

21 October 1968

READING 2

[To Group-takers: Please keep this simple and avoid old names like ‘Centres’ and ‘Parts of Centres’ – for new Knowledge requires new descriptions.]

Obviously the chief characteristic of a ‘mind-body machine’ (or large computer) would be its rejection of anything new, anything for which it has not been programmed. What it rejects will be entirely predictable; it’s always the same whenever we try to introduce new ideas or old ideas in a new way. In fact, when we ourselves first met with the True Knowledge during the 1930’s, we raised precisely the same objections, asked the same questions, behaved quite as predictably. Those who were determined to understand it, at whatever cost, are still here today; the others from time to time went off somewhere else. The Shankaracharya often says that all possible questions have already been put many times, so all the answers are known. All this is beautifully illustrated by the reports from last week’s meetings; but one cheerfully admits that everything is now much better than it used to be, for you are all much more knowledgeable and intelligent than we were! So let each one just try not to think and behave like an automaton at these meetings and we’ll be away to a good start.

Each of our main functions, thinking, feeling, instinct, movement, sexual function and the rest, has the same three levels as the whole house – mechanical, emotional and voluntary control. The mechanical part of our intellectual function is our chief danger; this part is made to sort, label and catalogue impressions and should *never* be allowed to think for us; it should simply supply the necessary information. It is called the ‘*Formatory Function*’ because it is a law that the *mind becomes what it takes up*. The story is told of a person going to a wise Man to get the Knowledge, who was asked first of all to mention anything he had seen on the way. He said the only thing he could remember was a monkey sitting in a tree and making offensive gestures; so he was asked first to go and get that monkey out of his mind. After an hour he returned bathed in perspiration and saying the monkey was only becoming bigger. He was told never to look back on what had grown up in the course of many lives, but to look always forward and upward, for if not attended to, the monkey and other sub-human features would go away or die of starvation.

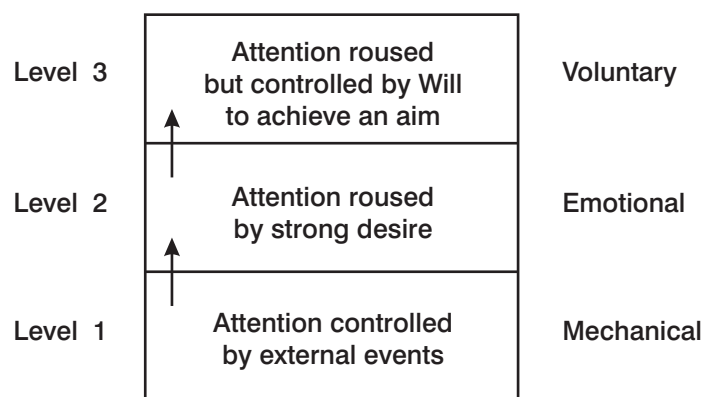
We must therefore set our sights on what we want, and set our sights high. We know very well what the view is like from the top of the mountain for we’ve been up near there many times. Consciousness (the view from the top) has these well-defined characteristics: one has a glorious sense of Being; of actually living; of intense individuality, but an individuality which is shared by everything in creation and is in no way separate from anything. At such a moment one is in everything and everybody, and everybody is in Oneself.

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PART 1

From that vantage point let us consider the question of *Attention* about which many questions came up last week. The same diagram (Figure 1 of Reading 1) will give us quite enough theory – for *Attention has to be practised and not talked about*.

In the natural order of man there are three levels of attention (see Figure overleaf). Each of



these again has three sub-levels. Practically all the degrees of attention usually observable belong to the three sub-divisions of Level 1, and people naturally vary in their capacity to attend in particular kinds of situation both innately and as a result of training and environment. Level 2 always gives the subject and the onlooker an impression of discovery or of genius – something out of the ordinary. But if not controlled, supplied with the necessary technical skill, and linked to an aim, it can either dissipate in dreams or can be dangerous as in the expression ‘genius is akin to madness’. The great breakthrough in Science or Art comes from the individual in whom all three levels of attention work beautifully on demand.

