



Listening to the Voice 17-18 February 2018

All the documents

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A) Visible / Invisible

01) 09.30 – Introduction

02) 10.00 – The 3 worlds (30’)

1) The Reality – the real invisible world of our origins: The Source - Essence – Emptiness – Imperishable – Permanent.

2) The physical material world in which we live: The Expression - making visible what is not visible (the Source). Incarnation. Perishable. Impermanent.

3) The abstract world of our representations: The Projection - our own construct.

Note that the projection is in most cases just an illusion unless it is built on the perception of world 1 (which would be nevertheless an illusion but yet on more “solid” ground).

1) The Source of life

Invisible – Our Essence

Emptiness which is Fullness

No way to represent it

*In this world there are two orders of being,
the perishable and the imperishable.
The perishable is all that is visible.
The imperishable is the invisible substance
of all that is visible.*

(The Bhagavad Gita)

2) Visible + impermanent

Nature - the world we see

Makes the Source visible

Signs that help us to grow

Incarnation: see and do / be

3) Our own construct

Our projections – fiction

The meaning we impose

The world of our making

The world we change

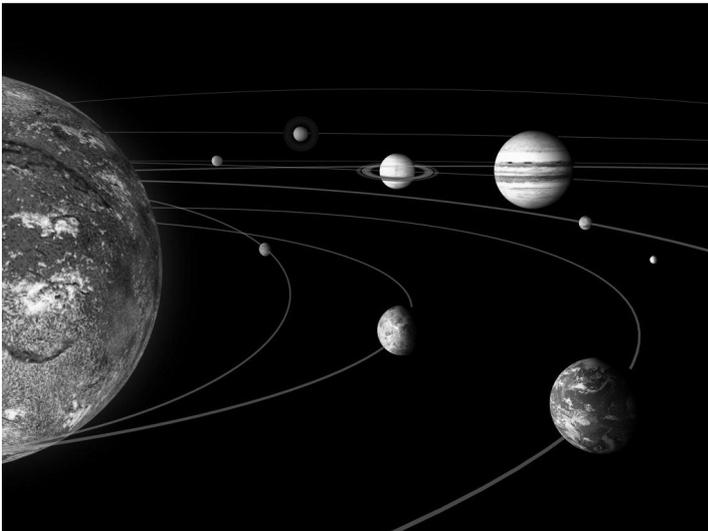
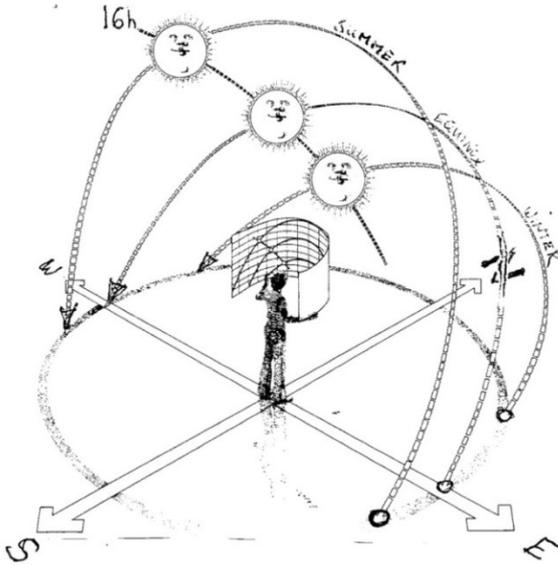
Q: Describe each of these 3 worlds. Open discussion.

Summary: World 1 is the only Reality. World 2 is its reflection. World 3 is our illusionary construct.

03) 10.30 - The great illusion (30')

1) The teaching of science and rational wisdom

What we see: the sun rising and setting => Illusion: the sun seems to circulate around the Earth.
Science explains the true pattern (not the illusion): planets are circulating around the sun. We believe it!



2) The teaching of impermanence

We observe the material world. The world in which we live happens to be an illusion when we believe that it is all that there is.

Philosophy and religion teach us that everything is impermanent and that everything is in constant transformation as an expression of what the invisible Source is. We do not believe it! We continue to act according to what we see. **This is the best way to get into trouble!**

Q: Why do we believe the former (science) and not the latter (spiritual teaching)? How can rationalism and deeper consciousness cohabit in our lives? How may we detach from our rational observation of appearances and act in tune with our inner perceptions that are principally in touch with their inner source, rather than just appearances? Open discussion.

Summary: The Source is the only Reality that makes us alive

11.00 MORNING TEA

04) 11.30 - Our true nature / essence (30')

Q: How do the 3 worlds combine in your life?

Illustrate each of the 3 worlds with an example taken out of your ordinary life.

Who do you believe you are? What is your essence?

Why don't we act according to this essence but only according to material commodities?

Look at how your past has defined in what you believe and how you understand the meaning of life: conditions of upbringing, opening or not to the sacred dimension of life, practical trajectory, material constraints, etc.

How much does it depend on us that we may choose to focus on the right source?

15' reflection 2 by 2, 15' sharing.

Summary: We tend generally to conform and we are therefore prevented from being / acting according to what we truly are.

