ordinary sleep, the waking state is the state of sleep associated with the ordinary waking-consciousness, the state of self-remembering is the state of awareness in consciousness (in contrast with the superficial awareness (sleep) of the ordinary waking-consciousness), and the objective state is seeing things as they really are (in a comprehensive sense), rather than as they (merely) appear to be.

Of relatively great import is the double realization that (1) virtually everyone is asleep virtually all of the time (i.e., the ordinary waking state is entirely mechanical in nature and anyone in that state has no awareness of that fact (at least at that time)) and (2) the real and immediate evolutionary objective of the bulk of humanity is the achievement of self-consciousness. In this context, while virtually everyone thinks that he or she is self-conscious, in fact virtually everyone is merely asleep in mechanical activity and superficial awareness. The achievement of self-consciousness then requires real awareness, the continuous awareness of what one is and how one is.

These ideas are not new. They pre-date the emergence of humanity and have been a part of the ancient wisdom in one form or another (and under various names) for as long as there has been an ancient wisdom. These ideas are crucial to advancement in consciousness. In the broader sense, from any perspective in consciousness there exists a precursory state of consciousness which can be considered waking-sleep (e.g., a flower is "awake" compared with a "sleeping" rock, a dog is "awake" compared with a "sleeping" tree) [and a self-remembering person is "awake" compared with an ordinary human being]. The break-through in consciousness comes with the conscious realization that one is asleep virtually all of the time. From that break-through, one can begin the rather lengthy and difficult process of self-remembering (more correctly, periodically remembering (realizing) that one was asleep and thereby gradually lengthening the "waking" period until one is self-remembering all of the time).

This achievement of self-remembering (self-consciousness) (continual if not continuous awareness) is absolutely essential in overcoming all of the limitations (inertia) of material (egoistic) existence. Without this awareness one is simply enslaved by the mechanical nature of personality-centeredness and all of its associated (mundane and personal) absorptions, attachments, biases, buffers, delusions, desires, feelings, filters, habits, opinions, thoughts, etc. In this sense, one cannot actually "do" anything as long as one is absorbed in (as) a personality. Freedom (real (unencumbered) activity) is attained (revealed) (realized) through self-remembering.

Of course self-remembering goes hand-in-hand with honesty and humility, with humility being the first ray component, self-remembering being the second ray component, and honesty being the third ray component. In this sense self-

remembering is the dynamic relationship (realization) (activity) in consciousness afforded to those who are free from the relative delusion (sleep) of material (personality-centered) (egoistic) existence. The effort to self-remember is the bridge in consciousness between the inertia of personality (matter) (mind) (ego) and the progressive (evolutionary) momentum of the spiritual path. Once a student consistently self-remembers, then transition to the objective state is possible.

† Commentary No. 921

Mechanical Life

In The Fourth Way (and other works) P.D. Ouspensky explores the ideas of (1) mechanical life, (2) personality sleep, (3) the many "I"s, (4) personality integration, and (5) awakening through self-remembering. All of these ideas are crucial to the transformation from personality-centered existence to soul-centered existence, which is, after all, the practical objective of those of humanity who have more or less exhausted the lessons afforded through personality-centeredness. Of course one also needs an appreciation for the spiritual path, the place and reality of the soul, etc., but the process of awakening begins with the realization of one's absorption in the mechanicalness of mundane, personal, secular life.

From the point of view of the soul, and in the sense of the unresponsiveness of the ordinary personality to that soul, and in the sense of the overwhelming lack of awareness of reality of the waking-consciousness of the ordinary personality, virtually all people and all of life are entirely mechanical in nature. This is easy to understand with regard to the subhuman lifewaves where there is no so-called self-consciousness. In the subhuman lives awareness is limited and there is no real awareness of oneself as an individual entity, although there are individual characteristics and in some cases individualistic behavior. Ordinary human life is not much different, in the sense that it too is quite mechanical, being determined almost entirely by internal and external forces acting on consciousness that is unaware of its own mechanicalness and artificiality.

