Correspondence Course in Gnosis
Level 1 - Unit 3

THE A WAKENING OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND INNER SELF-REMEMBERING
THE AWAKENING OF CONSCIOUSNESS

As we have already said in the previous Unit, there are four possible states of consciousness for man:

- Sleep
- Waking Consciousness
- Self-Consciousness and
- Objective Consciousness

Imagine for a moment a four-storey house. The poor intellectual animal mistakenly called man normally lives in the two lower storeys. He never visits the two upper storeys. That is to say, he only lives in two of the four states of consciousness: he spends one part of his life in the state of sleep and another in what is called 'waking consciousness', which is unfortunately another form of sleep.

In the first of these states, sleep, and while the physical body is asleep in bed, the Ego moves in the molecular region or astral world like a sleepwalker, with its consciousness asleep. In that region the Ego projects dreams and lives in them. In the world of dreams there is no logic, there is no continuity or causes or effects. All the psychic functions of the human being work with no direction and, as a result, subjective images, incoherent, vague and imprecise scenes, remnants of memories of the day, echoes of the past, etc. appear and disappear. All that universe of dreams goes through our psyche, and it only leaves a very small trace in our memory, and nearly always it leaves no trace.

When the Ego returns to the physical body, there appears the second state of consciousness, called 'waking state' and, as we have said earlier, it is just in reality another form of sleep. It happens like when the sun rises. The stars hide because of the brightness of the day, but that does not mean that they stop existing. Such are dreams in the waking state: they continue secretly; they do not disappear. When we return to
our physical body, our dreams continue in us. The waking state, which some people also call lucid consciousness or awakened consciousness, is really daydreaming, a state of relative and subjective consciousness.

As a result of the vivacity of sensory impressions, desires and feelings, and particularly the feeling of contradiction or of impossibility, whose absence is complete in the state of sleep, dreams become invisible, but they are present, and they often exert an influence on our thoughts, feelings and actions. The strength of this influence sometimes surpasses that of the real perceptions of the moment. In fact, daydreaming is more dangerous than ordinary night dreaming. Any daydreamer who wants to carry out his dreams in the waking state may harm others in the physical world. Nevertheless, night dreams are harmless. It does not matter how violent they may be; they harm no one.

This means that the intellectual animal, both in the day and in the night, lives in a world of dreams. He dreams while driving cars, he dreams while working in the factory, in the office, in the land, etc. He falls in love in a dream. He gets married in a dream... Seldom, very seldom in life, is he awake. He lives in a world of dreams and illusions, and firmly believes that he is awake, without realizing that he remains powerfully influenced by dreams. The Poet said, and rightly so, that ‘life is a dream’.

All the absurdities and contradictions of men and human life can generally be explained if we understand that men live in a dream, act in a dream and do not know that they are asleep.

The sacred teachings of the past very emphatically point out this state of sleeping consciousness in which man is all the time, and they stress the need to awaken. The Four Gospels, for example, demand that human beings awaken (in the New Testament we find the demand to ‘watch’ some ten times), but unfortunately those teachings do not say how to do it; they do not tell us with accuracy how to awaken.
To achieve it, it is necessary, first of all, to understand that one is asleep. Only when someone fully realizes that he is asleep, only when that person understands what to be asleep means, he can really enter into the path of awakening. We will never be able to awaken unless we previously realize that we are asleep.

To sum up, we will say that these two states, sleep and 'awakened sleep' (or waking state), are the only states in which the intellectual animal lives. There are, however, two other states of consciousness, which man can reach. But he can reach these two states only after a hard and prolonged struggle. These states are self-consciousness (or consciousness of oneself) and objective consciousness.

We generally believe that we possess self-consciousness, that we are conscious of ourselves, or in any case that we can be conscious of ourselves whenever we want it, but in reality self-consciousness is a state which we ascribe to ourselves without having the least right to do it. And as for objective consciousness, it is a state of which we know nothing.