05) 12.00 - Spirit and Matter / Form and Emptiness (30')

Comment these 6 statements (open discussion):

- 1) World 2 (Expression) makes world 1 (Essence) visible.
- 2) Form is impermanent, in constant transformation, fugitive: see plants, life and death, our own growth...
- 3) Emptiness is the Fullness that has no form. Form has no content but Emptiness.
- 4) We live as incarnated beings. We never stop creating forms (our acts and expressions).
- 5) Yet all these acts are just anecdotal. The true content (what truly matters) remains invisible.
- 6) Emptiness is form; form is Emptiness (Heart Sutra).

Summary: Our vocation is to give shape to Emptiness. This is the role of expression.

13.00 LUNCH

B) A space of infinite mystery

06) 14.30 - Questioning any thought that pops up in your mind (60')

Five statements:

- A) Our main obstacle to our deeper listening is our own brain that tries to be in charge but does not have the necessary skills to master all situations. Or it does it in the most reduced way: it eliminates many unknown possibilities instead of opening to them, because it behaves according to the limited patterns it already knows.
- B) We need to learn to create a space of silence in order to silence our mental functions and leave more space for listening to the inner voice of intuition, of imagination, of creativity, of clear-sightedness, etc.
- C) The power of doubt: the Reality is mystery. How could we master our path through mystery when the context is unknown to us? Unknown because it remains mysterious and always will be.
- D) Knowledge and Innocence as complementary attitudes. Doubt, ignorance and innocence are the best initiators for knowledge. Innocence is the true clean slate. Knowledge can never be grasped

because it is always in movement as a process of discovery more than as a content we can rely upon.

- E) Life is mainly awareness / being witness. Knowledge creates a false image of reality; it creates a screen that prevents us from seeing things as they are. Our own thoughts and projections create also a screen that makes us very often unhappy because we never stop judging what we experience as something that is not good enough. We need to learn to question all our thoughts until we see them clearly as just simple clouds that go through our mind or that do not obstruct any more our true vision (Byron Katie).

Q: 1) Reflect for a while on these 5 statements (A-E) – 5min. Then think of a precise situation of average importance in your life (neither insignificant nor vital).

2) Write down a few thoughts that come spontaneously to your mind about this situation. 10min, then we'll explain the next step. Do not read on before you do (2)!!

3) Examine then each of these statements not as a true description of the situation but as just thoughts your mind has produced, almost out of context. Observe them as just thoughts, as if they were clouds, or something that has popped up without much reason. See what they represent and how they are not more than thoughts: enjoyable as a creative exercise, full of vitality as signs of your own vitality (being alive), but very variable and impermanent, depending on external circumstances, on your moods, your expectations, your representations of what should be, etc. Be aware how often these thoughts make you unhappy. You may see how you would be much happier without them or at least with the contradictory thought (“all is good” instead of “I don’t like this”). Learn to question ceaselessly your thoughts.

20' reflection. 20' sharing.

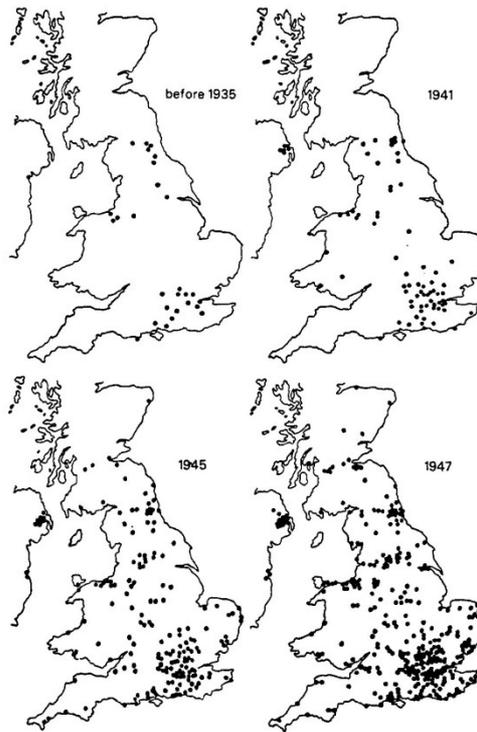
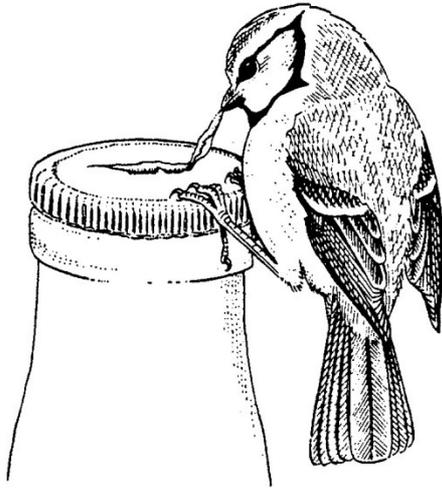
Summary: Questioning ceaselessly all our thoughts, this is the solution. While questioning our thoughts, we reopen the space for our intuition, imagination, creativity, clear-sightedness, etc. to become more active and bring more fruits.

07) 15.30 - The memory of the Universe (30')

Rupert Sheldrake is a biologist. He wrote a book: the Memory of the Universe. In a nutshell he says that forms take shapes under the influence of a sort of magnetic field which he calls “morphogenetic field” (i.e. “a field that generates shapes”) or simply “morphic field”. This morphogenetic field is exterior to us but it regulates the whole evolution of living species. We cannot see this morphogenetic field because it is not visible but it is nevertheless very much influencing how we behave. There is a Memory in the Universe (i.e. not in our own brain) that informs us of what other beings have discovered or learned in the past. Important mutations seem to happen as if geared from elsewhere.

