

# The SEARCHLIGHT

Association for Research and Enlightenment, Incorporated  
VIRGINIA BEACH, VIRGINIA

Vol. XVII

September, 1965

No. 9

## Know – and Change Thyself!

By Olive Richards Landers

(From a lecture entitled "Know Thyself and do Something About It" presented by Mrs Landers at the 1965 Spring Conference, Virginia Beach.)

P.D, Ouspensky, a Russian writer and lecturer and somewhat of a world figure, was referred to and recommended in the Cayce readings. Here is a brief attempt to correlate Ouspensky's ideas with the readings, especially as he set forth his ideas on Self-examination and Self-evolution in *The Fourth Way*.

Josh Billings is quoted as saying, "It is not only the most difficult thing to know oneself, but the most inconvenient one, too." Yes, it is inconvenient to know oneself, because the next thing is to do something about, oneself. So we avoid finding out about ourselves just because it is inconvenient to face up to ourselves, take ourselves over, and make ourselves over.

When can we find time to do all this? We must be making ourselves over all the time, says Ouspensky. Nothing and nobody will ever do it for us; it is a do-it-yourself deal. Nature has done all the evolving of us that she will do; the rest must be done by ourselves, and by our daily even hourly, choice and persistence. The readings confirm this: We all must pay the price necessary for development of self. (900-23) And: it is the continuous and continued *try* that is counted for soul development. (1391-1) Again: First big

job is to conquer self. Know the ideal. Do apply it in self. Learn to live with self and you will learn to live with others. People are not different from yourself. They have ideas also and they may be just as near right as self. But there is an ideal way. How? Living with others. (5392-1)

### SELF REMEMBERING

Ouspensky's first point and emphasis on this subject is that we are asleep. Compared with what we should be, we are asleep. In the morning, rather than face the day's duties and responsibilities, have you ever settled down for another snooze - or wished you could? That is what we do constantly rather than face ourselves as we are and take corrective action: we are asleep, and by our own choice. We are content, he says, to live in the "basement kitchen" of ourselves, with beautiful rooms above unused, ever unknown. Or, we are like airplanes which we are satisfied to hitch to a horse to draw along the ground, or else to drive as a motor car, unaware that we are made to fly. We possess unguessed capacities that we don't even try to know about and claim, for fear of the demands they will make on us.

We are *mechanical*, says Ouspensky. What does he mean by

that? That we are motivated and controlled from without by external circumstances, instead of from our inner center. This mechanical motivation results in our being opinionated, idly talkative, self-assertive - thinking and speaking with other people's thinking, not bothering to formulate our own. It is important here to distinguish between intentional and unintentional thinking. Unintentional thinking is purely mechanical, and we permit ourselves a great deal of it.

Then, says Ouspensky, we have *no unity in ourselves*; we are a scattered, conflicting lot of "I's", many of them disagreeing with one another, not even knowing about one another. One "I" of us decides something and another "I" interferes. We think when we say "I" that we always mean the same "I", whereas we have many "I's", all struggling for expression and control, and this makes up our inner life. Until we can become one controlling "I", become a unity, motivated and controlled from within, we shall continue to be asleep and to be mechanical. Before we can evolve we must want to awake and to cease being mechanical, even at the expense of pain and sacrifice.

How, then, are we to wake up? get over being mechanical become a unified self, a single "I"?

Self-remembering is a first and necessary step, to be made a constant practice, says Ouspensky. Self-remembering is a term of his own. It is not thinking - in fact, to do it one must really still all thinking; it is a higher mode of functioning than thought, it is consciousness, which, says Ouspensky, in our present stage we lack. This, I take it, is equivalent to what we accept as the *higher consciousness*, the

communication with the *real self*, Self-remembering, says Ouspensky, involves stopping and asking, as often as possible, "Am I thinking, speaking, acting consciously or mechanically, intentionally and deliberately or unintentionally and without deliberation, from within or from without?" In the midst of things, force self to check with basic self; this is self-remembering.

Self-remembering is self-awareness, also self-control, self-direction, taking charge of self. With this practice of self-remembering must always go the awareness of the purpose and aim of it, that is, to be in possession of the whole self instead of a fragment or fraction of the self, all our "I's" instead of one or two, to gain a higher level of consciousness, of being, a higher will than self-will. "In self-remembering we seek to get back to the base of our being, *the original deposit of spirit*."