Human beings are, of course, self-conscious, but only in the lower sense of having a dim awareness of themselves as separate entities, thinking, feeling,

and acting largely unconsciously as individuals. However, man suffers the illusion of self-consciousness in that he thinks of himself as a personality (ego) (feelings) (intellect) as being real, as having real volition. But in fact, virtually all people live mechanical lives, being almost entirely conditioned by internal and external factors (forces). Man acts according to habits evolved. Man thinks and feels according to habits and circumstances (conditions). Man does not really think for himself, or feel for himself, or act for himself (or others). He simply acts, feels, and thinks according to his conditioning.

This problem (illusion) is compounded by the fact that man thinks that he has self-consciousness and thinks that he has volition (i.e., man unconsciously assumes that his will is unconditioned). Man does of course have and exercises free will, but that free will is almost entirely conditioned by karma (karmic circumstances) (internal and external factors (forces)). Man does learn, grow, and evolve in consciousness as a result of his (mechanical) experience, but there is (for the vast majority of humanity) no real awareness of either oneself or the reality of life.

And virtually all of the people involved in metaphysics (theosophy) (the spiritual path) are not really any different than ordinary humanity except in the sense of (potentially) having a better knowledge and understanding of the nature of things and in the sense of (potentially) being better qualified in consciousness, but unless that knowledge and (intellectual) understanding (and qualification) is translated into real awareness, then the philosophical, religious, and spiritual students of the world are just as asleep in their mechanicalness as are the non-philosophical, non-religious, non-spiritual students.

Personality Sleep

Thus, from the point of view of atma-buddhi-manas (the soul), the personality is, in virtually every case and instance, asleep and unresponsive to direct higher impression. In this context, sleep-sleep refers to the sleep in the conventional sense of being unconscious, dreaming, etc., while waking-sleep refers to the sleep of the waking-consciousness of the personality, of being absorbed in physical, emotional, and mental activity to the exclusion of any conscious realization of higher impression. In this sense, virtually everyone sleeps through the waking hours of their daily life, being absorbed in the conditioned mechanicalness (and illusion) of personality-centered existence.

Man is generally so absorbed with being himself as a personality that he identifies completely with some aspect of his lower self or personality, e.g., with his body, feelings, intellect, etc. As long as a person acts, feels, or thinks without conscious realization that it is (merely) the personality acting, feeling, or thinking (and not himself in reality), that person is absorbed on the lower (personality) level and is thereby unconscious of and unresponsive to any higher impressions. Consequently, whenever one exhibits desire, feelings, likes or dislikes, beliefs, opinions, thoughts, etc. (which are all necessarily mechanical in nature (resulting from conditioning)), one is thereby or therefore asleep (absorbed as a personality) [unless one is consciously and simultaneously detached from the mechanical and aware of the mechanicalness, its nature, and the reality of oneself as other-than-the-personality].

Even conscious (intellectual) realization of these things is still a matter of sleeping through life, as awakening transcends any intellectual activity (i.e., intellectual activity of any kind is necessarily mechanical and part of the waking-sleep). One must also (ultimately) realize that waking-sleep is superimposed upon sleep-sleep, that is upon waking up (from sleep-sleep to waking-sleep) the mind (intellect) (feelings) continues to function in the sleep-sleep state even as another part of the mind (intellect) (feelings) is involved in the waking-sleep state. This is important to understanding (real) self-consciousness, because that (self-consciousness) is induced within (superimposed upon) waking-sleep and sleep-sleep (i.e., even when one is truly

self-conscious, there is still (concurrently) (simultaneously) sleep-sleep and waking-sleep activity).

The keys to understanding all of this are (1) true realization of the essential completeness or pervasiveness of one's mechanicalness [that one is not really self-conscious and that one cannot therefore "do" anything] and (2) honest, earnest (and detached) self-observation. If we continue to deceive ourselves into thinking that we are self-conscious and "doing" then we continue to sleep. Without honestly and earnestly looking at ourselves and seeing what (how) (why) we are as personalities, we cannot really understand the phenomenon. The mind (intellect) is potentially extremely (pervasively) talented in its ability to self-deceive. All of these problems are self-imposed.

The keys to overcoming personality (waking) sleep [the achievement of self-consciousness] are (1) honest, earnest (and detached) self-observation and (2) considerable effort toward increasingly recurrent self-remembering. Continual self-observation leads to more frequent and more lingering self-remembering. By utilizing one aspect of mind to monitor (self-observe) all of the activities of the mind, emotions, etc., while remaining as detached and unentangled in the process as one can, one can gradually and eventually rise above the intellect to the higher mind and spiritual intuition (buddhi).