For example one has observed that birds (tits) learn more quickly to open bottles of milk when other birds have already done so. Similar new behaviours appear at the same time in very different locations. As human beings we are informed of knowledge that seems to be stored somewhere in the Universe. This comes through intuition, imagination, creativity, clear-sightedness, etc.

When we are in touch with our true essence – world 1 - (not with our own projection – world 3) we learn to open to this source of inspiration that informs and forms us.



R. Sheldrake gives an example: In England tits learned to open milk bottle. This new behaviour spread through the country in the years before the war. During the war there were almost no milk bottles and this behaviour of the tits almost disappeared. In Sweden after the war it reappeared and the birds learned much more quickly how to do it.

Q: Do you remember in your life events when you suddenly knew something you never learned before, or when you understood something in a way that was not expected given what you knew, or when you imagined a solution to a practical problem in a way that seemed like miraculous?
10' reflection, 10' sharing.

Summary: Knowledge and wisdom are not in ourselves (not in our mind or heart) but in the Universe that communicates them to us.

16.00 AFTERNOON TEA

C) Many forms of listening

08) 16.30 - Listening to nature (60')

Nature is like the body of the Ground of Being (God, Brahman, Allah, etc.). It makes the expression of the Ground of Being (God) more visible. It reveals the Laws of Life.

Q: Go outside in nature, observe what you see as signs of transformation and notice 10 Laws of Life that impact on your everyday life. Write them own on a piece of paper.

Relate / compare with the laws of the 3 worlds.

40' alone, 20' sharing.

Summary: Nature is like the body of God: it makes Him/Her and Life visible. It teaches us the Law.

09) 17.30 - Listening to others (60')

Our attitudes toward others can be described as working along some of the following basic patterns:

- 1) **Judgement:** All criteria are already established by me! The image I have of these other people is the reality I have constructed. All is in my hands. I can measure them at my own yardstick.
- 2) **Projections – Expectations:** I have a scenario and a plan (my own individual and egocentric project) into which these other people have to fit. If they do not, they are wrong and I'm angry at them.
- 3) **Fascination whatever they are or do:** The law of diversity. I'm fascinated. I focus on my own experience of what (I believe) they are. I enjoy it whatever it is, because I'm only involved as an observer.
- 4) **Knowing deeply - loving - loving what is:** As I am open to anything, I may be in communion with them. I am moved by love that reveals to me how they are precious, although so different from what I had expected.
- 5) **Being one with them - knowing Life:** I see the Life in them that animates them as it animates myself. We are all in the same stream. There is indeed no precise limit between me and them. I experience Life. They are just, like me, a fugitive expression of a wider Reality. They are me / I am them.

Q: Illustrate each one by a story taken out of your own experience.

Groups 2 by 2, 30', then short sharing.

Summary: we tend to construct an image of others more than we truly listen to them and know them.

19.00 – DINNER

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SUNDAY MORNING

07.30 – MEDITATION

08.00 – BREAKFAST

10) 9.30 – Generosity of the Universe (15')

We live in abundance. 10min silence. Concentrate on the generosity of life. Everything that matters is given.

It does not mean everything is easy. It means Reality is generous and provides much more than we believe it does.

We neglect most of its gifts because we always expect something else than what it gives us or because we consider it normal to be showered by so many gifts.

Summary: we live in a world of abundance, not penury, as we too often believe

11) 9.45 – The inner voice (15')

This is just an information how St John of the Cross describes the perception of the divine in our lives (Ascent to Mt Carmel). Just a few points as a summary:

- 3 powers of the soul: 1) comprehension, 2) memory, 3) will. They correspond each of them respectively to the 3 virtues: 1) comprehension allows us to develop our capacity for faith, 2)

memory allows us to develop our capacity for hope, 3) will allows us to develop our capacity for charity.

- Different forms of knowledge come to the mind: 1) natural i.e. through the senses or 2) supernatural i.e. not through the senses; they happen in the heart-mind.
- There are mainly four types of knowledge that can be received by the understanding: 1) visions, 2) revelations, 3) interior locutions, 4) interior feelings.
- The visions (1) can be either (A) as if they were a real material perception by the eyes or (B) be on the contrary independent of any material appearances when they happen in ourselves or offer for example a vision of God.
- The revelations (2) (which are the ground for the spirit of prophecy) can either (A) be a form of knowledge we acquire or clear-sightedness that concerns simply the reality of our world, of our being, of our actions or (B) be a revelation about the secrets of the invisible divine world.
- The interior locutions (3) can either (A) be a form of inner discursive deduction by our own mind, or (B) be perceived as real words that teach us a truth, or (C) impact directly by their words on our being by transforming one aspect or the other of our person.
- The interior feelings (4) concern either the will or the soul. They are a change of quality in our intention or in our being.

What is interesting in this description of natural and supernatural ways of perception - as St John of the Cross, who was an accomplished mystic, explains them - is the fact that they combine all forms of perceptions: by the senses, by the intellect, by inner feelings, by grace, etc. All these many forms of perceptions form a whole that allows us to become aware of a reality that is not immediately perceptible. This means two very important truths:

- 1) that all our faculties contribute to our capacity for listening to the voice,
- 2) and that everybody is gifted of these same senses and abilities if they want to develop them and remain open to this subtle form of knowledge and inspiration. Good news!