In order to better understand these two states of consciousness, we must know that the consciousness of oneself is a state in which man becomes objective in relation to himself, acquiring the knowledge of himself; and objective consciousness is a state in
which man comes into contact with the real and objective world, from which he is now separated by the senses, his dreams, illusions and fantasies; in short, by the subjective states of consciousness.

In order to better understand the four states of consciousness, we are going to study them from the point of view of the possibilities that each of them offers with regard to knowing Truth.

In the first state of consciousness, sleep, we can know nothing about Truth. Even if real perceptions or feelings come to us, they mix with our dreams, and in this state we cannot distinguish dreams from reality.

In the second state of consciousness, in awakened sleep, we can only know a relative truth. This state is characterized by subjectivity. Hence, it is sometimes called relative and subjective consciousness. It is a state of beliefs and opinions, but without us having any certainty about what we believe and think. It is a state subjected to the depressing process of choice, in which we never know anything for certain. Here we find the fight of opposites, bigoted views and sectarian attitudes as to what is fair and unfair, proper and improper, right and wrong, where opinions and beliefs vary and bring people into conflict with one another. Here everything is relative. In this state one can never have total certainty. Conclusion: it is a state of ignorance and error.

In the third state of consciousness, self-consciousness, we can know the whole truth about ourselves. This state manifest itself as conceptual synthetism, analytical and conscious revision of beliefs and opinions, reflective induction and deduction, very serious studies of human psychology, phenomena and laws, etc. It is a state of vivid and direct experiences which leads man to attain self-knowledge.

In the fourth state, objective consciousness, man is in a position to know the entire truth about all things; he can study things in themselves, the real world as it is. In this state, Enlightenment is achieved. This state is so far from us that we cannot even think of it in
a right way, and we must strive to understand that flashes of objective consciousness can only be experienced in a fully realized state of self-consciousness.

This means that in a lower state of consciousness we can have flashes of the next higher state. For example: during the state of deep sleep in the night we can have flashes of the waking state (in those flashes it is as though we awakened in a dream. We experience them very realistically). During the waking state we can have flashes of self-consciousness (and in the flashes of that new state we awaken to the reality of 'waking sleep'. We begin to understand what to 'be asleep' means). During the state of self-consciousness we can have flashes of objective consciousness (fully awakened consciousness, state of Turiya, objective, enlightened and perfect clairvoyance, polyvoyance, etc.).

It is regrettable that the intellectual animal cannot prolong the flashes of self-consciousness and make them more and more continuous and permanent.

If we want to have longer periods of self-consciousness, we must understand that they cannot occur by themselves. They demand an act of will. This means that the frequency and duration of the moments of self-consciousness depend on the power we may have over ourselves. In a way, consciousness and will are two aspects of one and the same thing.

People's biggest mistake is that they like to think that they are self-conscious. They also believe that everyone possesses this state of consciousness, that people possess self-consciousness, or that, at least, they can have it whenever they want to. If people's consciousness were awake, the Earth would be a paradise, there would be no wars, there would be no mine or yours, everything would belong to everyone, we would live in a Golden Age. But it is very difficult to persuade people that they are not conscious of themselves and that they cannot become conscious just as they please. And it is particularly difficult because here nature plays a singular funny trick on them.
Ask a man if he is conscious, or tell him that he is not conscious. He will answer you that he is perfectly conscious of himself and that it is absurd to say that he is not, since in that moment he is listening to you and he is understanding what you are saying. And he will be completely right, but at the same time he will be completely mistaken. That is the ‘joke-illusion’ that nature plays on him. He will be right because your question or your observation will have made him vaguely conscious for a moment. A few moments later (when there is no longer anybody or anything that can awaken him vaguely) consciousness will have disappeared, but he will remember what you have told him, what he answered and he will believe for sure that he is conscious of himself.

Actually, the acquisition of the third state of consciousness involves an arduous and prolonged work. How could a man subject himself to this work if he thinks that he already possesses what is promised to him as a result of a hard and prolonged work? Naturally, that man will not undertake that work and will not regard it as a necessity until he has acquired the conviction that he does not possess the consciousness of himself or anything that is related to it, that is, psychological unity or individuality, a permanent and changeless I, conscious will, ability to do, etc.