† Commentary No. 923

The Multiple Personality 2

The human personality is a fairly complex, inherently and entirely mechanical, three-fold instrument of the (overshadowing, indwelling) human soul, with closely-linked vehicles (aspects) on physical (etheric), emotional, and mental (intellectual) levels, all of which need to be integrated into a complete and qualified (refined) whole before it can be properly aligned with the soul. But the non-integrated personality is also multi-dimensional in another sense, that of there being multiple personalities or many centers of personality within the actual personality, all of which are artificial.

In the Gurdjieff-Ouspensky system, these many centers are called the many "I"s and are a dynamic yet superficial aspect of the personality (which is itself

(as a whole) relatively superficial). Every desire, like, dislike, feeling, belief, opinion, preference (personal (personality) value), thought, etc., belongs to one or another of these centers, most of which normally and naturally compete with each other for attention (of the waking-consciousness which is deceived into identification with whatever dominant (albeit transient) center is manifesting at the time). For example, anytime one says (or feels) (or thinks) "I am happy" or "I like green" one is necessarily (and mechanically) identifying with that little self (I) to the exclusion or suppression of what one truly is. And one is necessarily (mechanically) (superficially) functioning at the personality-centered level, however useful that may be for experience and expression.

The non-integrated personality, viewed from the perspective of the waking-consciousness (focus of conscious attention), is a continuous succession of (necessarily superficial) physical, emotional, and intellectual activity, as one state leads (mechanically) to another. Through identification with our various conscious and unconscious values, thoughts, opinions, likes, feelings, dislikes, beliefs, attachments, etc., we continue to deceive ourselves (denying the underlying reality) and we continue to be absorbed in the mundane (secular) (personal) drivel of ordinary existence (experience and expression, however useful it may be in the process of gradual (mechanical) evolution).

In order to effectively integrate the (whole) personality, one must establish a single personality energy (entity) that absorbs (or dissolves) all of the many "I"s so that there is no longer any substantive internal competition or distraction. The "I"s on each level (physical, emotional, mental) must be combined (or otherwise resolved) on their respective level, and then the three levels must be combined into a single personality field. Similarly, ties (relationships) between centers on different levels must be resolved. One must also overcome (and dispel) any false personality (and all that that implies). Ultimately, one must be free from maya, glamour, and illusion, in full-self-consciousness realizing one's place in the greater whole and losing one's (individualistic, separative) self in that greater life.

Of course the achievement of an integrated personality in itself in no way implies that it is any less asleep than the non-integrated personality, but the integrated personality is a necessary precursor to awakening. One may awaken either through integration and subsequent self-observation leading to self-

remembering leading to realization, or through self-observation leading to (incidental but nonetheless effective) integration leading to self-remembering leading to realization. The ultimate (practical) purpose is to live (serve) (be focused) in the consciousness of the soul such that one looks and acts through the fully-integrated, highly refined and responsive, personality instrument.

† Commentary No. 924

Awakening 1

The spiritual path of conscious, creative evolution necessarily includes the process of integrating and refining the personality, awakening from the waking-sleep of mechanicalness and personality absorption, and becoming more and more (directly and indirectly) responsive to the higher self (the soul (atma-buddhi-manas)).

While integration and refinement can occur gradually (consciously and/or unconsciously) (in either case mechanically) and during personality sleep (waking-sleep), and while self-remembering does not necessarily include soul realization, direct and effective responsiveness to the soul can only occur when the personality has been transformed and awakened into intelligent subordination to the soul, which requires all of these (integration, refinement, alignment) to be achieved within the context of conscious awareness of the soul.

There are actually four stages in the awakening process (from this point of view): (1) the stage of the complete, natural (default) absorption in the mechanicalness of material, mundane, personal, and secular absorption (personality-centeredness), (2) the stage that ranges from occasional focus on metaphysical, theosophical, and esoteric matters (i.e., some conscious attention to the path) to a more-or-less continual focus on matters pertaining to the path (metaphysics, theosophy, self-development, service, etc.) (all of which focus is still more-or-less mechanical in nature, however enlightened it may be), (3) the stage that ranges from occasional moments of self-remembering to more-or-less continual self-remembering, or being consciously aware of the mechanicalness of the personality and simultaneously being aware that one is something else, even if one cannot or does not consciously realize what that something else (the soul)

really is, and (4) the stage in which the conscious awareness includes realization of the soul and allows that soul's energy to flow unimpeded through the waking-consciousness (and entire aura). It is possible for stage (3) to precede stage (2) [and in practice there is a combination of the two], but both occur between stage (1) and stage (4).