12) 10.00 - The 7 gifts of the Spirit (60')

(Six of these gifts are mentioned in Isaiah 11:2)

They are gifts by grace. God is a self-giving actor in our lives. We have nothing to achieve. The gifts of the SPIR-it are in-SPIR-ations to become more deeply ourselves.

1) Wisdom

Hebr.: *Hochmah* = 1) wisdom. 2) skill, dexterity.

This is the ability to see the Universe as God sees it. It is not our own wisdom. It is an insight into the meaning of what is, of what matters.

2) Understanding / Intelligence

Hebr.: *Binah* = understanding, intelligence, discernment, prudence.

This is the ability to understand the functioning of the world. Observing what happens truly (not our projections). Intelligence means "read inside"; it is a deep understanding of the inner nature of processes, of relationships and of things. It makes sense, it gets the true picture.

3) Counsel

Hebr.: *Etzah* = 1) counsel, advice. 2) deliberation, purpose, plan.

This is the ability to be inspired and have insights about what to do and how to behave, or how to be.

4) Strength / courage

Hebr.: *Gemurah* = 1) *strength, power, might*. 2) *valour, courage*. 3) *mighty acts*.

This is an inner strength, not a dominating one. It is the power of the powerless that we inherit when we detach from our need for control, prestige and recognition. It consists in resilience to be able to resist adversity and remain anchored in our true roots. This strength is freedom from fear that allows us to act despite our own weakness. It is imagination, creativity, trust, the gentle power of life that is liberated when we don't resist love and when we detach from false attachment.

5) Science / knowledge

Hebr.: *Dahat* = 1) *knowledge, act of knowing*. 2) *intelligence, understanding, wisdom*.

This is the ability to discern and recognise the energy of Love and Beauty in everything that is part of Creation. This form of science goes much beyond what we understand as science in a material way. It opens us to the explanations of the main shaping energies in the Universe. It allows us to reconnect with the laws of harmony and love. It provides us with the gift of judgement that consists in seeing what is as it is. Clear-sightedness allows us to recognise the Divine in the creation and in each expression of life. This new understanding generates wonder.

6) Piety

This is the awareness that our being depends on deeper roots that nourish us. This is the awareness of our own being rooted in God who is the essential energy. Reality (the Ground of Being) is mystery. Piety calls for wonder and gratitude, love and awe. This is the energy of our search for deepening the mystery of Life. It involves not only God as a source of life, but also the whole creation as a body that is nourished by the same roots. Piety generates communion, compassion and gentleness. We are all one. Compassion is our anchorage in our origins.

7) Awe

Hebr.: *Yirah* = 1) *fear, terror*. 2) *reverence, awe*.

This is the discovery of our own weakness, poverty and humility. Humility is not a negative attitude; it is just the awareness of our limits. When we know these limits, we are able to live life to the full and be fully ourselves. Awe is not fear because we know that Life is bringing harmony into our experience. It anchors us in a secure ground. This is the opening to grace that is the true provider of our joy, peace and inner strength. Without awe there can be no hope, because hope relies on our trust in the active forces of love and harmony that shape the world. Awe is indeed the source of true courage and strength that relies on the trust in the loving power of Life. God is merciful. In Hebrew the root of the word "merciful" means the womb. God is a Mother that gives birth to us. The awe is the reverence for the mystery we discover when we are given birth to. This mystery is gracefulness, i.e. pure gift.

Q: Each of you chooses one of the 7 gifts to be reflected upon. Form groups of 2 so that you will share with someone who has chosen a different gift from yours. About 40' sharing i.e. 20' for each gift. Illustrate and share with the other about the chosen gift referring to experiences taken out of your daily life. Back in the group, we wish you to present to the others what the gift means to you and to share shortly about what strikes you most.

Summary: The gifts of the Spirit are no personal skills but transpersonal energies that shape our life when we make ourselves receptive to them.

11.00 – MORNING TEA

13) 11.30 - Listening to the voice in our dreams (30')

Of course, there is one voice that talks in us, over which our conscious willpower has no effect at all, and that is our nightly dreams. They are autonomous and obey their own laws. Already in the 1960's, scientific experiments had shown that all people dream for approx. 50-80 mins. in 6-7 dream periods, each night, even though many cannot remember having dreamed. Yet when in those experiments one group was wakened as soon as rapid eye movements (REM) were detected, which is when dreaming occurs, and another was allowed to complete their dreaming sequence and then wakened, the first group showed signs of mental breakdown within 4-5 days, whereas the second group had as much interruption to their sleep but was not so affected. So we need this time of dreaming to stay sane.

Why is this so? There seems to be an intelligence in the psyche that is responsible for the dreams: a purposeful numinous power which has the spiritual function of widening our perspective of who we think we are, by including the information from areas of the psyche to which our conscious ego has no access in waking life. We usually refer to this as the Unconscious which is both below (our instinctual nature of which we can be only partially aware), and above (the telos or meaning of our lives in becoming whole and complete).