When one awakens consciousness, when one becomes self-conscious, when one acquires consciousness of oneself, it is then when one really comes to know the truth about oneself.

Before attaining the third state of consciousness, one really does not know oneself, even if one believes that one knows oneself.

It is absolutely necessary to acquire the third state of consciousness, to go up to the third storey of the house, before being entitled to go to the fourth storey. The fourth state of consciousness, the fourth storey of the house, is really formidable. Only those who attain objective consciousness can study the things in themselves, the world as it is. Those who reach the fourth storey of the house are, beyond any doubt, Enlightened Beings. They know the Mysteries of Life and Death by direct experience. They possess Wisdom. Their ‘spatial sense’ is fully developed... But, to achieve this, first we have to Awaken Consciousness.
If we want to reach the Awakening of Consciousness, to attain self-consciousness, we have to work on our consciousness here and now. It is precisely here, in this physical world, where we must work to awaken consciousness. Anyone who awakens here awakens everywhere, in all the dimensions of the Universe.
Inner Self-Remembering

To reach the state of self-consciousness, we must remember ourselves. One of the characteristics of the waking state (daydreaming) is that man is all the time in a state of self-forgetfulness. He is absent. He has no true reality. Self-remembering is an act of will in which the student tries to feel himself, to be conscious of himself.

Speaking about this state, Master Samael wrote: ‘Unbelievable though it may seem, when a student observes himself, he does not remember himself. Beyond any doubt, aspirants do not really feel themselves; they are not conscious of themselves. It seems something hard to believe that when the Gnostic aspirant observes the way he laughs, talks, walks, etc., he forgets himself. This is unbelievable, but it is true. It is absolutely necessary, however, to try to remember oneself while one observes oneself. This is fundamental in order to achieve the Awakening of Consciousness.

‘To observe oneself, to know oneself, without forgetting oneself, is tremendously difficult, but it is frightfully urgent to achieve the Awakening of Consciousness. What we are saying here seems nonsense. However, people are not aware that they are asleep and that they do not remember themselves, even if they look at themselves in a full-length mirror, or even if they thoroughly observe themselves in detail.

‘Self-forgetfulness, the fact of not being able to remember oneself, is really the chief cause of all human ignorance. When a person deeply understands that he cannot remember himself, that he is not conscious of himself, then he is very close to the Awakening of Consciousness.

‘We are saying something that has to be deeply reflected on. What we are saying here is very important, and it cannot be understood if it is read mechanically. Our readers must reflect on it.

‘During inner self-remembering, during the tremendous super-effort to be conscious of one’s own I, it is clear that one’s attention is divided, and here we return again to the subject of the division of attention. One part of one’s attention is naturally directed to the effort, and the other part to the Ego or pluralized I...’

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Division of Attention

Self-remembering demands division of attention. Without a conscious division of attention, it is impossible to perform self-remembering.

Division of attention is an act of will which cannot be made by itself; it requires an intentional and conscious effort on the part of the person. It is very important to understand what this division of attention means.

To explain the idea of division of attention, Master Samael quoted the experiences which the Russian writer and esoterist, P. D. Ouspensky, experienced in himself. Next we will transcribe those experiments, extracted from Ouspensky’s book Fragments of an Unknown Teaching.

‘I will try to describe my attempts to remember myself. The first impression was that attempts to remember myself or to be conscious of myself, to say to myself, I am walking, I am doing, and continually to feel this I, stopped thought. When I was feeling I, I could neither think nor speak; even sensations became dimmed. Also, one could only ‘remember oneself’ in this way for a very short time.