The evolution of consciousness proceeds throughout the four stages, but it is only when some progress is made in the middle stages (and subsequently) that "real" (non-mechanical) (accelerated) progress is made. Wherever the emotions are untempered, the intellect functions independently, the ego is manifesting, etc. Where the person wants to do something (talk, feel, have, think), the individual is necessarily personality-centered, lacking (significantly limited) in awareness, and largely unresponsive to higher impression.

Much like the principal impediment to self-remembering (being one's belief in his or her actually having self-consciousness when one is actually in waking-sleep), the principal impediment to (real) awareness is the (false) belief or notion (conscious or unconscious) that one already has such awareness, i.e., if one does not know what one is lacking there is no possibility of awareness of same. Most people have no real ideas about the soul. Even most people who have encountered theosophy, the ancient wisdom (esoteric philosophy) (or whatever it may be called) still have no real understanding of what the soul (atma-buddhi-manas) really is, how it functions, what it "feels" like, or anything about it, really. People tend to make assumptions about the soul, equating it with being somehow better or more refined or otherwise an extension of that with which they currently identify (which is the lower self (personality) (ego) (intellect) (no matter what they may call it) rather than the higher self). All of which leads to a continuance of personality-centeredness.

Awakening 2

Yet the soul is something else and cannot be defined effectively in “human” terms because it is simply not at all like the personality-individuality to which we are accustomed to (though the soul is the more real part of the human being). In order to awaken to the soul, to the voice of the silence, one necessarily has to temper the personality such that the soul can be heard, or else there will not be any realization of the soul nor any real awakening.

The soul is more effectively defined in terms of what it is not (what is left is the soul). The soul is not egoistic or materialistic in any way. The soul does not act, feel, think, or talk. The soul has no likes or dislikes. It does not agree or disagree. It is not happy or unhappy (yet there is happiness). It has no possessions and feels no sense of individuality (though there is a slight sense of locality within the field of souls). The soul is responsible without feeling responsibility. The soul loves and yet is wholly impersonal. The soul lives through all of the personality and yet is not attached to or entangled in personality concerns at all. The soul has (is) a sense, but that (real) sense does not rely on sense-impressions.

The unevolved soul is just as pure (in quality) as the fully-evolved soul, the only distinction being one of relative completeness and capacity (responsiveness to even higher factors). The soul is not mechanical in any way. Nor is the soul contrived or given to contrivance. The soul is being and expresses itself in terms of quality (and through qualification of its instruments). The soul is not concerned about anything. And yet the soul’s qualification is responsive to the needs of evolution and in the embrace of the hierarchical plan. The soul is conscious on its level, but not in the same way that the personality or waking-consciousness is conscious. The soul lives in the silence of the monad.

In order to understand (intuitively if not intellectually) the soul and its nature (quality), the spiritual student must learn to listen, not passively but actively, without thinking, without even self-observation in the preliminary (Ouspensky) sense. Self-remembering is a precursor. Integration and refinement are precursors. Intelligent detachment is a precursor (having opinions is one of the

most difficult impediments to awareness) (of course passive acceptance of others' beliefs and opinions is even more devastating to progress in consciousness). Discrimination and patience are also precursors (discrimination in order for the waking-consciousness to discern the difference between the quality of the soul and the contrived or fabricated quality of the masquerading ego (intellect) (unconscious mind)) (patience because the whole process takes sustained effort over a relatively long period of time).

The process of awakening is quite gradual and requires sustained effort, but not intellectual effort. It requires the effort of the mind to temper the intellect, not forcefully but through qualified detachment and dis-identification from things (acts, feelings, thoughts) of the personality (ego) (mind) (intellect) (while remaining wholly responsible for same (i.e., mechanicalness does not relieve responsibility or accountability)). Above all, the process of awakening requires a letting go of all the habits and notions (expectation) (knowledge) acquired as a personality (save the qualitative commitment to the path and its associated (qualitative) discipline). As long as we think we know something (definitively) we are thereby enslaved. As long as we are filled with our own ideas and notions we cannot awaken to the greater reality of what we are truly.

