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EXPLORATION OF THE NOUMENAL OR INVISIBLE WORLD

SECTION 1

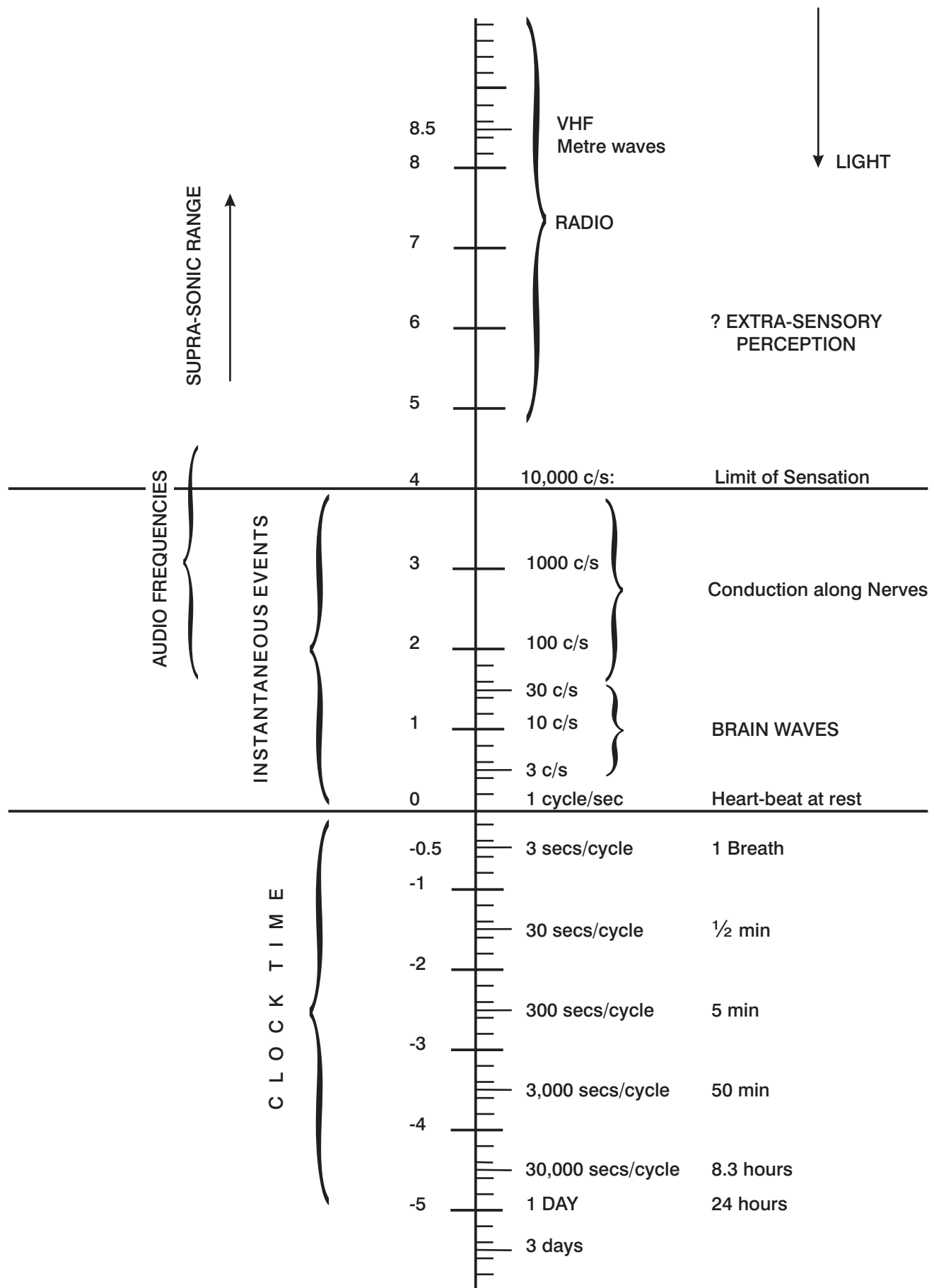
Some people agreed with me that in this way of looking at the relation between energy and duration of time lies the answer to many common questions and problems. There is nothing doubtful about that time-scale, anybody who goes deeply enough into it would have to agree with it.

