

14 May 1973

## READING 2

### THE THREE WORLDS

#### PART 1

In last week's paper we described two maps which can be used separately for different purposes: one for describing the ordinary, obvious physical world of facts and science and education – a world governed by activity or ennui in which we ordinarily live and communicate with each other in common words; the other a mysterious private world in which we also live, but in which there is little chance of communicating with our friends unless we have a lot of Sattva.

Now I want to make the attempt to combine the two and try to communicate something of this mysterious inner world, which can light up our creative impulses, make the meditation go like a song, as well as start up unexpected friendships with almost anybody.

Figure 4 (overleaf) is a straight map showing nine rooms, those secrets of our own nature which we would gradually like to discover. But in order to see their relationship, we have to realise that the three rooms of the coarse physical world are small, limited and unimportant as compared with the vast unexplored regions of the subtle and causal worlds. Figure 5 is an attempt to express this fact, which is quite contrary to the ordinary views of people, particularly in this material age!

I may say at once that, though the Shankaracharya can be understood logically yet, for me, he speaks to this inner world – to the same part of me that responds to any work of art, or which brings an impulse to write a poem or paint a picture, as well as to love the Param-Atman in all its forms. As far as I know, His Holiness has never written poetry, composed music or painted pictures, yet he is 'an artist to his finger-tips', and his ashrams are nests of music and poetry and art. Only those who take his sayings at their face value are worried by the difference of race and background, and by the difficulties of translation. But in the subtle and emotional part of me, I find no barrier to mutual understanding, any more than I have found difficulties in talking with the Russian Ouspensky or the Turkish Resuhi.

With Figure 5 (overleaf) in view we could recall Plato's famous description in the *Republic* of the prisoners in the cave. Instead of quoting that, I will give you a few sentences from the letters of his great successor, Plotinus:

External objects present us only with appearances. Concerning them, therefore, we may be said to possess opinion rather than knowledge. The distinctions in the sensory world of appearance are of import only to ordinary and practical men. Our question lies with the ideal reality behind appearance. How does the mind perceive this ideal?...

Knowledge has three degrees – opinion, science, illumination. The means or instrument of the first is physical sensation; of the second logical dexterity; of the third intuition. To this I subordinate reason, which is absolute knowledge founded on the identity of the 'mind that knows' with the 'object known'.

There is a raying out of all orders of existence, an external emanation from the ineffable One. There is again a returning impulse, drawing all upward and inward toward the centre from whence all came... The wise man recognises the idea of the good within him; this he develops by withdrawal into the holy place of his own soul...

(Quoted in *Tertium Organum*, 2nd edition, p.241, & 1951, English edition, p.217)