† Commentary No. 962

Buffered Consciousness

One of the keys to psychological absorption is provided in the Guirdjeff-Ouspensky system in the concept of buffered consciousness. Humanity is involved and absorbed (psychologically entangled) in manifestation such that awareness is quite limited, by conditioning, by circumstances, even by transient evolutionary necessity.

The principal factor of absorption is ignorance. The human being in general has no realization of his or her true nature, the purpose of his or her existence (incarnation), the nature of the universe (evolution, karma, etc.), the superficiality of material existence, etc. As the human being evolves in consciousness there is successive realization culminating in self-realization or awakening to the higher self. In the meantime, virtually all of the apparent

forces and factors in the objective world conspire to keep humanity in ignorance. This is due almost entirely to the inherent inertia of matter and the submission and emersion of humanity in matter (physically, emotionally, and mentally). But it is also due to the (needed evolutionary) consequences of the experience of struggling with this emersion and rising above and beyond this state of conditioned existence.

Much of this conditioned existence (absorption) (psychological sleep) is built or compounded upon ignorance, based on (unconscious) psychological comfort and the (unconscious) psychological evasion of inner and outer contradictions. Psychological sleep is in a sense a matter of self-deception. In failing to recognize the reality of manifested existence, human (personality) consciousness contrives unconsciously, and collectively creates a model of manifestation consistent with quite limited understanding (assumptive delusion). That model generally includes the delusion of separate existence (as personalities) and the delusion of material reality (denial of that which is spiritual). The human being does not want to believe in the superficial and transient nature of life in the lower world (and the superficial and transient nature of the lower self or personality) so that a belief system is contrived to accommodate psychological comfort (sometimes through religion, sometimes through personal philosophy, always through rationalization (conscious or otherwise)). In any event, the unconscious assumptions that are made about manifested existence, which contradict reality, contribute to the continued enslavement of human beings to unrealistic patterns of sense perception.

In order for a person to awaken from this sleep of deep psychological conditioning (which has been sustained for countless incarnations), a person requires certain shocks (jolts) to the psychological system. Gradual evolution does not provide many major crises or shocks, but there are (merited) occasional shocks (to the unconscious) which spur the individual onward (or back to within the bandwidth of the evolutionary path). Once the evolution of consciousness reaches the point of conscious appreciation of reality, then the series of shocks (intense experience) moves more to the realm of conscious psychological experience and the need for shocks is lessened. But whenever the serious student strays sufficiently from the path (e.g., when the student becomes absorbed in personality experience or expression), the progressive balance must be restored.

The spiritual student is really one who recognizes the limitations of human (personality-centered) consciousness and who works to overcome the implied conditioning, eventually becoming self-realized (awakened to the conscious presence of the higher self).

† Commentary No. 978

Types of Thinking

One of the notions provided in the Guirdjeff-Ouspensky system is the concept of types of thinking (based in theosophical terms on relative polarization of consciousness). Four types are suggested, which correlate, relatively and respectively, with (1) physical, (2) emotional, (3) mental, and (4) intuitional polarization.

For Ouspensky, ordinary people are categorized as being in one or another of the first three groups (sans progression) with each leading to the fourth if mechanicalness can be overcome. In theosophy, however, there is recognized a progression from the physical polarization through emotional and mental stages, to intuitional levels. For Ouspensky, "Old thinking is No. 1, being chiefly imitation. No. 2 is emotional, based on likes and dislikes. No. 3 is logical thinking which cannot be applied to bigger things. Thinking No. 4 is the beginning of thinking which, little by little, disposes of all contradictions."