‘I had previously made certain experiments in stopping thought which are mentioned in books on Yoga practices... My first attempts to self-remember reminded me exactly of these, my first experiments. Actually it was almost the same thing with the one difference that in ‘stopping thoughts’ attention is wholly directed towards the effort of not admitting thoughts, while in self-remembering attention becomes divided, one part of it is directed towards the same effort, and the other part to the feeling of self.
This last realization enabled me to come to a certain, possibly a very incomplete, definition of 'self-remembering', which nevertheless proved to be very useful in practice. I am speaking of the division of attention which is the characteristic feature of self-remembering. I represented it to myself in the following way:

'When I observe something, my attention is directed towards what I observe — a line with one arrowhead:

I ----------------------------------------------- the observed phenomenon.

'When at the same time, I try to remember myself, my attention is directed both towards the object observed and towards myself. A second arrowhead appears on the line:

I <------------------------------------------- the observed phenomenon.

Having defined this I saw that the problem consisted in directing attention on oneself without weakening or obliterating the attention directed on something else. Moreover this 'something else' could as well be within me as outside me.

The very first attempts at such a division of attention showed me its possibility. At the same time I saw two things clearly.

In the first place I saw that self-remembering resulting from this method had nothing in common with 'self-feeling', or 'self-analysis'. It was a new and very interesting state with a strangely familiar flavour.

'And secondly I realized that moments of self-remembering do occur in life, although rarely. Only the deliberate production of these moments created the sensation of novelty. Actually I had been familiar with them from early childhood. They came either in new and unexpected surroundings, in a new place, among new people while travelling, for instance, when suddenly one looks around one and says: How strange! I and in this place; or in very emotional moments, in moments of danger, in moments when it is necessary to keep one's head, when one hears one's own voice and sees and observes oneself from the outside.

I saw quite clearly that my first recollections of life, in my own case very early ones, were moments of self-remembering. This last realization revealed much else to me. That is, I saw that I really only remember those moments of the past in which I remembered myself. Of the others I know only that they took place. I am not able wholly to revive them, to experience them again. But the moments when I had remembered myself were alive and were in no way different from the present.
'I was still afraid to come to conclusions. But I already saw that I stood upon the threshold of a very great discovery. I had always been astonished at the weakness and the insufficiency of our memory. So many things disappear. For some reason or other the chief absurdity of life for me consisted in this. Why experience so much in order to forget it afterwards? Besides there was something degrading in this. A man feels something which seems to him very big, he thinks he will never forget it; one or two years pass by—and nothing remains of it.

'It now became clear to me why this was so and why it could not be otherwise. If our memory really keeps alive only moments of self-remembering, it is clear why our memory is so poor. All these were the realizations of the first days.

'Later, when I began to learn to divide attention, I saw that self-remembering gave wonderful sensations which, in a natural way, that is, by themselves, come to us only very seldom and in exceptional conditions. Thus, for instance, at that time I used very much to like to wander through St. Petersburg at night and to 'sense' the houses and the streets. St. Petersburg is full of these strange sensations. Houses, especially old houses, were quite alive, I all but spoke to them. There was no 'imagination' in it. I did not think of anything, I simply walked along while trying to remember myself and looked around; the sensations came by themselves...

'Sometimes self-remembering was not successful; at other times it was accompanied by curious observations.

'I was once walking along the Liteiny towards the Nevsky, and in spite of all my efforts I was unable to keep my attention on self-remembering. The noise, movement, everything distracted me. Every minute I lost the thread of attention, found it again, and then lost it again. At last I felt a kind of ridiculous irritation with myself and I turned into the street on the left having firmly decided to keep my attention on the fact that I would remember myself at least for some time, at any rate until I reached the following street. I reached the Nadejdinskaya without losing the thread of attention except, perhaps, for short moments. Then I again turned towards the Nevsky realizing that, in quiet streets, it was easier for me not to lose the line of thought and wishing therefore to test myself in more noisy streets. I reached the Nevsky still remembering myself, and was already beginning to experience the strange emotional state of inner peace and confidence which comes after great efforts of this kind. Just around the corner on the Nevsky was a tobacconist's shop where they made my cigarettes. Still remembering myself I thought I would call there and order some cigarettes.
Two hours later I woke up in the Tavricheskaya, that is, far away. I was going by izvostchik to the printers. The sensation of awakening was extraordinary vivid. I can almost say that I came to. I remembered everything at once. How I had been walking along the Nadejinskaya, how I had been remembering myself, how I had thought about cigarettes, and how at this thought I seemed all at once to fall and disappear into a deep sleep.

