

23 January 1967

READING 1

Some of us have talked together during the Christmas holiday and have agreed that what we all chiefly need is *singleness of aim* which eventually must eliminate all dualism and conflict. I quote from Mr. Allan's formulation just received:

There are many good reasons, the New Year for instance among them, why we should at this moment examine our position as individuals and as members of this organisation centred at Colet House. We cannot do this without reminding ourselves, constantly rediscovering, what our objective is. We all have our own aim, but how often do we define it with clarity and with honesty? How frequently does it guide and govern our daily actions? A little self-searching on this point might prove very profitable, for if this aim of ours is not clear and constantly before us, how can we expect to achieve it? Single-mindedness, judging from biographies, or even from one's own acquaintances, is perhaps the attribute which contributes most to the achievement of material success. Why should it be any different if the aim is spiritual rather than material?

One thing that seems to have struck many of us recently is the recognition of the continuity of the spiritual life. This life runs continually throughout our ordinary day. All too often we forget it completely, sometimes we feel it running parallel with our daily activities but far too seldom do we accept that the two are one and must be one if life is to have meaning. Dualism in the spiritual and material life is something to be shunned at all costs for it makes it impossible to apprehend unity or achieve Self-realization.

He goes on to remind us of the Gospel story of the 'tribute money' and of many remarks and illustrations from the Shankaracharya underlining the essential unity of external and inner life down to quite small matters. For example: 'In answer to a question as to whether drinking alcohol was bad, the Shankaracharya once replied – "How could there be anything bad in creation? Nothing is bad if taken according to measure. Of course if one takes more than one needs, then anything could be bad."'

Guided by such advice we aim, not at some rigid and artificial code of behaviour, but at a state of Being which is entirely appropriate to any situation and takes everything 'according to measure'. The most practical guide to bring us to that happy state of Being is the understanding of the 'LAW OF THREE'. In the 'common life', undisciplined and untrained people are exposed to an unending struggle between activity ('Rajas') and inertia or restraint ('Tamas')– between two forces without the third. This is the arid and disappointing world of 'scientific' duality – excitation and inhibition.

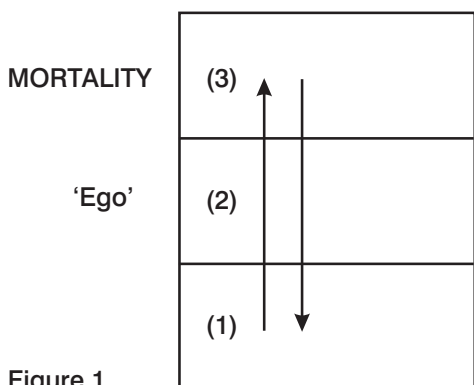


Figure 1
Opposition of Activity & Inertia

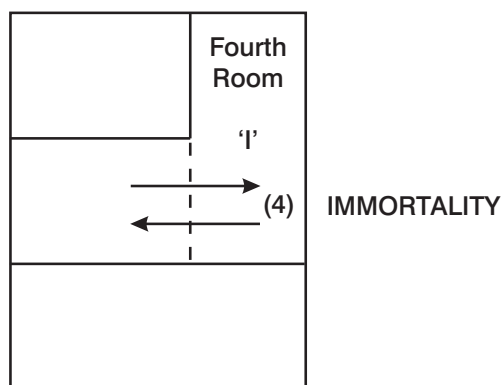


Figure 2
The Flow of Mercy (3rd force in this triad)

How much of *our* days are spent like that? But with the memory of the Fourth Room and an established connection with the Source of everything good, a consistent supply of the third force ('Sattva') is available. With increasing concentration of this 'Elixir', life is completely transformed, even though nothing external to ourselves may have changed in the least degree.

Figure 1 also shows the familiar 'three storeys', comprising (as we said last term) all the sensations, feelings and thoughts which enter consciousness, giving rise to the feeling of 'ego' and the so-called 'psychology' of everyday life. In fact it is not psychology but mechanics, and it is transient and *mortal* because dependent on the mortal body.

Nevertheless it gives us something to start on – a *basis for observation*; for those sensations, feelings and thoughts are manifestations of three basic divisions of the nervous system:

Top Room: Voluntary Division (observation and voluntary action). This room by itself is not designed for 'thinking' but for *control* – the basis of attention and Will – which depends on *Knowing by observation*. 'Animals know, but only man can know that he knows'. Controlled attention brings into play the intellectual parts of all five centres.

Middle Room: Autonomic Division (Higher neurochemical regulation, the basis of our desires – our 'emotional life' – the emotional parts of the five centres). This is not under our control.

Lower Room: Spinal (The co-ordination of local bodily mechanisms and the mechanical parts of all the five centres which go on without attention).[†]

The controlling centres or minds (Figure 1) in each storey are organised but not integrated together, like separate Government Ministries often at odds with each other, and poaching on each other's preserves. This is the underlying cause of the mental and moral chaos we see everywhere around today. *Unity of control* is achieved through Self-knowledge, by *integration* at certain key points, like co-ordination between Ministries and a 'Cabinet' responsible to a Sovereign or President. This is the proper work of a Fourth Way School and leads to permanence – even Immortality.

(Discussion of *general* idea)

During the present century all the necessary facts have been discovered by the disciplines of those sciences concerned with man (and those species which approach him most closely); but these facts remain clothed in complicated specialist language and play no part whatsoever in the practical conduct of human affairs. Are we content to remain in that 'Dark Age' of ignorance, like a man on a raft, who though surrounded by water, is dying of thirst? We now have more than enough Knowledge about those key points where integration is possible, and those of us who want to, can go on to study this practically.

Some very full and recent answers to questions sent direct from New York to the Shankaracharya, are a most valuable guide, provided we understand his terminology. Referring to Figures 1 and 2, he describes '4 levels':

1) '*Physical*', 2) '*Subtle*', 3) '*Causal*', 4) '*Divine*'. The first three correspond closely to the

[†]This has a *passive* ('Instinctive') mechanism consisting of inner reflexes by which the body adapts to external changes; and an *active* ('Moving') mechanism providing for the rapid execution of all learnt movements.

three divisions of the nervous system above described; but the fourth (of course) is totally unknown because not susceptible to study by current scientific method.

[These names are at variance with those in published accounts of our own System which must be *totally forgotten* if we want to understand him. In your discussion of *those* names (as applied to Figures 1 and 2) try to find examples from your own experience.]

Summary: The direction of the arrows in Figure 1 depicts the world of 'knowing' and 'doing' – the world of visible movement; in Figure 2 the still and unknown world of 'Being'. The difference in direction also illustrates the French proverb: 'L'homme propose; Dieu dispose'.

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