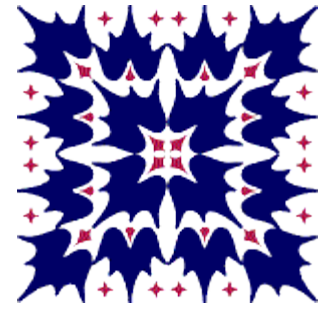
Most people function with some combination of the first three levels or aspects of thinking, depending on habits and circumstances (and with some preponderance based on polarization of consciousness). Most people really do not think for themselves, but appropriate notions and concepts (and words) based upon (predominantly unconscious) imitation, i.e., repeating whatever they have heard or read (or simply picked up based on passive mentality) (i.e., the astral and mental planes are filled with "trendy" thought-forms to which most people are simply (passively) vulnerable (susceptible)). In this sense, non-conformity is an indication (not necessarily conclusively so) of some extent of achievement of freedom in thinking. And most people "think" to some extent according to their likes and dislikes, generally without any conscious realization of their biases (or the fact of their influence) (i.e., having likes and dislikes

means being biased). Few people actually use logical principles in thinking, although many presume themselves to be logical while applying their trendiness (and bias based on likes and dislikes). But those who are reasonably logical are limited thereby.

For the spiritual student, these are all keys to progress in consciousness. The student must undo the passive (hereditary and environmental (cultural)) conditioning of the personality, tempering the entire personality in such a way as to reduce or eliminate the intrusion of (external and internal) mundane thought-forms. In order to achieve this, the student must reject trendiness in thinking (feeling) (values), rise above having likes and dislikes, and focus on understanding (truth) rather than "having" beliefs and opinions. Ultimately, the student must pass beyond even logical thinking to the realm of no-thinking. Yet, at each stage, these processes are necessary and useful. Having (strong personal) likes and dislikes is a means of overcoming (the limitations implied in) trendiness or mechanicalness at the lowest (physical) level. Logical thinking is a way of overcoming (rising above) (the limitations implied in having) likes and dislikes (mechanicalness at the emotional level). And having no beliefs or opinions (at all) (no-thinking) is a means of overcoming the limitations of logical thinking (mechanicalness at the concrete mental level).

The intuitional plane is the level above and beyond the mental plane. In order to function effectively on intuitional levels, the impediment of the mind as an independent (mechanical, self-serving) entity must be overcome. Truth can only be revealed to the extent that the mind is free from likes and dislikes, free from beliefs and opinions, and free from mechanicalness (thinking per se). Apparent contradictions disappear with intuition. One simply sees beyond.

Section 3.722



The Fourth Way 2

- This section consists of an extended article that summarizes the real import of Ouspensky's teachings.

The Fourth Way

Ouspensky's Fourth Way addresses one of the two fundamental and inter-related challenges of the spiritual path, namely waking up. The other challenge is purification or refinement, which is dealt with in many teachings and in many ways. The challenge of waking up builds upon the progress in refinement, for without refinement there is really no chance of waking up because the person is simply too mired in the physical world and personality life.

The three traditional methods of waking up considered by Ouspensky have worked well for many people, but most methods run the risk of complacency, which is to say, going back to sleep. Thus Ouspensky's Fourth Way, in the broadest sense, is a fourth method, and one that challenges the student to overcome his or her conditioning.

Therein lays the inertia of the spiritual path, namely conditioning. The human being in incarnation is immersed in matter. He or she naturally identifies with the physical body, the emotions, maybe even the mind, yet all of these things are of the lower world, not the higher. The human being in incarnation is immersed in matter, in so many ways and to such a great extent, that it is almost, but not quite, impossible, for most people to rise above this conditioning. Worse, everything in the outer world seems to contrive to further condition us, to prevent us from waking up. And yet this lower, outer world is the place where we need to be, in order to learn and grow, and eventually to rise above our conditioning in spiritual awakening.

For most people waking up is not an issue. Most people don't need to be awake. Most people cannot even comprehend the fact that they are asleep. Most people are where they need to be, to learn the more basic lessons of life, to meet and fulfill their karma, to develop in all the ways that human beings need to develop, as prerequisites to waking up. This takes place over the course of many lifetimes. But eventually the human consciousness begins the process of refinement and gradually begins the process of waking up, of overcoming all of the conditional rampant in the material world, the inertia of the physical plane, the allure and glamour of the astral plane, and the illusion of the mental plane.

Eventually there is the beginning of the realization that a person is not really what he or she seems to be, not the physical body or emotions or mind or even the entire personality, but something higher, deeper, much more profound. But this growing realization is necessarily on emotional or intellectual levels, and the very mechanism of realization, either the deeper feelings or the intellect, is necessarily very highly conditioned, by the inertia of matter itself, by the entanglement of the senses, by the separative nature of the mind.