At the same time, while immersed in this sleep, I had continued to perform consistent and expedient actions. I left the tobacconist, called at my flat in the Liteiny, telephoned to the printers. I wrote two letters. Then again I went out of the house. I walked on the left side of the Nevsky up to the Gostinoy Dvor intending to go to the Ofitzerskaya. Then I had changed my mind as it was getting late. I had taken an izvostchik and was driving to the Kavalergardskaya to my printers. And on the way while driving along the Tavricheskaya I began to feel a strange uneasiness, as though I had forgotten something. And suddenly I remembered that I had forgotten to remember myself.

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The main characteristic of **self-remembering** is **divided attention**. And there are three strange things with regard to this idea:

First, for certain cosmic reasons, no one can try it or practise it until he has been spoken of it and has been taught about it. That is to say, man cannot discover it for himself; he needs to be instructed by those who know it.

Second, when he has been told about it, any normal person has sufficient will and energy to grasp what it means. And if he wants to, he can, the moment he has learned about it, become conscious of himself in his environment, that is, of himself sitting on a chair and paying attention to a new idea that is being transmitted to him. But this **self-remembering** cannot be repeated or kept except by his conscious effort. As we have said earlier, it does not occur by itself. It never becomes a mechanical habit. Just when the idea of **self-remembering** or of **divided attention** is forgotten, all efforts, it does not matter how sincere they may be, degenerate again and again into ‘fascination’, that is, into **realizing one thing at a time** (he no longer realizes himself and simultaneously a person or an object. He only realizes the object or person with which he has identified).

The third thing is another curious psychological **trick** that must be mentioned in connection with the moment when a man first hears the idea of **self-remembering**. Namely, if he relates it to something which he has heard or read previously, or to some philosophical, religious or eastern term that is already familiar to him, the idea immediately becomes invisible to him; **it loses its power**, because this idea can only open up new possibilities to man as a **completely new idea**. If it is connected with some familiar association (as for example, the idea of ‘living here and now’), it means that it has entered a wrong part of his mind, where it can remain stored as any other fragment of knowledge. An impact has taken place and it has not produced the effect that this **idea** carries with it, and only with great difficulty can man return to the same opportunity.

The **idea of self-remembering** must come to us as a **great discovery**, making us wander why we had not realized it before, and also discovering, as Ouspensky said, that one has just encountered ‘an entirely new problem, which science and philosophy have neglected so far’.

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We will finish this Unit with the following words of Master Samael:

'Inner self-remembering is something more than analysing oneself. It is a new state, which can only be known through direct experience.

'Self-observation, simultaneously accompanied by the inner remembering of one’s own I, is tremendously difficult, and yet it is essential for one to really know oneself.

'Self-observation and inner self-remembering start the development of the spatial sense, which reaches its full maturity with the Awakening of Consciousness. The chakras, mentioned by Charles Leadbeater and by many other authors, are, in relation to the spatial sense, what flowers are in relation to the tree that gives them life. What is fundamental is the tree.

'The spatial sense is the normal functioning of the awakened consciousness. Any man who is truly awake can see, hear, touch and smell everything that happens in the forty-nine subconscious departments...

'Any man who is truly awake can verify for himself, through direct experience, the dreams of people. He can see those dreams in the people who walk in the streets, in those who work in factories, in those who govern, in every creature.

'Any man who is truly awake can see, hear, smell and touch the great realities of the higher worlds. Whoever wants to experience the reality of everything that happens in the higher dimensions of space must awaken consciousness here and now'.

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In the next Unit we will look in depth into the possibility of the awakening of consciousness and the inner experiences that it gives us, through a practical exercise which Gnosis teaches and which has to do with the triple division of attention.
**Recommended Practice**

Practise *self-remembering* during the day. Try to remember yourself from moment to moment, from instant to instant, following the instructions which you have been given in this Unit.