The reading put it: Turn within and take thyself to task. Not as to whether you may eat tomorrow or not, but say to your soul, "Where leadest thou?" (1472-6) And: All that you may know of good must first be within self. All you may know of God must be manifested through yourself. To hear of Him is not to know. To apply and live and be is to know. (2936-2.)

#### **AIDS TO SELF-REMEMBERING**

What, then, are the main hindrances that stop us from seeing ourselves as we are and then taking ourselves in hand? First, we must be willing to recognize and acknowledge ourselves as we are: asleep, mechanical, and a bundle of unrelated "I's". Says Ouspensky, "If we knew ourselves as we are it would be unbearable,.. All our life.." He goes on, "all our habitual ways of thinking have only one aim - to

avoid shocks, unpleasant feelings, unpleasant realizations about ourselves.”

Yet we mustn't be either discouraged or defensive about ourselves. We must realize that we are victims of habits and attitudes of which we are unaware, or that we excuse as having no bearing at all on our spiritual development. We must pinpoint these destructive habits of thought, attitudes of mind, face them, uproot and rid ourselves of them. We must realize that it is ourselves we must change, and not other people nor outside circumstances. These outside persons and things reflect ourselves. With change in ourselves they may possibly undergo change. We must first understand ourselves before we can understand others, must govern and control ourselves before we can govern and control outside matters.

From the readings: First, analyze self. See, know your own shortcomings, not to magnify them in your self-appraisal, nor (measure them) in your judgments of your fellowman: (thus, I'm no worse than he! He's no worse than. I!"); but rather to know when to shun, what to overcome, what (you will have) to meet in your dally endeavor in this material experience. (1876-1) Note, "daily endeavor", not endeavor that is occasional or convenient.

One hindrance of which Ouspensky makes a point and harps on is what he calls *identification*. By this he means what might be called a fixing of ourselves in regard to something, making up our mind irrevocably on something, getting carried away by something, losing ourselves in it, going overboard about it. This stumbling block can be a person, a cause, a belief a situation, an idea, or our work. We like it too much. All our prejudices (which

we may prefer to call "convictions" either for or against, are identifications: we make them part of ourselves, can't tell them apart from ourselves. These identifications - and we may expose hundreds of them in the course of a day interfere horribly with our evolution, our attaining true consciousness. They are utterly mechanical and they have us in their power.

Minding other people's business, sitting in judgment on others, show identification with others and their affairs. Taking things personally instead of impersonally is identification. Says Ouspensky, "To struggle with identification is to make an effort to keep the feeling of 'I' (basic 'I') in the presence of some emotion, thought, or situation that threatens to engulf us." To catch oneself in time .. keep the reminder handy: This is just a way of thinking or feeling. I can modify or alter it. I am independent of it.

Ouspensky gives a special name to a form of identification in relation to people: "considering." "External considering" can be good, in that it takes other people's feelings into account, putting oneself into another's place, adjusting to others. But even this can merge into negative "internal considering" when we wonder what others are thinking of us or want to make them think certain things about us. Mostly, however, our "considering" is concerned with our own feelings. People do not value us enough, do not think enough about us, are not considerate enough of us. Should we, then, cultivate indifference? No, indifference is negative. The interest we feel in other people is not to their interest if we are imagining things about them or accusing them.

Then, should we not be wholeheartedly in favor of, or even

devoted to, anything? Only so long as it is under the control of the basic self (the self we are to "remember"). The real, the whole self must be kept in mind as bigger than, and in control of, all outside interests, attachments, concerns. Attention, by the way, must not be confused with identification. Attention is an important activity of the mind and should be exercised. Attention can be controlled, while identification gets out of control, doesn't want to be controlled, controls us. We are exercising attention and defying identification when we are self remembering.

Another hindrance to our self knowledge is what Ouspensky calls *false personality*. False personality is the personality we imagine we are and to some extent elect to be, though it runs away with us and we become unaware of it. But we *must* become aware of it and fight it, it deludes us, pretends to be the real and whole 'I' of us, and at the same time misrepresents and misleads us. How do we fight it? We must find the 'I' we can trust, must separate the reliable from the unreliable, the stable from the unstable. Says Ouspensky: Have the courage to be simple and sincere and to act so.