Dreams speak to us through *symbols*, an archaic language that exists in all cultures and at all times, and so transcends all conscious verbal barriers. Symbols originate from two sources: 1) the individual's personal experience and 2) the universal deep sub-stratum of the collective human experience since time immemorial. Can we say that dreams are driving at something, have goals?

It seems there is, yet not derived from the conscious ego, but rather from some unknown, unconscious source that aims at the emergence of a psychic totality in which all aspects and qualities of the personality are contained. So why do we generally take so little notice of our dreams? One reason may be *fear*, for trying to listen to the voice of our dreams might mean we have to consider all sorts of surprising facts about ourselves, and the dialogue between the conscious part, our ego, and the unconscious side of our psyche which sends us the dreams, can be demanding, even relentless. A more obvious reason is that we pride ourselves on our rational, logical, scientific kind of thinking, and this blocks us from our dreams which use an older language: that of symbols and allusions. We can literally have our soul be throttled by collective attitudes and views that deny this deeper reality, causing illness from depression to spiritual numbness.

What are the fruits of undertaking the work of listening seriously to our dreams?

- Taking into consideration previously unconscious attitudes, we grow in wholeness.
- When the ego and the unconscious part in us move into opposite directions, the result is anxiety and tensions. When the ego learns to dialogue with the depth within, growth toward the true Self results.
- Our growth depends on the superior knowledge of the Unconscious. Yet the ego has an equally important role in consciously integrating this deeper knowledge into our lives so it can bear fruit.
- Because dreams are not limited to our personal life, through universal symbols they relate us to issues in life beyond ourselves.

Whenever we do decide to try and listen to the voice of our dreams, there are some elements that help us with learning to understand its language, so different to that of the conscious ego:

- The first question we ask is always "Why did this particular dream come at this time"? The understanding of a dream has to feel meaningful to the dreamer and be confirmed by subsequent events. There seems to be an unconscious source of wisdom that helps to see

ourselves in a wider perspective and that works toward the healing and wholeness of the personality.

- The nature of dreams are *compensatory*; that is to say the dream might show an opposite personality trait or a situation to that of waking life: This is not to be taken to be *the* truth, the truth lies somewhere between what I consciously already know and what the dream points out. The dream offers us a wider view to consider; it would be quite false to consider the presentation in the dream to be *the whole truth*. Rather, it presents another unknown side for our consideration.
- Almost all dreams are primarily about the inner situation of the dreamer's personality, his/her problems and his/her relationship to others and the world, rarely about purely events "out there". Equally the people who appear in dreams are fragments of our own personality as a general rule. We are far more complex than we suppose, and we need to know and integrate them in the totality of us.
- Certain prominent typical dream figures are significant for our psychic well-being. These are the archetypal personifications that are part of our basic human nature, and they are mentioned briefly here. However, to go into detail would require a workshop by itself.

The Shadow: an inferior figure of our own sex, representing that in us of which we are most afraid of and would rather not face, including aspects that are repressed in our own culture. It is not without value. Feared and rejected it becomes evil, recognised and accepted it plays a part in the total psyche. Being shown our shadow in dreams compensates our limited conscious attitude and we are less likely to intend good and do evil. Wrestling with the Shadow is the equivalent of "Taking the beam out of our own eye". The unity that embraces and transcends both the ego and the shadow is often represented by an element in the dream of something round or square, a universal symbol of balance and harmony.

The unconscious counter-sexual element that belongs to our wholeness: Anima/Animus. The Animus, the masculine component in a woman, holds the key to development as a person in her own right and could appear as any kind of man: guide, healer, sorcerer, demon, father, husband, lover, etc. The Anima figure in a man's dream represents the feminine component and is the intermediary for relating to himself and the outside world. Both anima and animus are enormously important for the total psychic health of a person.

The Dreamer: sometimes part of the action in the dream, sometimes as spectator, standing for our conscious ego self.

Non-human dream symbols, landscapes, natural occurrences like fire, flood, earthquake...

Some dreams deal with the connection between the visible and invisible worlds. With surprising frequency, people dream of a reality beyond time and space, such as seeing departed relatives in a new reality, or their own death either as calamity or as extremely beautiful. In dreams where the dreamer is confronted by a "Shadow" figure, the killing of the dreamer is not to be taken literally; rather it suggests a profound transformation. Mostly in dreams to "die" means "to change".

To get to the meaning of a dream, we need to :-

- Know and keep in mind the current conscious situation of the dreamer.
- We may need to look at several dreams over time to discern its meaning.
- Gather associations to all parts of the dream material.
- Be serious about looking at our dreams over time.
- We need to develop knowledge and erudition for the more archetypal material, such as myths and religious traditions.

Somehow, in our dreams the whole meaning of life is involved. Light and darkness, Logos and Eros, Love and Hate, Good/Evil belong to it. There is a centre in the psyche that holds

the opposites together dynamically. This centre has always existed, is at work now, and yet has to be born into a conscious relationship to the Ego, in which the ego recognises that it, the ego, is not the master in the psyche, but the servant to this Centre, which can be called the True Self or God within. In any case, it is forever the Subject of our experience and never the object which we can fully know or possess. Understanding the Divine as the inner source of life and life energies and as the one who speaks through our dreams, leads us to know that our wholeness is like a circle including everything within us, where everything is held in union in the Centre, and our completeness includes our imperfection, and ALL is embraced.

