

22 February 1971

READING 3

PART 1

It is urgent for us to find a realistic way of translating His Holiness's conception of the three worlds – physical, subtle and causal (which we are experiencing *all the time*), into terms which will enable us to communicate with each other on the subject. Each world has its own range of space-time which, though they bear a constant relation to each other, appear to us (when we begin to observe them systematically) unrecognisably different.

Keeping to the time-component at first, we can distinguish between ordinary '*Physical Time*' by which we regulate our physical lives, and '*Psychological Time*' which governs all our internal world of sensations, thoughts and feelings. We need to have good clear examples of the transition between one and the other, as when we wake from sleep or go into a dream (whether by day or night); and each of us has thousands of such examples.

Every twenty-four hours we experience the transition from the world of night to the world of day; and as we open our eyes each morning we suddenly realise that all that was going on in our minds was illusion – 'just a dream'. But when we are told that the ordinary daytime world is also 'just a dream', we won't accept it at all!

We can progress by systematically observing the physical change of consciousness we experience every morning and relating it to the less common moments of spiritual awakening – rather as Mr. Ouspensky describes in Chapter 7 of *A New Model*.

To help us to get into the habit of observing and remembering the characteristics of our own changes of consciousness, we can pick up many descriptions from ordinary novels as expressed in the more lucid language of professional writers.

This one comes from a contemporary Penguin, called *A Change of Heir* (p.89) by Michael Innes – the pen name of J.I.M. Stewart, a University Reader in English Literature at Oxford. His hero is a not very successful young actor called Gadberry; and this makes the example especially interesting to us if we are trying to regard life as a drama. It expresses the way in which an anxiety state (such as we all suffer from time to time) is symbolised in the form of a recurrent dream (the precise state and dream-form being, of course, peculiar to each person).

It was long before Gadberry went to sleep that night. But as his thoughts were tedious and unprofitable to himself as they occurred, it is not likely that they would interest others. He did eventually pass into slumber – yet only to suffer – seemingly again and again, with no more than minor modifications – a dream by which he had not been troubled since his early days at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. He was on-stage, and he kept drying up. His lines just wouldn't come to him; he missed cue after cue; the prompter whispered to him in vain; his fellow actors performed prodigies of improvisation on his behalf, inventing whole loops of dialogue that should have enabled him to collect his scattered wits and take up the thread again. Yet it was all to no purpose. He had an uncertain notion that what he was involved in was a play of Shakespeare's, but all that would come into his head was Shakespeare's own words for his situation:

As an unperfect actor on the stage
Who with his fear is put beside his part...

That was exactly it, and there he was in the middle of some incomprehensible action, which went on and on forever, with the curtain obstinately refusing to come down on it.

But suddenly the curtain *did* come down. Or rather it had become a different sort of curtain, and something quite familiar was happening to it. It was his bedroom curtain; a housemaid was drawing it back upon a wintry scene; the tray with his early-morning tea was already standing by his bedside.

Gadberry glanced at his watch, and saw that it was just seven o'clock...

[Pause for Discussion]

When this example was read at three meetings last week we were rather surprised by the almost total lack of comment, of interest, or discussion based on people's own examples and illustrations. Yet don't we often get the same feeling as Dickens' Scrooge when he woke on Christmas morning after his night with the ghosts?

Yes, and the bed-post was his own, the bed was his own, and, best of all, the time before him was his own to make amends in.

The one comment worth quoting was this by Tess Skeaping, who makes the obvious leap from the physical to the spiritual experience of waking up:

The transition from the world of dreams, does this come when one wakes up and feels 'Here and Now'? This feeling comes as such a relief, like a glass of water when one is thirsty.

Splendid, that's it. The transition from the ordinary daytime state to a third, the new state of Consciousness of the Self, is an extension of the ordinary routine one. Almost everyone experiences it for moments, and some wise people and artists have found ways of describing more intense forms of it:

My beloved spake and said to me, 'Rise up my love, my fair one, and come away.

For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle (dove) is heard in our land... Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.'

(*Song of Solomon* 2:10-13)

[Further discussion: Chief point is that when we get this psychological impulse to wake up, we mustn't slip back into the past which is over and finished. We must instantly 'rise up and come away'.]

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PART 2

In order to get some idea of what is meant by 'different worlds with incommensurable space-time', let us suppose that there are two observers, A and B.

A is limited by the physical body, the duration of one cycle of which is 70 or 80 years – what we call his 'expectation of life'. His time-units are *days* – 'The days of our life are threescore years and ten'. Everything goes on very slowly here; seeds take a long time to come up; the effects come often years after their cause.

Now take observer B (subtle) who uses, not physical space-time, but psychological space-time. The duration of each of *his* cycles (that is, their 'expectation of life') is one day of 24 hours,

and his time-units are *moments* of three seconds' duration. There are nearly 30,000 such 'moments' in a day, as there are 30,000 days in 79 years. That was what was meant by saying that, though the space-times of these worlds are utterly different, yet they are inter-gearred. Things in the subtle world happen very quickly, they arise and disappear; single events are too quick to notice – repetition is the order of the day (shown in the above example of the actor's dream, for dreams at the deepest, most primitive level tend to be recurrent). The subtle world is so volatile and evanescent that the only lasting things are habits engendered by repetition. One must realise that to get rid of a single bad habit, one must patiently construct an opposing good habit by daily repetition.

Proceeding one step further, imagine some observer C on the *Causal* level. *His* cycle will last 3 seconds – a 'moment' – the time in which a dying man has to review his whole life at that last crucial moment. His time-units are ten-thousandths of a second (or tenths of a millisecond).

What sort of 'time' is this? Highspeed photography shows that it is exactly the duration of the 'leader stroke' of a lightning discharge. Yet it has been recorded that the Divine vision, quick as lightning, can change a person's whole life (see especially William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience*).

Incidentally the earth is moving at three times that speed in its orbit round the sun (3×10^4 metres per second). May be that's why we don't *feel* it moving, but only calculate its movement by watching the change of position of bodies outside the earth. It took astronomers many centuries to realise that it was the earth moving, and not the sun and stars; perhaps it will take centuries also before they realise that the moon and earth are growing, and not dying off!

CONCLUSION

This is by no means the whole story of course. It's only a beginning. But it serves to show how naive and ignorant our usual approach is when compared with that of great men like Mr. Ouspensky, and also the Shankaracharya, who has been trying to get us to understand this for eight years! Thus, leading up to the famous story from the *Ramayana* of Lakshman's dive for the ring, he wrote:

All events are manifested at the physical level, though their causes come from higher levels, and their effects pass on to higher levels also. But the units of time and magnitude decrease with rising levels. A thing that looks far off from the physical level, such as Self-realization, is not like that when seen from the subtle level.

(Record, 12 September 1969)

Until we make an end of futile discussions of big subjects like human fate, life and death, recurrence, Self-realization, etc. in terms of 'common time', we'll neither see the Truth nor make the grade.

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