False personality is useless to us, but the trouble is we often favor it, protect it, like to present it as a 'front'. It is more picturesque and appealing, we think, than the sounder self. But it is utterly mechanical, is based on wrong views of ourselves and of everything else. It is ruled by our likes and dislikes, by petty conceits about ourselves, by the necessity of proving ourselves right, by the need for our merits to be recognized, by our desire for respect and appreciation. It must never be excused or justified, but must be subdued and made passive. That is the

best we can do with it, says Ouspensky; we can never get rid of it, but if we keep our false personality under control by the newborn self, we'll do well. Ouspensky likens this battle to "the Christian idea of the old Adam and the birth of the new man in Christ," and we know that this is an unending battle.

Another useless and mechanical indulgence he attacks is talk. "We talk too much. We talk and talk and talk, and we never really notice it. Generally we think we talk very little, much too little, but particularly those people who talk most think that they never talk. This is a very useful subject for watching. You will see how your day passes, how many mechanical things you say in certain conditions, how many other mechanical things in other conditions. Or you will notice that you just talk and talk because it gives you pleasure, or fills your time. It is necessary to watch it and stop at least some of this unnecessary talk.

But above all other hindrances, negative emotions hurt and hinder us the most, according to Ouspensky. Says he: "All possibilities of development are contained in conquering negative emotions and transforming them."

What are these "negative emotions" we must conquer and transform? Fear, anger, hate, worry, depression and discouragement, jealousy, self-pity and such. "There is not a single useful negative emotion. There are no obligatory negative emotions," Ouspensky points out. "One of the worst illusions we have is that negative emotions are induced by circumstances, by other people, whereas all negative emotions are in us, arise and issue from inside us. There is not a single, unavoidable reason why somebody else's action or some circumstance should produce a negative

emotion *in me*. No negative emotion can be produced by outside causes if we do not allow it. We have negative emotions because we permit them, justify them, blame other things and persons for them, and do not struggle with them to stop or prevent them. "At the basis of negative emotions," he says, "there generally lies a kind of self-indulgence one allows oneself. If one does not allow oneself fears, one allows anger in one of its forms, and if one does not allow oneself anger, one allows self-pity."

So, how are we to deal with them? Ouspensky says, First, stop all expressions of them. Watch impressions and reactions, to guard against negative ones; usually, *don't react* for nearly all reactions are negative. Then realize that we can down these negative emotions, they can be conquered, destroyed, transformed. Transformed into what? Into understanding. Even in ordinary life we refrain from expressing negative emotions in certain instances: we refrain from an expression that may cost us a job, or a friend. If we can control the expression of them in certain situations we can control it in all situations, if we try.

Said one of his pupils to Ouspensky: "I have a certain critical attitude toward people." Ouspensky replied, "Does this critical attitude give you anything, or not? You will see that it gives you nothing. We often forget this question of personal profit, yet it is the only criterion. Perhaps this will help you not to criticize. It is just the same as criticizing the weather."

Another asked Ouspensky, "Why is it that it gives a feeling of relief to express anger or irritation?" He answered, "There is a worm in you that wants to express itself. Then when it

has expressed itself, the irritation of the worm subsides; but in this way it becomes stronger and has more and more control over you.

"If, by persistent thinking, we realize that nobody can be guilty against us, that *we* are the cause of all that happens to us, that changes things. After some time this right thinking, this creating of right attitude, right point of view, can become a permanent process, and negative emotions will appear only occasionally to be dealt with."

Another way to deal with negative emotions, advises Ouspensky is to turn them on oneself. Turn annoyance, irritation, criticism hate on one's own faults, shortcomings, and weaknesses. We like to be comfortable about ourselves and so we tolerate ourselves, make excuses, claim indulgence for ourselves, instead of disciplining ourselves. Says reading 5243-1: Not severe enough with self...Demand or ask not of others that you do not of self. This is the beginning of wisdom.

\* \* \*

Ouspensky is a no-nonsense person, an unsparing critic, but a penetrating realist and counselor. Briefly, too briefly, to sum him up on this subject, we find that we must regard man as possible of development and then regard every thing helpful to his development as useful and what hinders as harmful. This requires constant self-observation, self study; it is necessary to know yourself before you can change yourself. "Isn't this introspection?" asked one of his pupils. "No. Introspection is without purpose or aim, it is a form of self-petting and enjoying oneself."