D) Three special powers or gifts

They are not powers in the sense of domination but they are powers in the sense of service.

14) 12.00 – 1st power: Inner understanding of what is / clear-sightedness (30')

Direct knowledge, clear understanding of what is observed or has happened or why people behave the way they do may often help us to become good observers and be full of understanding and compassion, yet discerning clearly what is.

Attention allows us discerning incorporated harmony.

Simone Weil: Attention and will

The following extract is taken out of Gravity and Grace by Simone Weil (“la pesanteur et la grace”) – published 1947 but written earlier:

We do not have to understand new things, but by dint of patience, effort and method to come to understand with our whole self the truths which are evident.

Stages of belief. The most commonplace truth when it floods the whole soul, is like a revelation.

We have to try to cure our faults by attention and not by will. The will only controls a few movements of a few muscles, and these movements are associated with the idea of the change of position of nearby objects. I can will to put my hand flat on the table. If inner purity, inspiration or truth of thought were necessarily associated with attitudes of this kind, they might be the object of will. As this is not the case, we can only beg for them. To beg for them is to believe that we have a Father in heaven. Or should we cease to desire them? What could be worse? Inner supplication is the only reasonable way, for it avoids stiffening muscles which have nothing to do with the matter. What could be more stupid than to tighten up our muscles and set our jaws about virtue, or poetry, or the solution of a problem.

Attention is something quite different. Pride is a tightening up of this kind. There is a lack of grace (we can give the word its double meaning here) in the proud man. It is the result of a mistake.

Attention, taken to its highest degree, is the same thing as prayer. It presupposes faith and love. Absolutely unmixed attention is prayer.

If we turn our minds towards the good, it is impossible that little by little the whole soul will not be attracted thereto in spite of itself.

Extreme attention is what constitutes the creative faculty in [wo]man and the only extreme attention is religious. The amount of creative genius in any period is strictly in proportion to the amount of extreme attention and thus of authentic religion at that period.

The wrong way of seeking. The attention fixed on a problem. Another phenomenon due to horror of the void. We do not want to have lost our labour. The heat of the chase. We must not want to find: as in the case of an excessive devotion, we become dependent on the object of our efforts. We need an outward reward which chance sometimes provides and which we are ready to accept at the price of a deformation of the truth.

It is only effort without desire (not attached to an object) which infallibly contains a reward.

To draw back before the object we are pursuing. Only an indirect method is effective. We do nothing if we have not first drawn back.

By pulling at the bunch, we make all the grapes fall to the ground.

Love is the teacher of gods and men, for no one learns without desiring to learn. Truth is sought not because it is truth but because it is good.

Attention is bound up with desire. Not with the will but with desire — or more exactly, consent.

We liberate energy in ourselves, but it constantly reattaches itself. How are we to liberate it entirely? We have to desire that it should be done in us — to desire it truly — simply to desire it, not to try to accomplish it. For every attempt in that direction is vain and has to be dearly paid for. In such a work all that I call 'I' has to be passive. Attention alone — that attention which is so full that the 'I' disappears — is required of me. I have to deprive all that I call 'I' of the light of my attention and turn it on to that which cannot be conceived.

The capacity to drive a thought away once and for all is the gateway to eternity. The infinite in an instant. [...]

A divine inspiration operates infallibly, irresistibly, if we do not turn away our attention, if we do not refuse it. There is not a choice to be made in its favour, it is enough not to refuse to recognize that it exists. [...]

Method for understanding images, symbols, etc. Not to try to interpret them, but to look at them till the light suddenly dawns. Generally speaking, a method for the exercise of the intelligence, which consists of looking.

I believe we have to make a clear distinction between focus and attention. Focus is concentrated on one single problem. It is exclusive of anything else. Focus is closed.

By contrast attention is all inclusive; it is the broader opening to what is as it is really. It is the wider panorama. It is true mindfulness.

Our main struggle for attention is a struggle against our own mind. The mind is searching constantly to focus on problems. Problems are like peanuts for our monkey mind. It is what it needs to be alive. Yet it misleads us and catches us into problem solving.

Clear-sightedness or illusion (conventional wisdom)



On the opposite, attention, in its inclusiveness, remains rooted in our essence. It remains broad and all-embracing. It allows us being truly receptive.

When Simone Weil writes about desire she does not mean desires for pleasures, but she means the urge for searching for the truth, whatever this truth is and whatever disturbing or challenging it can be. The attention she describes is earnestness and honesty in our search for Life.

The key for clear-sightedness: be free of preconceived (conventional) explanations; be detached in order to see whatever arises; be open to compassion / attention that allow us to see clearly and to feel like others do; etc.

Q: Describe and explain the gift of clear-sightedness and the role of attention in it. Compare attention with focus. How is it not related to effort, will, etc. but desire or earnestness (see S. Weil) ? Bring examples. 15' personal reflection then sharing.

Summary: Clear-sightedness is not something we generate with our own mind but it happens in us when we release our effort and will (see R. Sheldrake). Attention is the key (see S. Weil).

13.00 - LUNCH

15) 14.30 – 2nd power: Imagination – creativity (30')

The bottle and the cork.

Inventing solutions.

Spirit shapes matter.

Enigma: thinking outside the box.