Thus Ouspensky's Fourth Way, or some other comparable method of undoing the conditioning. One of the things that he naturally addresses is the nature of reality. We necessarily suffer the illusion that what we see and hear and feel and "know" is real. Ouspensky encourages us to think differently, to consider other "realities" or ways of looking at things, that help us loosen the grips of "ordinary" awareness, enabling us to see things more broadly, more deeply, thus his focus or emphasis on multi-dimensional reality, higher dimensions, and ordering. He does this based on reasoning, and stretching the mind, where theosophy simply presents the panorama of higher dimensions that are realized rather than reasoned.

We tend to perceive and to think in accordance with our temporal and spatial, i.e., experiential, conditioning. But the truth is that what we see and hear and feel in this lower world is a very small fragment of reality, and distorted. When we begin to realize other dimensions and a broader, deeper sense of time, we are thereby less conditioned by the ordinary perspective. We still must struggle to maintain this higher awareness, for the lower consciousness, the pull of the ordinary senses and "life" in the lower worlds is ever there to deceive us. And yet this "awareness" is still within the realm of being asleep. Any intellectual realization is necessarily part of being asleep. Anything that relies on the abilities of the personality, that is biased by the personality (body, emotions, mind) is part of being asleep. So this awakening to higher dimensions, whether a matter of intellectual appreciation or actually experiential and a matter of perception, is merely a prelude.

It is the soul that is not asleep. Therefore the personality (mind) will remain asleep, to some considerable extent, until it is wholly subordinated to and aligned with the soul. Therein lays another great challenge, namely the illusion that the mind is the soul, that one is awake when one is really still asleep.

Which leads to Ouspensky's concept of self-remembering. We are only self-conscious in some very primitive sense. The objective is to become self-conscious, to embrace the self-realization and higher senses of the soul, which cannot be done unless the personality is truly qualified, meaning purified and very highly refined, and unless the personality is truly self-less, i.e., being truly humble and with no sense or tendency to "be" separate. An intellectual understanding of inclusiveness is nice. Embracing that understanding is even better. But neither is sufficient, for it is still the personality or mind that has this understanding. One must rise above the mind, one must learn to not think at all. And that is what self-remembering ultimately leads to.

One must truly overcome all of the conditioning of mechanical life, and even thinking is part of this mechanicalness. One must truly embrace the truth that one is asleep if there is to be any hope of waking up. One must continually, if not continuously, remind oneself of this. One must become truly honest, which is very, very difficult. One must become truly humble, which is almost impossible. One must not know anything. One must be open to the truth, without becoming attached to whatever is apprehended, meaning that one cannot think about what is apprehended without going back to sleep.

While Ouspensky's Fourth Way is a very powerful tool, is it actually the next step that is key, namely achieving the mystical state of communion with the soul. In this sense, all four "ways" lead to the same place, by some same means (purification and refinement leading to integration and alignment) and some different means (focus and specific methodology). This higher state is a place where the whole (refined, integrated) personality is absorbed by the soul, in communion with the God-Christ-Self within. And this is not a matter of the personality "doing" something, but a matter of the personality preparing itself, and losing itself, and giving itself to the higher. Ultimately, it is the soul that "does" something, in absorbing the lower self. Only at that level, of the soul, is there is any real awareness, any real awakening.

And of course the biggest impediment besides the inertia of the entirety of worldly existence, is the deep and abiding need of the mind (personality) to remain separate. The mind will necessarily participate in this process of preparation for awareness. And continually sows seeds of further deception, to undermine the process, to ensure its own existence. But as the student actually

achieves some measure of refinement, the hold and strength of this need is lessened, which is another way of saying that the illusions created and sustained by the mind become more and more subtle. And yet, eventually even these hurdles are overcome, through further refinement, through further detachment from worldly ways (those who have truly mastered this “seem” to be in the world, but are truly not) (there are strong indications and evidence of this, that the more aware student will recognize), through truly embracing honesty, through not knowing anything, through truly not-thinking, through truly being humble.

Whether one approaches this place of being through one or another of the more traditional paths, or through Ouspensky’s Fourth Way, does not really matter. What matters is truly embracing the process, and everything that that means.