It may not be irrelevant, and will in any case be thought provoking to

quote Ouspensky in his discussion of good and evil. In this connection he says, "we must try to understand the relative positions of morality and conscience. What is morality and what is conscience? We can say first of all that morality is not constant. It is different in different countries, in different centuries, in different classes, with people of different education, and so on.... Morality changes, but conscience never changes. Conscience is a kind of emotional understanding of truth in certain definite relations, generally in relation to behavior, to people, and so on. This is always the same; it cannot change and it cannot differ in one nation or another, in one person or another."

#### **OUSPENSKY AND CAYCE READINGS COMPARED**

Turning now to the Cayce readings, we find these less severe than Ouspensky, more encouraging, while firm. They do not mince matters, but happily emphasize our power of choice. The difference may be in that Ouspensky sees as man to man, sees what is obvious to a percipient critic, whereas the Source of the readings saw the potential man within the weak and erring one. Ouspensky denies that we have will at all, whereas the readings stress our will power. Ouspensky, however, concedes our power of choice, our ability to put forth effort and energy in work on ourselves, in all of which some exercise of will is implied.

What, then, are some of the aids to self-knowledge, self-evolution advised by the readings?

From the beginning, the readings sound a higher note than Ouspensky's. Thus: Study more to understand that each one of us at all times stands in the presence of that Power, that Force, that brings to each the power of knowing

self in a material world. Each act, each thought of each body adds to the bringing about of His Kingdom in the earth or adds to that which prevents it (the Kingdom) from becoming manifest in this material plane. (911-6)

And: Understanding without spirituality may too soon become egotism. (3268-1)

A premise constantly emphasized in the readings is having an ideal. Formulate and write down an ideal for yourself. Review and revise it constantly, measure yourself by it, to use it as a pattern. In short, the readings are explicit about using our ideals as a guide to self-examination and self-improvement. Through our ideals we are to lay hold of the higher forces to help us - and not confine ourselves to the self in hand, the self in view. There must be definite decisions in self as to attitudes towards all activities of body, mind and purpose, or the choosing of ideals.

Begin with soul. The answer must be within self....the Christ.

What is the ideal mentally?... How much meditation, how much application, how much appreciation?

See the body perfect in vision, in thought, in purpose.

What is the ideal relationship that should exist between self and home, friends, activities, conditions, experiences? (3051-6)

Study self. What are your spiritual ideals?

Where is heaven (to the entity)

Where is God?

What relationship does the entity bear to the Creative Forces? (And then underline what you are doing about it.)

What is religion?

What is morality?

Write these as related to self - not to others..

In your material ideal, is it that satisfying of some appetite soon desire of body, or is it the fulfilling of a spiritual and mental purpose?

Write these, then as you analyze self and apply, lay this aside and in three months check on self. It will be worth while. (3032-2)

Eventually it will be seen that these (ideals for body, mind, soul) must become as one, must conform to one another, must contribute to welfare not only of self but also help to others...What you sow in body in mind, in purpose you must one day in the physical being reap...What you do to others you are doing to yourself. (3198-3)

Unless there is the application of ideals, there cannot be that accomplished which is the fulfilling of the purpose for which a soul enters material experience. For it is not by chance but a purposefulness that each soul enters, that it may become so developed... as to become a fit companion to its Maker, (1796-1,) And: Know that as the ideal is held within self, the attainment will arrive, without as well as within self. (1908-1)

Humility is another means toward self-knowledge and self control set forth by the readings: The more often there is a humbling of the spirit, the more often there may be a better hold on self and a better understanding gained. (1402-1)

Patience is another aid to work on the self recommended by the readings, and not a passive patience, but a positive, persistent patience, a steadfastness and faithfulness to an undertaking. The Lord abhors the quitter, says 518-2. Setting ones hand to the plow and turning back is condemned over and over. Be patient with self and with others. The more

patience that is shown in self toward others, the more patience will be shown by others to self... As patience is manifest, so will the results be seen. This doesn't mean patience in the sense of submissiveness, or just being quiet, but an active patience. Force self once in a while to do some unpleasant things that it hasn't wanted to do, and like it! (911-3)

Let us make sure, however, that we can study ourselves only in relation to our environment: home and those in it; job and associates; friends, and all connections with other people (church, clubs, etc.). These form the testing ground, the laboratory for work on ourselves. Your problems are your heritage you have made and are meeting in your dealings with your fellowman day by day. (2524-1)

The readings further state that our motive in gaining self-knowledge, self-control, and self-development should not be inner peace; this will result only from outgoing service. The Lord has to all entities given the opportunities to become aware of their relationships with the Creative Forces through the manners in which they deal with their problems with their fellowmen. (2284-1)

