

18 November 1968

READING 6

PART 1

For the moment we have got what we need from the simile of the three-storeyed house, and your probing questions have shown that it has its limitations; a house is a three-dimensional thing and it's hard not to think of it spatially.

But, like the other similes and pictures we use, it is ultimately derived from a Universal Symbol which can take us further. This Symbol derived from Higher Mind (that is, men above the level of No. 5) consists in the first place essentially of a centre of light or energy from which radii rays conduct a two-way stream of energy emerging and retreating, as in the expansion and contraction of a universe. This is the vision seen by the mind when it is *still*, yet fully awakened, and there are vivid descriptions like this by Plotinus:

For light everywhere meets with light; since everything contains all things in itself and again sees all things in another. So that all things are everywhere, and all is all. And the splendour is infinite... There each part always proceeds from the whole, and is at the same time each part and the whole together. For it appears indeed as a part; but by him whose sight is acute, it will be seen as a whole.

(*Ennead* 5:8)

In describing Creation, our System says that the Absolute by His Will creates all worlds and that these worlds of the first order are eternal and unchanging, with no limitations like time or space or change. The Shankaracharya, too, in his recent talks about the same Symbol speaks of the Creator (Purush) and of His creation (Para-Prakriti) as the blueprint or unmanifested universe. But as the mind of the observer begins to ask further questions, it begins to *move* and with its movement everything in the Universe appears to move with it, so that it sees the universe as changing in *Time* (which is the measure of motion). Now *all movement in Time is circular*, and is governed by one of two Cosmic Laws – the Law of Octaves about which you will be hearing; this the Shankaracharya's System calls the Apara-Prakriti, the dance or drama of the 'Manifest world of Nature' which (being circular) he says, is 'repetitive'. Naturally the lives of men are repetitive like everything else. As the Greeks put it:

Since the soul (of man) is immortal and has been born many times; since it has seen all things both in this world and the other, there is nothing it has not learnt. No wonder, then, that it is able to recall to mind goodness and other things, for it knew them beforehand.

(Socrates in Plato's *Meno*)

It might be said that in pursuing so extensively the repetitive cycles of successions of phenomena on all levels of the universe, the current scientists No.1, 2 and 3 have completely forgotten Newton's words:

It is not to be conceived that mere mechanical causes could give birth to so many regular motions... this most beautiful system of the Sun, planets and comets, could only proceed from the counsel and domination of an intelligent and powerful Being.

(*Principia*, Book 3)