(Discussion. Let each person give examples from their own speciality – something they know and can do well.)

PART 2

What is it that enters at the moment when we are entering Level 2 and spoils all further attention?

We have two very clear examples from the Olympic games last weekend; for at that height of achievement we can be confident that the machine has been brought to near perfection. But what happens on the day?

In his first effort at the long jump, the Texan rocked the world with a jump of over 29 feet which ‘killed his opponents’. The holder of the gold medal, our Lynn Davies, said: ‘I can’t go on after a jump like that’.

He sulked and stopped trying, although if he’d been thinking of his country instead of himself he might well have got the silver medal. This is a striking example of what we call ‘*Identification*’ – one of the two chief obstacles in the way of Attention.

The next example shows both this Identification and the other obstacle which we call ‘*Negative imagination*’:

The surprise of the women’s 800 metre semi-finals was the elimination of Yugoslavia’s Vera Nikolic, the world and European record holder, who curiously ran out of her race after some 300 metres... The reaction of the Yugoslav girl, who had been training furiously for her event, became even more dramatic... She was seen shortly afterwards leaning dangerously over one of the bridges... Fortunately she was pulled back only to roll on the ground tearing at her hair in anguish. Yesterday she was flown back to Belgrade.

Maybe we shan't ever know exactly what form her imagination had taken.

(Discussion of more ordinary examples of 'Identification' and 'Negative imagination' within your own experiences.)

PART 3

The remedy against these obstacles, and the means of achievement of further natural degrees of attention which each of us possesses (*in potentia*), lies in the top storey (Level 3). We need to set up here an *observer* who can be totally passive and just see things as they are – a lookout man in his crow's nest. It is particularly important that this man (who is only a servant) should realise his own ignorance and should not attempt to interfere. He sees, but does not try to do anything. *Doing* belongs to a still higher level of control.

So now we come to our own use of the word *attention* which is supernatural and depends upon access to the Fourth Room (Figure 2, Reading 1). This is the exclusive meaning which we, at our meetings, give to the word Attention, for it 'can' in time include any of the natural kinds that we may want to cultivate.

This Attention follows from the accumulation of a certain kind of energy – the 'Energy of Being', which is our nearest equivalent to the Sanskrit word 'Sattva'. It must be clearly distinguished, by taste, from the two other kinds of energy – one called Rajas or 'Rage' (excitement, movement, actions, disturbances) and the other called Tamas (negative reaction, inertia, spiritual ennui, fear, dejection). The lookout man in his 'crow's nest' can, with instruction, learn to see every situation whether within or outside himself, in terms of different concentrations of these three elements. For those who like a visual picture, the man with Sattva looks on a world bathed in a clear and luminous sky-blue colour; the man with Rajas sees red; the man with Tamas sees only a bilious yellow-green or only a colourless grey.

But the Shankaracharya constantly urges us not to stop on the way even to study the Three Gunas (or in Christian terminology the 'Three Persons of the Trinity'). Our business is with *Unity* itself. As the Lord Krishna says to Arjuna in the 14th Chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita*:

O Prince! He who shuns not the element which is present, and longs not for that which is absent; who maintains an attitude of serenity; who is not disturbed by the elements, who realises that it is only they who act and remains calm; ... and he who serves Me and only Me, with unfaltering devotion, shall overcome the three elements and become One with the Eternal. For I am the Home of the Spirit, the continual source of Immortality, of Right Action, and of Infinite Joy.

[Caution: Please avoid equating the Three Gunas with the three storeys of the house. Each of the three rooms may have its variable proportion of the Gunas. In the Fourth Room everything is *One*. The main theme of this Reading is that a well trained automaton can take one through life quite efficiently living in the lower storey without any knowledge of the rest of the house, but for finer work living and conscious men and women are required.]

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