With 4 straight lines, without lifting the pencil, connect the 9 dots here below. (5 min)

o o o

o o o

o o o

Comment on the enigma and what it means.

We are not aware how much we are defined by our origins: The place where I was born defines my race, my language, my culture, my religion. My family has shaped my behaviour and my creed, etc. These are beautiful gifts; they are yet no answers but only tools of prospection; we need roots to strive but roots can become limiting when they prevent us from growing freely. Like trees we need to be rooted but there are no limits to the extension of our branches. The further we extend them, the more we embrace and the more we learn to love, to delve with mystery, and to discover true wonder. Thinking outside the box requires that we extend as much as possible our tentacles, beyond the limits of conventional wisdom, and further more if possible. Space and time are indeed no real limits; they are only for our bodies but not for our spirits which can expand infinitely.

To guide us in our vocation to give shape to Emptiness, we need a wider perspective, a vision that leads us through daily life and its messiness. It allows us to remain focused on the wider picture and not fall into excessive pragmatism. It sustains also our courage because it gives meaning to what we

attempt to do. It gives strength to our perseverance. Yet this vision, although it is our guide, never stops changing and evolving. It is never frozen.

The key for creativity: breaking habits and ways of thinking (conventional wisdom); imagination as the motor of life; perspective and vision are the leading thread; etc.

Q: Remember how a new perspective or the perception of new possibilities has opened new doors in your life.

Summary: Imagination provides us with the image that leads us and gives meaning to our efforts. Thinking outside the box.

16) 15.00 – 3rd power: Inner strength – determination (30')

This inner strength is about daring to do the right thing, taking initiatives, being faithful to oneself. It brings of course a kind of loneliness of the prophet.

1) Being oneself: We all believe more or less that we are not OK and that we have to adapt in order to be more in conformity with our surroundings. Certainly we cannot impose our will to others but we have nevertheless to remain faithful to what we are: i.e. bring into the world the actualisation of our special gifts and skills. In this we are all different from one another. And this difference lets us think we are weird. Maybe we are, but I believe that it is our challenge to live through this weirdness. We have not only to accept it but to make the best use of it and even to develop it. Of course this is not a game for the sake of the game. It is very serious. It is about the meaning of life and the expression of the treasures that have been imparted to us. Be weird, be yourself, do not worry about what the others will think of you. Be courageous to be honest. It is certainly a lonely path but it is the only way to be.

2) Let's start a short reflexion about the will of God (still not very clear in my mind – to be deepened): What is the will of God? I believe it is not a precise will that expects that we do this or that (unless maybe exceptionally?). The will of God is for me rather an energy for a quality (Life): love and justice, community and unity in differences, reconciliation and forgiveness, renouncement on violence and power, free giving, helping life to flow, etc.

If God is the Source of everything, our vocation is to express God's will, i.e. to give it shape (Emptiness and form). We are then the expression of God's will. We have the "power" to "modulate" it as a treasure that has been entrusted to us. The mission is defined in its content (the general Laws of Life) but this content is huge and we have to choose how to express it through our skills. The shape is not defined; we are free to modulate it; we have to give it a shape we can create in order to remain faithful to the task but also to our own way to perceive this task. We will be able to do so only if we surrender to this will and let it express itself through us. We become then kind of initiators of it; nothing will happen if we do not take the initiative; we shape it and express it. Of course not for our own purpose but for the sake of its pure expression, for the sake of truth which remains always much beyond our own concerns. There seems to be a kind of contradiction between doing the will of God and our freedom to express it. How far is this freedom creativity?

God is probably not in control in the strict way as it is meant too often. He has "surrendered" his power to love. He disempowers himself to let love thrive. It is why Jesus has been killed. His powerlessness became intolerable to the Priests and Pharisees.

Let's read this quotation from Gregory of Nyssa (Catechetical Oration)::

Thus God cannot be held responsible for evil, for he is the author of what is, and not of what is not. It is he who made sight, not blindness [...] And that without subjecting us to his good pleasure by any violent constraint. He did not draw us towards what is good

against our will, as if we were an inanimate object. If when the light shines very brightly [...] someone chooses to hide his eyes by lowering his eyelids, the sun is not responsible for the fact that he cannot see it.

Start riding the bike



3) Take the initiative: Life is like a bike. You have to start it and then only you can direct it. God does not dictate to us (or only maybe exceptionally) what we have to do. He does not write to us instructions. It means we have to read his will through our own perceptions and intuitions. Our life is not a project but a continuous redirecting of what we do. Mostly important is how we do it. Not whether we paint the fence in green or red but rather whether we paint it with love, or not, love for the fence and the paint and as an offering to the people who will look at it. We need then to be the initiators, to start the bike running. This way of doing requires attention, concentration and determination, yet also flexibility and adaptability. Trusting and yet questioning all the time.

The key for inner strength: the metaphor of the bike (you have to start it and then guide it); not measuring the success; remaining anchored in one's own perception (yet questioning it); trusting one has well listened and done the right thing.

Q: How do you know what is right to do or be, when it goes against conventional wisdom? Where does the strength to do it nevertheless come from? How does fragility combine with this strength? How do you know what is precious in you when you feel so different from others?
Personal reflection 20'.

Summary: We have to learn how to respond to our own inspirations or motivations, despite the sense of loneliness it generates. Fragility and strength are two antagonistic but necessary components of our experience.

