

29 June 1964

## READING 8

In order to understand and experience completely the Seven Steps of the Ladder of Self-realization it is valuable to form some picture of the enormous difference of Time-Scale between the three worlds – those of bodily mechanisms, sensory perceptions, and ‘Moments of Truth’.

Imagine a clock face with three hands, beating seconds, minutes and hours. Only in the ‘clock of life’ the difference in the beat is much greater – roughly comparable in each case with the number of seconds (3,600) in an hour.

Further, we must borrow from the Theory of Relativity the idea of Action, as ‘Energy multiplied by Duration’. In the diagram we show three circles, concentric because simultaneous. Round the outer circle the ‘hour hand’ moves, measuring heartbeats (c/s – cycles per second). The *duration* of the big cycle is a life-time of  $10^{9.3}$  seconds or about 75 years. The bodily mechanisms are geared to cycles of heartbeat and breathing, and when these wear out a new body is needed.

The ‘minute hand’ is moving much faster, beating kilocycles (kc/s – 1,000 cycles a second), and lasting a day of 24 hours. It records the ordinary psychic mechanisms of perception by the brain, i.e., sensory perceptions. These are delicate mechanisms, easily tired, so they need about 8 hours rest in every 24.

Within this circle of sensory perceptions is an emotional mechanism capable of much greater energy (Mc/s – Megacycles or 1 million cycles per second) and far more evanescent. It may be registered as an instantaneous flash or may be momentary (3 seconds) or last half-a-minute (30 seconds) or 5 minutes (300 seconds). If it could be made to last 3,000 seconds or about 3/4 hour it might change our whole lives and all our customary attitudes.

We might say then that the ‘seconds hand’ of our clock is registering ‘*Moments of Truth*’.

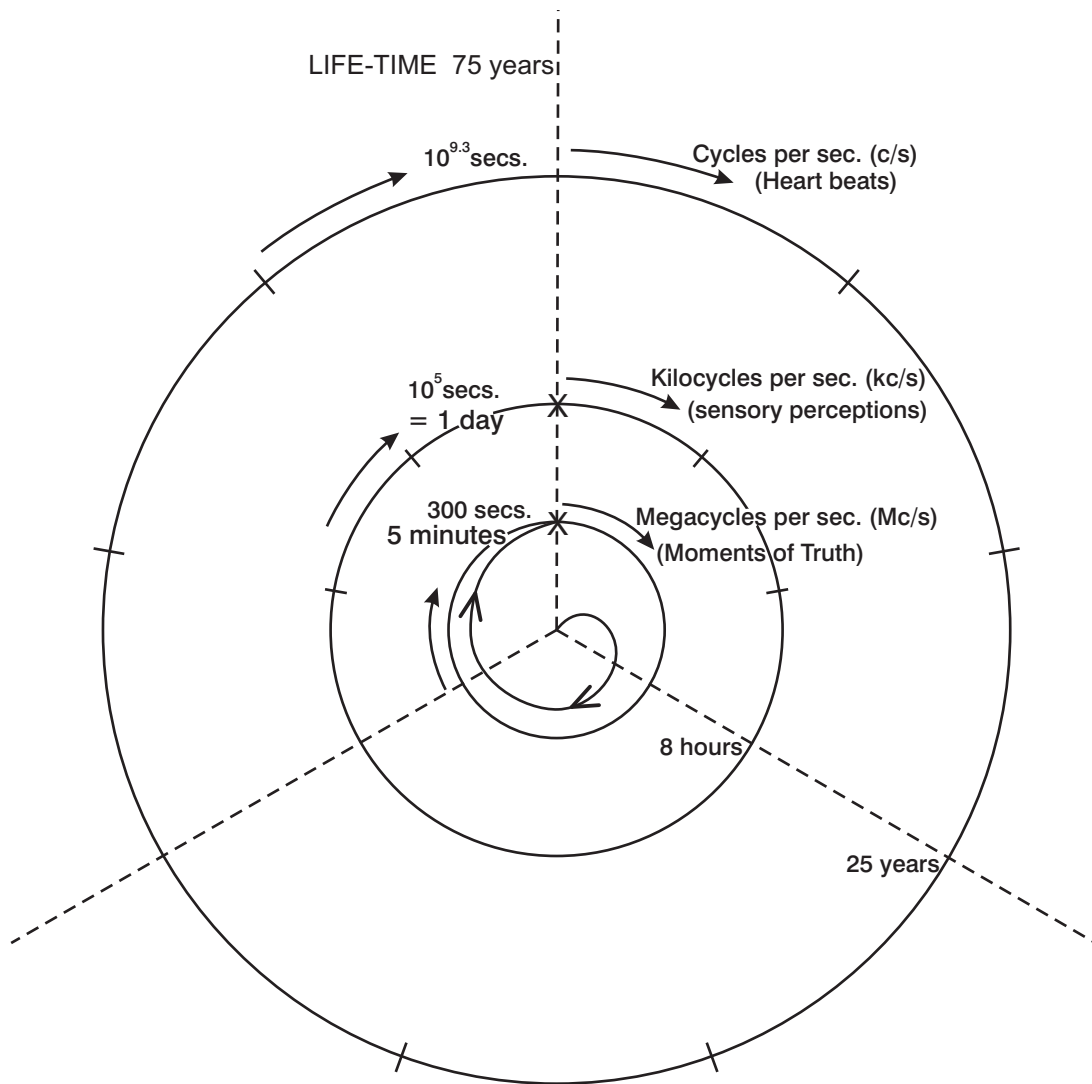
Should anyone ask how (in view of the vast machines which are needed to generate megacycles per second) one could possibly conceive of their production in the human nervous system, we might give the following answer: A million cycles per second might be produced not by revolutions at that speed, but by a million small electrical circuits interconnected and firing *simultaneously*. This is quite possible in the brain, where each nerve cell has many branches making contact with other cell bodies by means of tiny terminal buttons or ‘synapses’; where every small nerve centre has thousands of individual cells; and where very many such nervous centres form part of a huge circuit such as the ‘limbic circuit’, which carries the main instinctive drives, like hunger, thirst, reproduction and so on. It’s a thought!