*

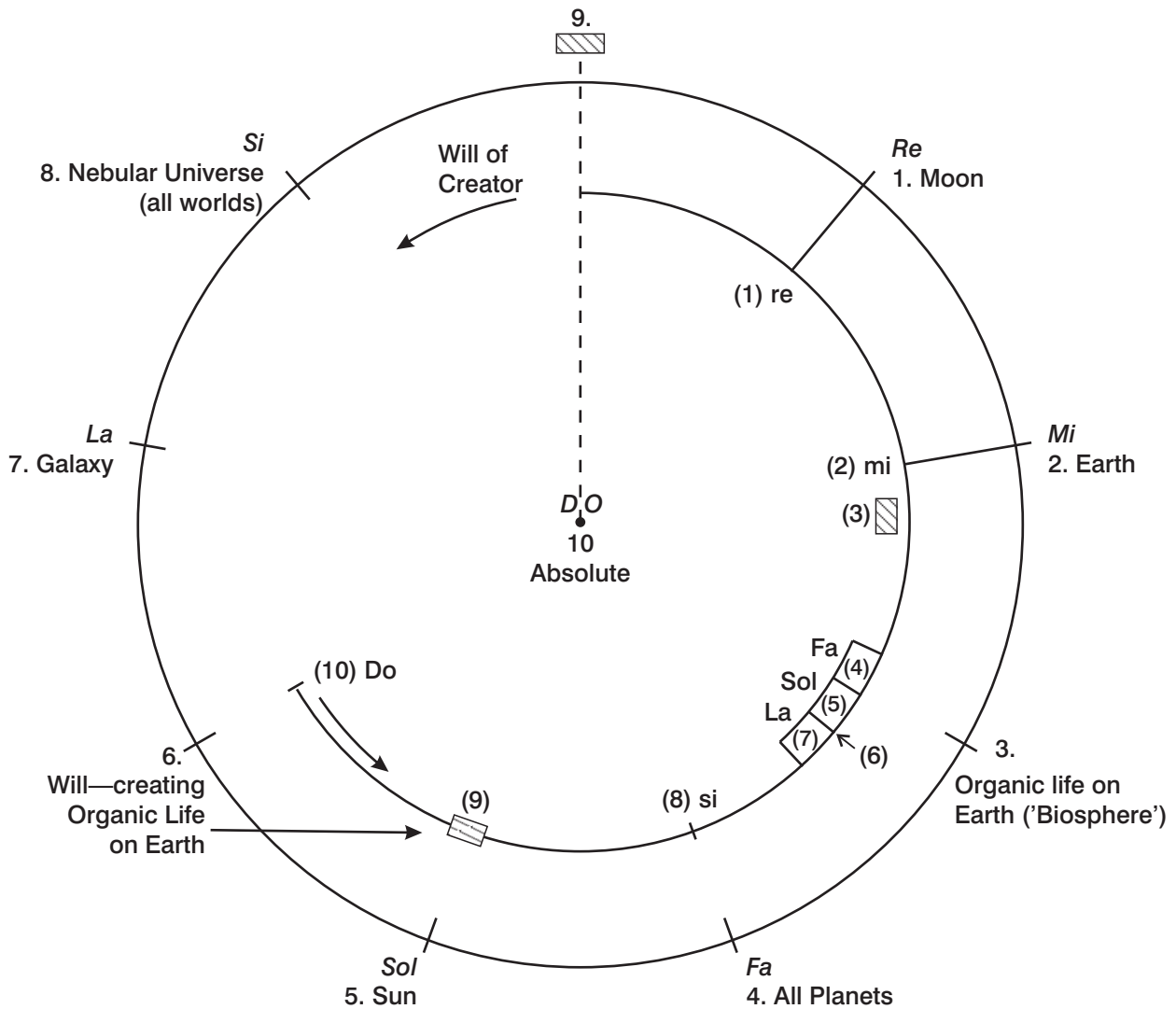


Figure 1

PART 2

With these remarks in view we can now use the Symbol to take a look at Creation from the point of view of men living on this tiny planet earth (Figure 1). If we ask ourselves the question, 'What is the world?' (as we've so often done in the past), we discover that (just as when we asked, 'What is man?' and found that there were seven distinct levels of men), so there are seven levels of world. Firstly, there is this earth (2) which is most intimately 'our world', and within its sphere of influence its single satellite the moon (1). But the earth is part of the Planetary world (4), which Newton wrote of, and that again is part of the world of our Solar System (5). But our Sun is an average star among the uncountable stars of our Galaxy, the 'starry world' or Milky Way (7), which is one of an unlimited number of Nebulae in the 'Expanding Universe' (8); but only a little more consciousness will show us the Universe as one Whole (just as a car is one whole consisting of many parts), and this 'Whole Universe' we call the Absolute.

(Pause)

Now (with still minds) we can look at these seven levels of the Universe in the manner of Plotinus as 'always there', and the seven 'worlds' as radii rays proceeding from a centre; or we can look at them as part of a repetitive process of creation, proceeding from the point 9 in a counter-

clockwise direction. In the main Ray of Creation one sees that there is no mention of 'man' on this planet (or any other planet of any other of the infinite number of possible rays). If we want to find a place for 'man' on earth we must consider a subordinate ray of creation proceeding from its creative principle, our Sun, at first Unmanifest (10), but with the conscious purpose of creating (9) a Biosphere or Organic Life on a planet, which is able to sustain it by appropriate conditions of temperature, humidity and atmospheric composition. The three levels of Organic Life (7), (5) and (4) are 'Man', 'vertebrates' and 'invertebrates' (our old friends 'man, sheep and worm'). At (6) perhaps starts the 'nitrogen cycle' enabling plants (3) to fill the 'interval' which makes animal life possible; the dead bodies of living things enter and nourish the earth's crust (2), and it is said that their 'life principles' feed the Moon (1).

(In the Discussion we must start by reminding ourselves of any facts we *know*, leaving what we don't know till later.)

PART 3

We can now return to see the fuller meaning of the three-storeyed house with which we began this term. We could if we liked, use this picture as a 'big house' to contain the main Ray of Creation, but, as was said, mankind is too insignificant to appear on that scale. Instead we can show the smaller creation proceeding from the level of the Sun (Figure 2).