15.30 – AFTERNOON TEA

E) The Source

17) 16.00 - The dangers of inspiration (15')

When one believes one listens to the voice, there is the danger of becoming proud of being the provider of what is indeed a generous gift.

Ego, witch, evil forces. Dominant (exploiting) spiritual teachers. The price of wisdom in our society.

The power of doubt (questioning). The power of trust.

Faith and hope = seeing the meaning, knowing that the path leads somewhere.

Summary: There so many false teachers. Fragility is our strength.

18) 16.15 - Christ, the true source (30')

Incarnation as a sign of the Real, an expression of what is.

Chandogya Upanishad 8.1

The following text is taken out of the Upanishads:

OM. In the centre of the castle of Brahman, our own body, there is a small shrine in the form of a lotus-flower, and within can be found a small space. We should find who dwells there, and we should know him.

And if anyone asks "Who is he who dwells in the small shrine in the form of a lotus-flower in the centre of the castle of Brahman? Whom should we want to find and to

know?” we can answer: “The little space within the heart is as great as this vast universe. The heavens and the earth are there, and the sun, and the moon, and the stars; fire and lightning and winds are there; and all that now is and all that is not; for the whole universe is in Him and He dwells within our heart.”

And if they should say “If all things are in the castle of Brahman, all beings and all desires, what remains when old age overcomes the castle or when the life of the body is gone?”, we can answer: “The Spirit who is in the body does not grow old and does not die, and no one can kill the Spirit who is everlasting. This is the real castle of Brahman wherein dwells all the love of the universe. It is Atman, pure Spirit, beyond sorrow, old age, and death; beyond evil and hunger and thirst. It is Atman whose love is Truth, whose thoughts are Truth.

Even as here on earth the attendants of a king obey their king, and are with him wherever he is and go with him wherever he goes, so all love which is Truth and all thoughts of Truth obey the Atman, the Spirit. And even as here on earth all work done in time ends in time, so in the worlds to come even the good works of the past pass away. Therefore those who leave this world and have not found their soul, and that love which is Truth, find not their freedom in other worlds. But those who leave this world and have found their soul and that love which is Truth, for them there is the liberty of the Spirit, in this world and in the worlds to come.”

One can translate this in Christian words (another code of expression of the same truth):

1) Christ here and now. The Spirit hovering over the water (Genesis). The incarnation that makes the invisible visible.

2) Trinity and the 3 worlds: the Father as Source (World 1), the Son as expression (World 2), the Spirit as interpretation (World 3).

Father and Son are here all the time... we need to listen to the Spirit: get the right interpretation (world 3).

3) The focus of attention: like a wave length. We receive from what we are connected to. With focus we get only peanuts for the monkey: focus on food => more food, on work => more work, on money => more money, on sex => more sex, on intellect => more intellect, etc. We need to be rooted in what matters most to us: broad attention is the root.

When you drive a car, if you look sideways, you tend to go off the road; you tend indeed to drive in the direction of the point you are fixing your eyes upon. Life is the same. Our life is what our spirit focuses upon. Spirit shapes matter, yet often it is rather the contrary. Our glance is contemplation.

Q: How can you describe the point on the horizon on which your eyes are focused? How is the first world the source of everything in your life?

Summary: The Source is the Divine (not visible) – the only Reality. The rest is anecdotal!!

19) 16.45 - A place where to listen (15')

Silence and contemplation. In our society which invades all aspects of life and dictates our behaviours, we need to protect a personal space of silence and purity. It is not only a time of meditation in the morning, it is a constant space that accompanies us through the day.

It happens in us, despite of effort. We do not create it. We have to learn how to listen and recognise it. Attention is the rule.

Q: How do you do that?

Listening to the Voice

17-18 February 2018

A) Visible / Invisible

- 01) 09.30 – Introduction
- 02) 10.00 – The 3 worlds (30')
- 03) 10.30 - The great illusion (30')

11.00 MORNING TEA

- 04) 11.30 - Our true nature / essence (30')
- 05) 12.00 - Spirit and Matter / Form and Emptiness (30')

13.00 LUNCH

B) A space of infinite mystery

- 06) 14.30 - Questioning any thought that pops up in your mind (60')
- 07) 15.30 - The memory of the Universe (30')

16.00 AFTERNOON TEA

C) Many forms of listening

- 08) 16.30 - Listening to nature (60')
- 09) 17.30 - Listening to others (60')

19.00 – DINNER

SUNDAY MORNING

07.30 – MEDITATION

08.00 – BREAKFAST

- 10) 9.30 – Generosity of the Universe (15')
- 11) 9.45 – The inner voice (15')
- 12) 10.00 - The 7 gifts of the Spirit (60')

11.00 – MORNING TEA

- 13) 11.30 - Listening to the voice in our dreams (30')

D) Three special powers or gifts

- 14) 12.00 – 1st power: Inner understanding of what is / clear-sightedness (30')

13.00 - LUNCH

- 15) 14.30 – 2nd power: Imagination – creativity (30')
- 16) 15.00 – 3rd power: Inner strength – determination (30')

15.30 – AFTERNOON TEA

E) The Source

- 17) 16.00 - The dangers of inspiration (15')
- 18) 16.15 - Christ, the true source (30')
- 19) 16.45 - A place where to listen (15')