But what *is* still doubtful, a matter for research, is the relation of the steps of the Ladder to it and we must keep our minds open until we have collected enough facts. So let us take that part of the scale which we can actually observe at first hand and enlarge it (see Figure overleaf).

Our present moment is somewhere between a heart-beat, one second, and a breath of three seconds, so that we take as zero one second per cycle or one cycle per second, and going upwards we measure instantaneous events in increasing frequency of cycles per second until we get out of the range of sensation altogether at 10,000 c/s. Now when we close our eyes and do not attend to anything else but the mantra, we first become aware of the ordinary noises of the brain which EEG records show to be a mixture of six kinds of waves at frequencies varying from three to thirty cycles a second, based on the alpha rhythm which is ten cycles a second (+1). Having passed through that rhythm we come to a comparatively silent region broken by instantaneous sensations, images, memories, ideas. Resuming our attention on the mantra, we are aware of its changes of speed either quickening or slowing to a point where it escapes altogether from sensory manifestations, which is called 'transcending to the finer phases'. There follows either a complete silence, an emptiness, or sometimes experiences of what can *only* be extra-sensory perceptions (like an emotional glow) because all sensation has ceased.

We have to remember, however, that consciousness is measured both by *intensity* of moments of consciousness (measured upwards on the scale), but also by *repetition and duration* of periods of consciousness in time. Our consciousness ordinarily only remains the same for three seconds; it changes with each breath – count one, two, three, and it's different! The initial experiment given us by Mr. Ouspensky showed that the limit of our consciousness was two minutes when we could, with great efforts, be conscious of one thing, one's own existence. On this scale two minutes comes just at the point (-2) minus two; minus one-and-a-half being thirty seconds or half-a-minute; minus two-and-a-half three hundred seconds, five minutes; minus three-and-a-half, fifty minutes, just about three-quarters-of-an-hour; minus four-and-a-half, just over eight hours, the average period of sleep; and the point, minus five, thirty thousand breaths, ninety thousand seconds or one day. All that was clock time. Below point five we enter calendar time with three days, thirty days, etc.

The point is, having entered into and developed higher energy of consciousness, how long can we hold it for? It is this 'energy multiplied by duration' (Eddington's definition of 'Action') which counts in the ascent of the Ladder, and the development of the four bodies takes it a step further since it means that a given step in energy has become *permanent*.



SECTION 2

Most of us, perhaps without knowing it, have during the last three years been seeking and finding experiences which link together the noumenal and the phenomenal worlds, for this is one way of expressing the object of the meditation.

The questionnaire was not only designed to get information about people's progress in the method, but also to find a way in which the experiences met with on this journey to the interior and the effect on our lives could be communicated. Difficult though it is to remember and to express these experiences, yet somehow people seem to have managed it, and I'd like you to hear some examples.

In order that these records should be quite impersonal and quite unselected, the following method has been adopted: A serial number is given to each form received, corresponding to the list of names in alphabetical order. Taking first those (roughly 200) who have been able to do the two half-hours and who are getting sufficient reward to want to go on (often without any checking or other assistance), I'm giving you the records of the first 54, that is, roughly the people whose names begin with A, B, C, D, E, F, G. ...

These happen to be fairly representative – 17 men, 37 women. Of the latter there are 18 wives and mothers and the rest have to earn their own living – 7 with secretarial jobs; 2 are nurses; and the rest working like the men in the professions and the arts: 5 teachers, 3 lawyers, 3 doctors and a vet, 2 farmers, 4 artists – 2 on the stage, 2 musicians; and business, politics, civil service and journalism one each; 6 are retired and living alone. It's quite clear that certain situations and kinds of life are well-suited to finding two quiet half-hours, and others are more difficult – though none seem to be impossibly so, except for short periods.

Today I am trying to relate to this diagram what they say on their forms. Of the *instantaneous* experiences – fleeting events – described, some were perceived through the senses, some not. Of those experiences which had an *extension in Time*, we have some felt during a half-hour, some which continued afterwards or were felt at other times in the twenty-four hours. And then there are those permanent trends more gradually established which can be divided into *physical* trends and *psychological* trends.

