

11 October 1976

## READING 2

### 'THREE WORLDS'

I selected the quotation from the television interview with the newly appointed Archbishop Hume because of his words: 'God is not something to be experienced through our senses,' for this leads directly into the special teaching we have had on the simultaneous existence of three entirely different attitudes to the world – sensory, subtle and causal, the understanding of which we now know to be indispensable in achieving the unity of Self-fulfilment.

We all have a great difficulty in seeing the relationship between these three worlds and the great differences between them; and this difficulty was expressed very clearly and vocally at both the New Groups last week. Take comfort, for this difficulty is natural and universal!

I would therefore like to lead up to the Shankaracharya's teaching and our own experience through Meditation by giving you certain descriptions by leading contemporary thinkers; for this concept of the three worlds has also emerged (in part) from the scientific world of today.

The mathematician, J. W. Dunne, begins his small book published in 1940 and called *Nothing Dies*, in this way:

Have you ever seen a miracle? No? Then imagine that the earth is at peace and that you are looking down from some high window upon the lights of a great city – lights radiating as far as the eye can reach – red, blue and green lights. Hark to the ascending roar of the traffic; pause a while, gaze and listen. What a whirlpool!

Now turn your head and glance upward. There twinkling remotely above are the silent stars; they are worlds, myriads of them. Look down and wonder, look up and marvel until you ask yourself in a sudden spasm of ungrammatical amazement: 'Where in thunder did this all come from?' But it is not merely the nature of this that exists which is miraculous; the master miracle, the entirely incredible thing is that there should exist anything at all. It is the ability to realise that fact which distinguishes man from sub-man, and you know in the instant when you ask your question that to talk of atoms and molecules is merely to shirk the issue... But if you are a natural philosopher you may emerge from that moment with a portion of the truth; you may suspect that *you* somehow are implicated in this tremendous pageant of appearances.

Now let us return to our high window. What is it that we are pretending you observe? – lights and colours and sounds. But this brings us up against a very important fact: there are no such lights or colours or sounds in the world dealt with by physical science. They are what are called sense-data. Data means, 'things given;' and all the non-physical elements in sensory phenomena are said to be 'given' because if you had never experienced, say, the redness of a field poppy or the sound of a tolling bell, you could never from other knowledge infer that there existed anywhere in the universe such extraordinary facts.

They are not physical, because to be physical means to be describable in the language of physical science; and no description of shifting stresses in an ether, no mathematical formulae, can provide a man who has never experienced redness or sound with the remotest conception of what these phenomena are like.

Some ten years later, the great scientist, Sir Charles Sherrington, in introducing a series of

broadcast talks called *The Physical Basis of Mind* was saying much the same thing near the end of his long life:

When I turn my gaze skyward, I see the flattened dome of sky and the sun's brilliant disc and a hundred other visible things underneath it. What are the steps which bring this about? The whole chain of events from the sun to the top of my brain can be expressed physically, each step being accompanied by an electrical reaction. But now there succeeds a change wholly unlike anything which led up to it and wholly inexplicable by us. A visual scene presents itself to the mind: *I see* the dome of sky and the sun in it and a hundred other visual things beside. In fact, I perceive a picture of the world around me.

When this visual scene appears, I ought, I suppose, to feel startled, but I am too accustomed to feel even surprised. It is a far cry from an electrical reaction in the brain to suddenly seeing the world around one with all its distances, its colours, and its light and shade... Aristotle two thousand years ago was asking: 'How is the mind attached to the body?' We are asking that question still.

Both these quotations illustrate the problem of the relationship between the physical or sensory world outside, and the subtle or psychological world within each of us.

In the same series of broadcast talks, the neurologist, Russell Brain, asked the question: 'Is it likely that physiology will ever throw any real light upon the relationship between the brain and the mind?':

I believe, that working in conjunction with psychology, it will. But you must not expect me to give a clear idea of how that will happen. I can only guess where present advances seem to be leading us. Think of a pattern; an atom is a pattern of electrons, a molecule is a pattern of atoms. There are patterns of patterns of patterns, and so on indefinitely. The most complicated patterns we know are in the brain. Not only are there twelve thousand million nerve cells out of which the patterns can be made, but nervous patterns exist *in time* like a melody, as well as in space.

If you look at a tapestry through a magnifying glass, you will see the individual threads, but not the pattern. If you stand away from it, you will see the pattern but not the threads. My guess is that, in neurology, we are looking at the threads, while with the mind – in psychology – we perceive the patterns; and that one day we shall discover how the patterns are made out of the threads.'

What he didn't realise then, but what recent researches are beginning to show us today, is that this division between outer and inner is dependent on our structure. For the noisy hemisphere containing the speech centres (the left one in the great majority of people) is perceiving the *threads* (in the outside world), classifying and communicating them by means of words; while the right hemisphere – the silent one – is leading inwards and searching for the patterns and the melodies. It wants to penetrate into the depths of the deep blue sea and come away from the surface ripples and waves.

Much more will come gradually out of this because it is directly observable by each of us whether we are scientists or not.

(Pause for discussion or silence)

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But enough of thought and theory about the three worlds which we are experiencing simultaneously whether we know it or not. We can now turn to our own experience since we were first given the Meditation in 1960.

We were told then by the Maharishi that when we sit to meditate, we first exclude, as far as we can, all bodily sensations. We choose a quiet place, shut our eyes, keep the body in a comfortable position so that it does not intrude. Next, we follow the rhythm of the Mantra through the psychological world of thoughts and feelings, memories and dreams, to the silent world beyond.

Subsequently, at every series of talks with the Shankaracharya we have had over fifteen years, we have learnt that the Meditation is designed to take us through worlds 1 and 2 – the physical and the subtle – to the silent causal world of unrealised possibilities. For world 3 (to use another metaphor) is like a flowerbed full of seeds, most of which have not come up yet. There we become aware of an everlasting Presence – the Self or Atman, the only true Consciousness permeating the Universe – which we can only discern in complete silence, inner silence as well as outer.

He has told us that the initiation ceremony we use now (exactly the same as that in use for centuries in India) is designed to take us *straight to the causal level*. Both agree that a period of meditation is like going into the treasury for the wealth and energy which we need to spend in the market place – the world of movement which is a compound of worlds 1 and 2

Let us try to do that together for a few minutes, merely allowing the meditation to work there as it was designed to do, and will always do if we let it.

#### MEDITATION

**N.B.** This paper is just for group-takers' consideration, not for reading yet at meetings.

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