

27 September 1976

READING 1

'THREE WORLDS'

INTRODUCTORY

At the beginning of another 'academic year', we need to take our stand on a broad level, the level perhaps of the majority of reasoning people today; no longer regarding ourselves as a small and exclusive sect. I can find nothing better for our purpose than this passage from last week's television interview with the newly-appointed Cardinal Hume who (whatever our religious beliefs or disbeliefs) has seemed to many of us a profoundly honest 'experiencer'. (*Listener* 23.9.76. p.357):

Ludovic Kennedy: I have read that there were times, and especially quite recently before you became Archbishop, that you were plagued with doubts. Is that true?

Cardinal: Yes, that is true.

L.K.: Can I ask you what were the nature of your doubts?

Cardinal: Well, I knew so many people who were people I admired and who were good and had no particular belief in God, or were not Christians. One could also see, at times, the terrible mistakes that Christians could make. But I think, more deeply, more fundamentally, God is not something to be experienced through our five senses – our eyes, our ears do not help us. I think it is natural that the relationship with God is always alternating between the presence and an absence. It is difficult to describe it. I know from my own experience that you have to go through periods of darkness in order to see a bit of light. It is like going through a dark tunnel and knowing, at the end, there is going to be full vision.

Though no longer plagued with any doubts at all, I have chosen this passage chiefly because of the sentence that, initially at least, 'God is not something to be experienced through our senses'. For this leads directly into the special teaching we've had on the simultaneous existence of three entirely different attitudes to the 'World' (sensory, subtle and causal) the understanding of which we now consider to be indispensable in achieving the unity of self-fulfilment. However much we subscribe in theory to this means of escaping from duality, in practice we don't seem to know much about it; we don't seem to know how to pass at will through the 'tunnel' to the light beyond, and *stay there*.

Let's try to emulate the Cardinal by asking ourselves some honest questions. Do we really know from *our own* experience:

1. In what way do we ourselves and our surroundings look different when seen from the quiet subtle level as compared with the ordinary sensory world?
2. What is involved in stepping out of the subtle world of personal psychology into the causal world and how do things look from there?
3. How much of the following passage have we proved for ourselves:

Q. (by the Head of the School of Meditation). At my last visit when you spoke of stillness (through meditation) you said: 'Your job is to provide "stillness" and make them give up.' Can you tell us more?

S. There are three degrees of stillness: The bodily rest of the physical realm, the mental rest of the subtle realm, and the spiritual rest of the causal realm. As far as the *physical realm* goes, everyone knows that after a full day's work one must get rest during the night; and even after a spell of exertion during the day one must stop to rest and gain energy to start again. Most people recognise that, although not everyone knows the art even of physical rest.

The stillness at the *subtle level* appears between the fulfilment of one desire and the start of the next one. This is the 'state of non-desire' which, provides rest of the subtle level. One stops all hankerings and the thinking process comes to stillness.

The peace at the *spiritual or causal level* becomes available when all activities of the physical and the subtle bodies – the physical desires, the feelings arising, and the thoughts motivated by desires are stilled. In that peace the True Self (the Atman) appears as the sole witness in its luminous glory; and observes the great stillness of the whole universe as one single unit where there is no play of physical, mental, or even emotional movement... One simply accepts everything without any rejection or opposition. These are the three types or levels of stillness which the school should provide for its members according to the varying needs of individuals.

(Record, 9 November 1973)

(See Note, below)

(Pause: possibly for a few minutes of silence and meditation.)

To the question 'Is our school providing this stillness at the subtle or psychological level which must be our starting-point?', one would say that even if the school may actually be providing the means for it, rather few people are using it for that purpose! If people could achieve this stillness at will they'd spend far less time in that dark tunnel and all those tranquillising drugs wouldn't be needed!

Now, it's been proved that you can't get it just by sitting still, for when you begin to move, when you go into action, bang goes the stillness. Yet this habit is avoidable; if one acquires control of the 'moving centre' (Mr. Ouspensky's term) or of 'Manas' (H.H.'s word) it is possible to do a full day's work carrying the stillness along with one. Then the half-hour that follows will be easy and natural, and ensure continuity of effort.

Strangely, one very effective way of reaching this 'second degree of stillness' is by *doing physical work with attention*, in good company and in special surroundings. That is the reason for certain experiments which we are proposing to you for this term.

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NOTE

The following quote from a 1919 essay by the late Nobel Prize winner Hermann Hesse (*My Belief*, Jonathan Cape 1976) about Dostoyevsky's saintly Prince Myshkin seems to relate to the above description:

Myshkin is different from others... for him the highest experience is that half-second of supreme receptivity and insight that he has experienced a few times, that magical

ability for a moment, for the flash of a moment, to be able to *be* everything, to sympathise with everything, to understand and accept everything in the world. There lies the essence of his being. He has not studied and accepted magic and mystical wisdom, not read and admired them, but (if only at very rare instants) actually experienced them. He has not only had strange and magnificent thoughts and inspirations but more than once he has stood on the magic threshold where everything is affirmed; where not only the most far-fetched idea is true, but also the opposite of every such idea.

He is saying that, until one has abandoned one's rigid attitude of personal approval or disapproval, one cannot get out of the incessant duality and transcend that magic threshold. This briefly is one answer to our second question (p.89).

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