We'll take the instantaneous experiences first:

1. 1st Category – Instantaneous Events –

Increase in intensity of Consciousness and Extra-Sensory Perceptions.

Bursts of lovely physical and mental energy – one instance of very acute sight – once a thought seemed to expand instantly in all directions like revelation – indescribable moments come along at intervals – fatigue instantly expelled by change of breathing and circulation (very refreshing) – something seems to take one to the hub of Creation – sudden sense of refreshment and protection – bursts of golden happiness – inrush of energy which can just as easily go negative as positive – occasional insight and impersonal understanding – occasional remarkable change in memories of the past – frequent realizations that there is a great Power which is 'all surrounding' – once felt the most wonderful warmth and love when I could not sleep and tried to recall the mantra (like a ray of sunshine) – vivid illumination of, actual experience of, a System idea – sudden peace of mind – 'feeling of prayer rising to crescendo of longing' – feeling of peace and happiness

and love – sudden delight and happiness which made me laugh out loud – momentary change in sense of time – change in feeling of ‘I’, which I had heard about before but never experienced – insight from time to time into the nature of things and sense of harmony – sudden feeling that the whole world is exceedingly alive and ready to be explored and that all the answers lie within one – for moments I feel almost as if I am being watched (rather like meeting myself for the first time – Who am I?) – brief sensations of harmony and freedom and a new kind of contact with the world outside – during the crisis of my illness something happened to me which I had never had before; it is indescribable, like a kind of explanation of things I had formerly felt uncertain about and doubtful – momentary evoking of a childhood sense of enchantment.

2. 2nd Category – Effects extended in Time – more *permanent* trends.

a) Physical

In many cases more physical energy, less tiredness, relaxation, more stability and balance, greater attention to postures, more joie de vivre.

Health

About 14 mentioned a general improvement of physical health, sometimes specified as improvement in tension, headaches, immunity to minor infections or quick recovery from them; improvement in anaemia and circulation troubles; disappearance of indigestion, change in appetite; change in various sex functions; great relief in childbirth due to meditation during the first stage; similar help at a major operation; improvement or elimination of rheumatism and neuritis; almost complete cessation of ‘phantom limb’ pains in amputated stump. Several said they did not feel the cold nearly so much.

b) Psychological

A happy relation with people and less irritability with family – relief of bad temper – less ‘fussed’ by all the things I’ve not been able to do – less unnecessary thought – stronger emotions – no more nightmares – less worry and muddle – life seems richer and steadier – far fewer fits of depression about one’s life and work – calmer, more balanced judgment (good or bad have less effect on one’s state of mind) – easier to come to right decisions and actions – greater self-confidence – learning to do things seems much simpler, and planning not so fraught with unnecessary doubts and fears – meditation has reached the roots of a recurrent mental illness and the healing that is now taking place seems as if it could be complete and permanent – insight into music and a more acute sense of pitch – apparent ease in coping with awkward situations – an unfolding comprehension of all one had been taught to know as a child – more alert – a certain detachment from desires – have begun to feel the life within me – an inner reserve has been established of good spirits, tranquility and vitality – new ability to formulate exactly things felt but not usually expressible – enjoying and accepting life – no more feeling of being excluded and isolated – more and more confidence in this inner thing which is growing and seems to protect you and provide what you need – no longer in such a hurry and so less nervous – the presence of the mantra going on all the time of its own accord sometimes comes to my notice, and often when I am in difficulties – clearer aim in all branches of my life – almost permanent removal of doubts, not only of the Way but of my being able to continue on it – great sense of security; it is there, one knows the way home – more serenity and slowing down of a more or less permanent state of ‘fizz’; this noticed by others – less bothered by details; more able to take

the broader view of situations and people – very marked absence of worry during a particularly trying time – can be happy for a stretch even when circumstances are against it – no critical thoughts about others as I am too busy checking myself – am very much surprised in the improvement in my memory and new ability to grapple with problems – boredom seems to have vanished – the beginning of an experience of something solid holding my psychology together (very marked at times) – not so inclined to be apprehensive or agitated about problems of living – tremendous gain of mental energy (whenever I manage to keep the energy gained I become a much quieter person): Do you think my very happy life now and all the good things which have happened to me during the last two years or so are the result of the meditation?