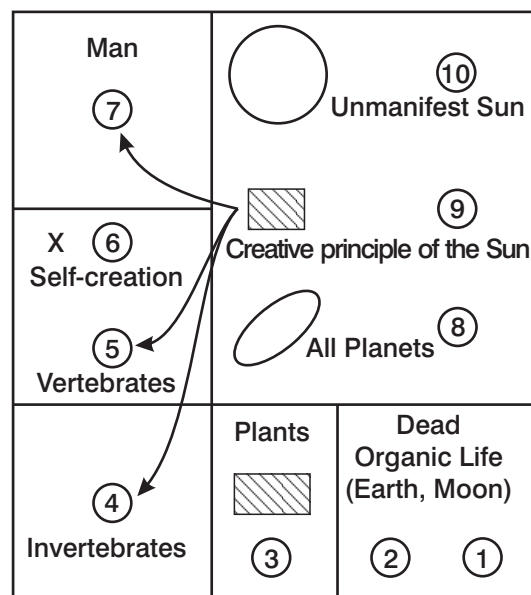


Figure 2

A man is not an isolated unit; nothing in the Universe is isolated from everything else. We sit here on earth in our small solar system in one arm of the Milky Way; and the matter of the intermediate worlds penetrates the matter of which each one of us is composed. The genus *Homo sapiens*, the self-creative Being, was the result of all the experiments in the Great Laboratory of the Biosphere. While Nature brought man to this point so that he has all the necessary ingredients at his command, she leaves individual man to attain his full stature as a three-storeyed creature by his own efforts.

PART 4

Our meetings are so often spoiled by dualistic arguments batting some idea back and forth like a shuttlecock across the net of ignorance, that we are most indebted to Mr. Rabeneck, of New York, for the following:

Dualism is the chief 'idol'; let us free ourselves from it.

In one of his later works – a lecture published in 1913 (not translated into English), P.D.O. indicates how Sanskrit words and concepts can help in freeing us from dualistic thinking:

(Translation of Russian Text)

We have no other way of thinking but by concepts, by *words*. And we always forget that words are only conventional abstractions corresponding to actuality very rarely, and then quite inaccurately.

Our weak and limited mind, when thinking about the outer world, has no other instrument to reason with but *concepts*. And we want to picture to ourselves the world as consisting of some kind of entities corresponding to our concepts. We have become used to thinking in opposites. To every *thesis* we have an antithesis. To every proposition – an opposition. We are wont to say: life and death; truth and lies; love and hatred; good and evil; heat and cold; freedom and predestination, etc. For our *logical thinking* opposites are necessary. This is the first, and perhaps the main fault of 'three-dimensional reason' of the 'Euclidian mind'.

Actually, the world does not consist of pairs of opposites. It is made up of unities. But our mind cannot perceive things in terms of unities. One of the necessary preliminaries that permits the mind to function is the division of the world into an innumerable quantity of 'pairs of opposites.'

...

A man governed by his intellect that uses concepts, and his language made up of words corresponding to these concepts, cannot get out of this conventional and unreal *dualistic* world.

However, this is a peculiarity of only European thinking and European language. The Ancient East knew how to think differently and created a language capable of conveying widened concepts that contained both *thesis and antithesis*.

This is why it is so difficult to translate into our European languages words and expressions of Eastern Wisdom. For instance, the word *Karma*. It is incomprehensible and untranslatable because it contains two of our *opposite* concepts that for a European language remain quite uncombinable, namely: *free will and predestination*. The law of Karma views life as the interaction of predestination and free will, influencing jointly every given moment. This is incomprehensible to the European mind. One seems to be excluding the other. In Ancient Indian philosophy one complements the other, one could not exist without the other. Where there is freedom, there is absence of freedom; where there is life, there is death; where there is being, there is non-being. And another untranslatable word, *Sat*, meant being combined with non-being.

In a number of instances we also know this. For instance, heat and cold viewed *as perceptions* are different phenomena; viewed as physical phenomena they are just different degrees of *temperature*. In this case a word has been found that contains both the thesis and antithesis – *temperature*.

Life and death are not opposites; together they form one whole. And this we can neither understand nor name; here we have no uniting idea, no *uniting word*. Our weak mind cannot conceive life and death as a *unity*. Their duality seems real to us. In actual fact, the opposition between life and death is as unreal as is the opposition between hot and cold.

(P. D. Ouspensky, *About 'Breaking Point'*, St. Petersburg, 1913.
Trans. N. Rabeneck)

CONCLUSION

What we so greatly need is a new set of concepts describing the third element which unites each pair of opposites like 'temperature' in the above example, or Sattva (between action and reaction) in the Shankaracharya's System. This would be an excellent way of beginning to study the other Cosmic Law, the Law of Three.

* * *