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Experiences of transition to the Moment of Truth, and back again to the ordinary world of sensory perceptions, have often been well described. You might be interested to recall these three accounts from very different sources:

### 1. from ‘*Experimental Mysticism*’, *New Model*, p.334.

The new sensation of ‘I’ during the first experiments, as far as I can remember it, was a very terrifying sensation. I felt that I was disappearing, vanishing, turning into



Note: It is a great mistake to think of the difference between these three circles in terms of speed. It is a matter of different pitch, as in music. Or you can think of machines burning different kinds of fuel, the powerful one at the centre burning super-octane, the middle one petrol and the outer one coke.

nothing. ... But it is remarkable that later, in subsequent experiments, the same sensation of the disappearance of 'I' began to produce in me a feeling of extraordinary calmness and confidence, which nothing can equal in our ordinary sensations. I seemed to understand at that time that all the usual troubles, cares and anxieties are connected with the usual sensation of 'I', result from it, and, at the same time, constitute and sustain it. Therefore, when 'I' disappeared, all troubles, cares and anxieties disappeared. ...

**P.343.** Later he describes the return to the ordinary perceptual world:

The experiments almost always ended in sleep. During this sleep I evidently passed into the usual state and awoke in the ordinary world, in the world in which we awake every morning. But this world contained something extraordinarily oppressive, it was incredibly empty, colourless and lifeless. It was as though everything in it was wooden, as if it was an enormous wooden machine with creaking wooden wheels, wooden thoughts, wooden moods, wooden sensations; everything was terribly slow, scarcely moved, or moved with a melancholy wooden creaking. Everything was dead, soulless, feelingless.

They were terrible, these moments of awakening in an unreal world after a real one, in a dead world after a living, in a limited world, cut into small pieces, after an infinite and entire world.

## 2. from Emily Bronte's *The Prisoner*

But first, a hush of peace – a soundless calm descends;  
The struggle of distress and fierce impatience ends.  
Mute music soothes my breast – unuttered harmony  
That I could never dream, till Earth was lost to me.

Then dawns the Invisible; the Unseen its truth reveals;  
My outward sense is gone, my inward essence feels;  
Its wings are almost free – its home, its harbour found.  
Measuring the gulf, it stoops, and dares the final bound.

And then the painful return:

O dreadful is the check – intense the agony –  
When the ear begins to hear, and the eye begins to see;  
When the pulse begins to throb – the brain to think again –  
The soul to feel the flesh, and the flesh to feel the chain.

**3. The Shankaracharya's story** depicts the reverse process and describes the descent of a Divine being from the Real World into the world of sensory perception (Maya) with loss of memory and consciousness, and later the sudden re-awakening. He told this story as an illustration of the truth that 'Time has different values':

Lakshman, the brother of Rama, told him that he would like to see the great illusion of Maya – the Maya of Rama. Rama replied: 'You will get into trouble through seeing it, so I shouldn't bother about it.' Lakshman replied: 'I'm quite sure it won't affect me, and I'm still curious to see it.' So Rama said, 'All right, you'll see it by and by', and left the question open. They went to the river to bathe. When they had finished bathing and both were coming ashore, Rama said: 'My brother, I've lost my ring, do you think you could dive for it?' He went and dived for the ring; at that moment he lost his consciousness. When he came out of the water, he was in a different land, it was a beautiful countryside. He met there a beautiful woman, and they settled down together, established a house and lived like householders. He begot four sons; and when he became an old man he caught malarial fever, developed a cough and eventually died. But his sons took him to the river to immerse his body in the water, and as the body submerged, at that moment Lakshman again came out of the water, and out of Maya. He went to Rama with tears in his eyes and repentance in his heart, but still didn't remember what had happened. But Rama said to him, 'You wanted to experience Maya, illusion. Now you have the experience.'

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Discussion

Does this help you to answer some of your questions and explain certain of your experiences?

The point about the simultaneous cycles shown on the diagram is that, according to the Shankaracharya's System, the perceptual world of ordinary life can co-exist with the Emotional world – the life of the householder is compatible with the Spiritual life. There is no transition from one to the other and therefore no conflict and no 'agony'! This is the art of living. To repeat last week's quotation from his talk with me:

A man can live in the world, be in the world, and also come out of it and enjoy the Higher Emotion ('Bliss') in himself without any action in the world, and this can be simultaneous.

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