SECTION 3. EXTRACTS FROM *Tertium Organum*

Chapter 13

Some causes and effects of phenomena are visible but others are hidden...

Let us imagine a savage studying a watch. He takes it to pieces, counts and memorizes screws, cogs, and even the number of teeth on each cog. But as he does not know what a watch is for, his efforts will bring him no nearer to telling the time by a watch...

In relation to nature a positivist is rather like a savage in a library. For him, the books are *things* of different shapes and sizes, but prolonged study brings him no nearer to understanding their contents because he has no idea that a book has content.

A man who knows that behind every phenomenon in nature there is an invisible noumenon, may eventually reach the essence of the thing. Every cipher can be read even without any key, but one must know that it is a cipher.

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The positivist does not recognize phenomena of different orders but regards all visible phenomena as effects of other visible phenomena and refuses to admit that causes not contained in this world could have penetrated into it, or that phenomena of this world could have functions outside it.

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Looking at life from the outside we see only physical phenomena, so that to a sincere positivist every metaphysical argument proving the unreality of matter or energy seems sophistry... When a positivist begins to realize this he feels that by his method he will *never* come nearer to *thought*, and he sees the necessity of a new method. Walls which he had built round himself begin to crumble one after the other, and infinite vistas of possible knowledge hitherto undreamed of, begin to unfold before his eyes.

He sees that manifested phenomena often disappear, like a stream gone underground, but that they continue to live in a latent form in someone's memory or in books, just as the harvest is latent in the seed. The Hindu idea of karma is a recognition of the unbroken sequence of phenomena. Each phenomenon is a link in the endless and unbroken chain stretching from the past into the future, now appearing in the guise of physical phenomena, then disappearing in the phenomena of consciousness.

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We may assert that the visible phenomenal world is a section of an infinitely more complex world which at a given moment manifests for us in our world. Nothing is more miraculous and supernatural than life. An enormous diversity of facts is apparent in one

street of a large town, but how much is hidden behind these facts and cannot be seen at all! How many desires, passions, and covetous thoughts; how much suffering, deceit, falsity and lies; how many invisible threads – sympathies, antipathies, interests – link this street with the whole world, with all the past and all the future! This world of noumena is infinite and incomprehensible for us. We can express our nearest approximation to truth by saying that each thing has an infinite variety of meanings and that it is impossible to know them all. Truth for us is a finite definition possible only in a finite series of phenomena. As Hegel wrote, ‘Every idea, extended to infinity, becomes its own opposite.’

The essence of a thing, i.e. the thing itself, is contained in the infinite number of functions and meanings of the thing which cannot be grasped by our mind, and it is also contained in the change of meaning of one and the same thing. In one meaning the thing is an enormous whole including many parts, but in another it is one insignificant part of a vaster whole. Our mind cannot bind all that into one, and the noumenal world remains incomprehensible for us.

Chapter 16

The *noumenon* of a man is his psychological life and all that it connects him with, but our perception of it is slight and imperfect since it comes to us through the phenomenal world. The characteristic feature of things belonging to the noumenal world is that they cannot be understood by the same method as things of the phenomenal world. We may find them by means of mental deduction or analogy; we may feel them and enter into some sort of communication with them, but we cannot hear, weigh, touch or measure them. They do not belong to the world of phenomena and cannot be perceived by us *objectively*. It is just as impossible to see *an emotion* as it is to see the *value of a coin*. You can see the inscription but you can never see its *value*. The grooves of a gramophone record are not sound and nothing can be heard merely by holding it close to the ear.

As man contains in himself two worlds, the phenomenal and the noumenal, the study of man provides the possibility of understanding the relationship of these two worlds in all nature; although in defining the noumenon as psychological life we take only one of its innumerable facets, since the number of meanings of one and the same thing in different sections of the world must be infinitely great and varied.

We must remember that the noumenon and the phenomenon are not different things but different aspects of the same thing, and that every phenomenon is the *finite* expression of something *infinite* – the three-dimensional expression provided by our brain, nerves, eyes and fingertips.

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