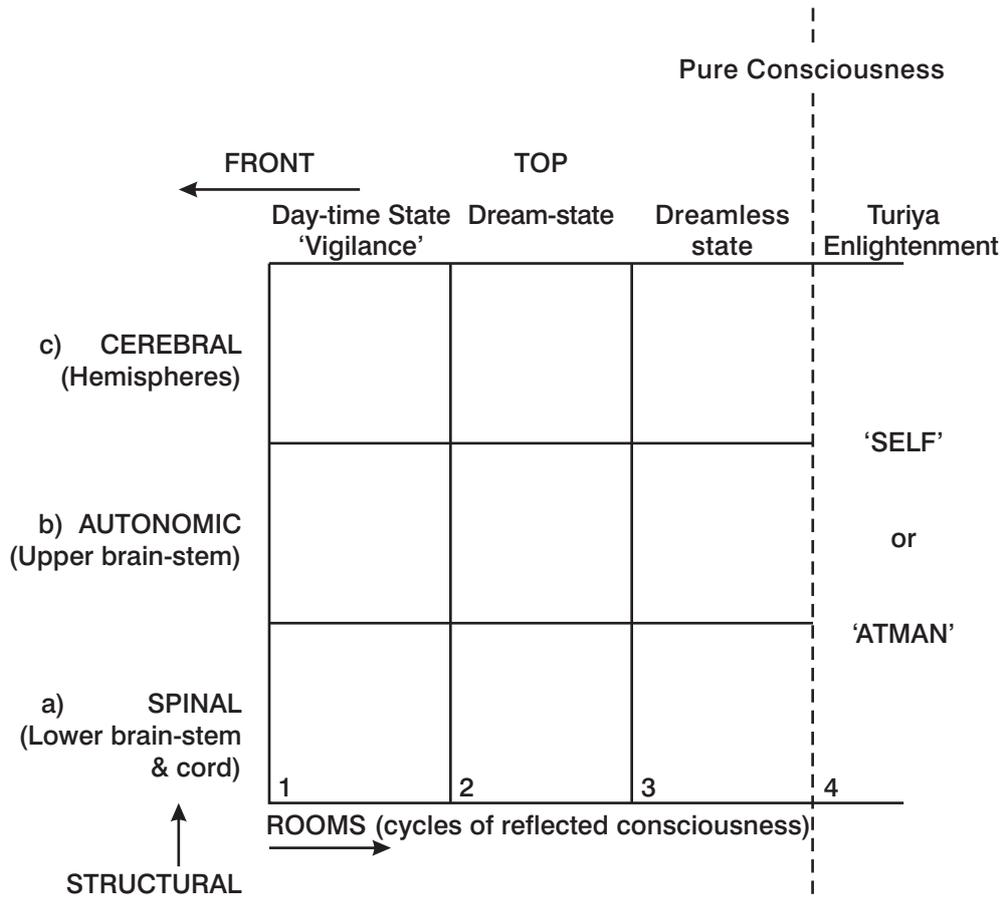


Figure 4

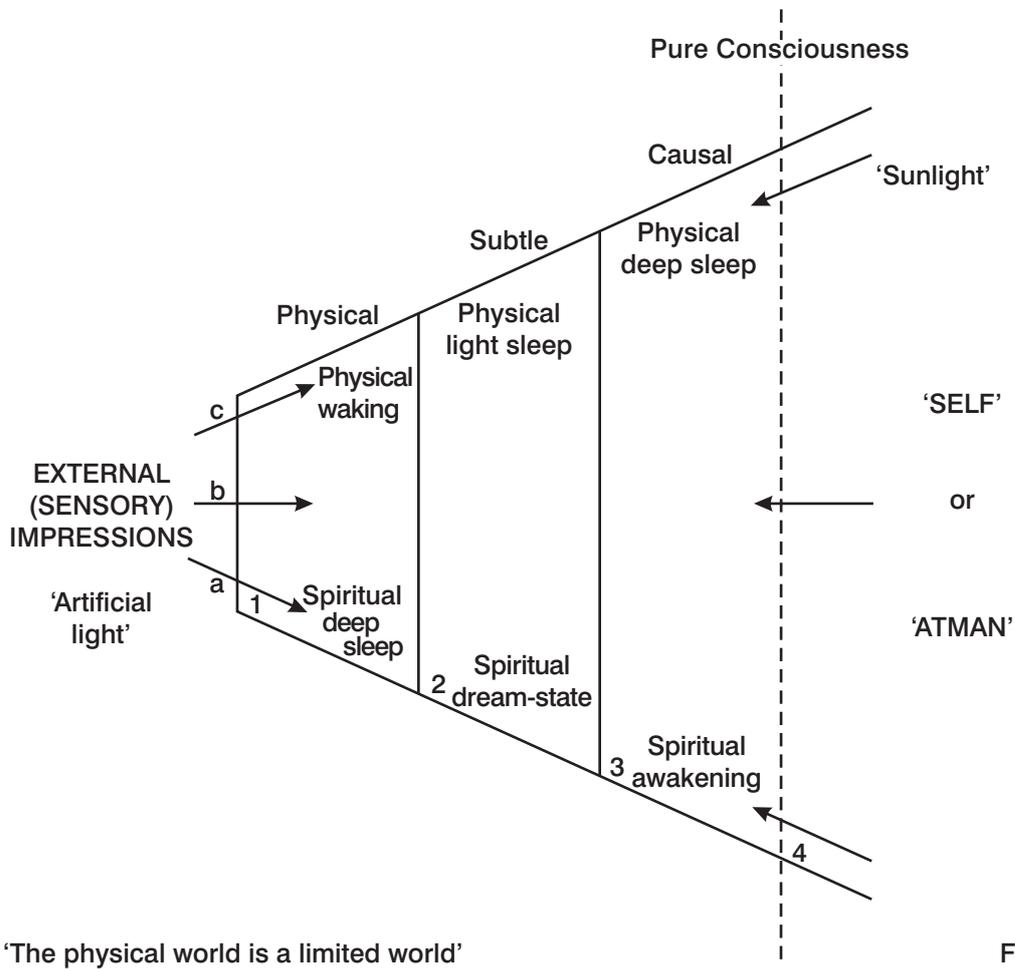


Figure 5

## PART 2

Which brings us to the next question: How are we to communicate with each other our experiences of the subtle and causal worlds? The language of logic here loses its meaning and must give place to a language of dreams, of stories, parables, allegories, myths and the various forms of artistic expression. That is why logical and scientific minds don't like it; they don't like venturing beyond what they call the 'facts of life'. The greatest writings in all languages (like the Gospels) get over the difficulty by using ordinary physical descriptions but with a symbolical meaning dependent on the understanding of the reader. But again, the logical minds which go in for textual analysis make hay of it all. We had better, I think, give some examples from a poet writing about poetry, and for this I choose passages from A.E. Housman's famous Leslie Stephen lecture at Cambridge (1933):

To me, the most poetical of all poets is Blake... because poetry in him predominates over everything else... Take this stanza addressed 'to the Accuser who is the God of this world':

Tho' thou art worship'd by the names divine  
Of Jesus and Jehovah, thou art still  
The Son of Morn in weary Night's decline,  
The lost traveller's dream under the hill.

It purports to be theology: what theological sense, if any, it may have, I cannot imagine and feel no wish to learn; it is pure and self-existent poetry, which leaves no room in me for anything besides.

Yet, let me add, at certain moments of awakening due to abundance of Sattva, this can seem to be a perfect description of that elusive 'Self' and 'leaves no room in me', either, 'for anything besides'; except that it contains a truth, so hard to express, that the 'God of this world' is seen in most religions or atheistic writings as an 'Accuser', in contrast to the 'truly unlimited benevolence of the Supreme Power', as one gets first-hand acquaintance with it.

The same lecturer, in quoting Blake's poem 'Hear the voice of the Bard' gives us another clue to what we are calling the 'Causal world':

That mysterious grandeur would be less grand if it were less mysterious; if the embryo ideas which are all it contains should endure form and outline, and suggestion condense itself into thought.

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## PART 3. PRACTICAL

Though all this seems so elusive, yet the Shankaracharya's recent description of the Ladder of Self-realization (as we go from left to right of Figure 5) is plain and simple:

Step 1 is '*Good Actions*'. This means that we do what we have to do in the best possible way – do our jobs efficiently and cheerfully. Perhaps we go out of our way to be kind; and if we get a 'good impulse' we try to put it into effect at the appropriate moment.

'Good actions' lead to *Step 2*, '*Good will*' ('benevolence'), good thoughts.

Increase of 'Good will' leads to *Step 3*, which is '*decrease in bad thoughts*'; and this decrease of negative, useless thinking and malevolence, is what puts us on *Step 4*, on which '*Sattva predominates*'.

This 'energy of Sattva' makes possible *Steps 5 and 6*, which have to do with the 'struggle for *freedom from identification* or self-involvement'.

The final or *7th Step* he describes as '*freedom from all thoughts about one's small personal self* and of the selfish benefits we might derive from our actions.

Thus the journey from left to right of the diagram is one of Liberation, giving up, relinquishing.

In some recent instructions to me by letter he said:

Giving up can be done emotionally and intellectually at all times and in all conditions. In this, there is no question of today or tomorrow, or of one or two hours or days in the week. Practise giving up *all the time*. You learn to consider your body, feelings and intellect as belonging to Param-Atman, and offering back all these to their real Owner. This is what 'giving up' means.

Again:

Is this 'giving up' the only way? No. Someone asked a Master the way to get to Param-Atman. The Master told him to run. 'Is running the way to Param-Atman?' 'Maybe, but not the only way. Service to others can also be one way, but not the only way. No one way is universal.'

Try this Ladder. But if you decide on it, keep to it and never abandon it. For, as he says:

Provided our determination is strong enough, a very little can achieve great results, because on seeing the invincibility of our determination, the heart of Param-Atman melts and He Himself comes to our help.

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A thought to carry in the mind this week:

This world wants your body. Well, serve the world with your body. But Param-Atman wants your love only. If you love Param-Atman, it would be Param-Atman who would then begin to serve you. As the *Bhagavad Gita* says: 'Through the inner ear of a Bhakta (devotee), I make my way into his Antahkarana (Soul) and sweep it clean.'

(Record, 4 April 1972)

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