Each soul either makes for development or retardment in its relationships and dealings with others; either becomes as a creative force or a disturbing influence. On the other hand...Do that which is not only pleasing in your sight to others (Which might be False Personality performing - Author's note) - but that which is pleasing to your conscience in your relationship to your Maker (which would bring self remembering into play, self remembering being, in a sense, a checking of oneself with the Maker.) (2081-1)

Negative emotions nearly always involve other people. Selfishness in its many aspects is the greatest hindrance to work on the self, say the readings: Know, self is the only sin; that is, selfishness - and all the others are just a modification of that expression of the ego. (1362-1)

We find the entity attempting to find justification of self's actions in the eyes of others, and in this way and manner the entity builds those conditions that make for a barrier between individuals. (136-21)

Often belabors and condemns self and others *throw not taking stock of self*. (39-2)

Justifying self is blaming some one else. (2803-2)

Resentments build hardships in the experience. (1766-2)

The less one thinks of self's opinions and the better listener one becomes, the greater may be the opportunities for being of help or benefit to those about the entity. (2612-1)

What one says of another will usually be one's own state also in one form or another. Such criticisms only create barriers, animosities, hates, disputes, corruptions...If the lesson of tolerance is learned in this experience (that is, in this lifetime), no one may even surmise as to how far the entity may advance spiritually and mentally. If there is intolerance and the tendency to be argumentative is held to, many will be the tears shed, many will be the heartaches and sorrows. (1669-1)

The affirmative attitude of the readings is shown in their emphasis on constructiveness versus condemnation, thus: To condemn others or to condemn self or to condemn circumstances is only to make for greater disturbance within self. (1261-1)

Keep that attitude of constructiveness ever. (275-46) And: If there would be application or the self to constructive thinking, constructive acting, constructive arrangement of time, we would find this would bring for the body a change in the whole outlook upon life. (1099-1) These (abilities brought over from a past life) may be used by the entity's looking within, Using the motivation or imaginative (that is, creative) Forces for constructive influences, not looking for adverse forces in the lives of others (blaming others, that is). Look to thine own self, my friend. (1131-1)

Prominent among the means toward self-knowledge, of course, are meditation and dreams. This is brought out in the Cayce readings so unmistakably, even emphatically, that it hardly needs dwelling on. Meditation, as the gateway to the inner, true self, the God within us, should be a daily practice. Dreams provide guidance to the self in hand and should be studied. Ouspensky discounts dreams, sees no use in heeding them, but he likens his self-remembering to a first step in meditation.

Hugh Lynn Cayce pointed out recently that healing meditation should be preceded by prayer For forgiveness; not a blanket "Forgive us...as we forgive," but an enumeration of the faults we know need forgiven. What a salutary study of the self this proposes!

Both Ouspensky and the Cayce readings make plain that self-knowledge and self-evolution entail hard and unremitting work on oneself. Ouspensky declares that the work becomes harder as.. we make gains. and see better what needs to be done on ourselves and become better able to do it. He stresses, too that we must work at many things in ourselves at the same

time, not one at a time. For instance, we should not tackle false personality this week, negative emotions next week. This method defeats our efforts at improvement in toto.

A Cayce reading says: Through your efforts alone, little may be done, yet through that which you and your consciousness are able to direct, much will be accomplished. Not just pulling weeds and planting posies and potatoes, but cultivating the soil. (900-282) That is, not just correcting surface faults and putting on pleasing manners, but stirring up, uncovering the depths of us, good and bad, and giving them full attention. Another person was told: There is nothing impossible for the entity to attain in fame or fortune or in spiritual unfoldments yet these will not be easy until the entity has conquered

self. Decide in self which you will choose, for there is here set before thee good and evil, life and death; choose thou, and know ever within self: If you are one in and with the Lord in His purposes naught can be against thee. (5056-1)

Finally, we may ask, what is the ultimate purpose of this toilsome self-examination, self-control and direction, self-development? It is all contained, or implied, in the meditation-prayer accompanying the chapter, "Know Thyself" in A Search for God, Book I: "Father, as we seek to see and know your face, may we each, as individuals and as a group, come to know ourselves as we are known, that we, as lights in Thee, may give the better concept of your Spirit in this world ."

**NOTE:** This is a REPRINT of a former monthly publication of the Association for Research and Enlightenment, Inc.