

Breaking through illusion

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John Main continually points us beyond the sphere of our 'ego' towards the sphere of the 'true self' – from illusion to reality – and saw meditation as an essential way of doing this: *"Meditation is a way of breaking through from a world of illusion into the pure light of reality."* He did not refer to 'left brain' and 'right brain' modes of being as I have done. But that does not detract from the fact that he was very aware of these complementary levels of consciousness. But his concern was not to capture them in words and ideas, but prove their existence by the experience of meditation. As he said in *'Word into Silence'*, *"By renouncing self ('ego') we enter the silence and focus upon the Other. The truth to be revealed is the harmony of our Self with the Other. In the words of the Sufi poet: 'I saw my Lord with my heart's eye and said: "Who art Thou Lord?" "Thyself," He replied.'*

There lies a danger in talking of 'left brain' and 'right brain' ways of perceiving reality. We must be careful that we do not start to externalize these different aspects of our consciousness as 'objects' linked to (or in the thought of some present-day reductionist scientists as caused by) these two halves of the brain. That leads to fragmentation of our interior being rather than the wholeness John Main points us towards. In emphasizing

experience and encouraging us to leave the rationalizing 'ego' behind, he is helping us to avoid this pitfall. He was very aware that the one thing science, philosophy and theology teach us is the basic impossibility of our limited rational capabilities to understand 'reality, as it is, infinite'. There are no ultimate right answers; theories often contradict and supplant previous limited personal attempts at interpretation. John Main in 'Word into Silence' quoted Alfred Whitehead as saying: "It is impossible to meditate on time and the mystery of the creative passage of nature without an overwhelming emotion at the limitations of human intelligence." There is without doubt an urge in humanity to want to understand reality. But it is our 'ego' aspect that loves to theorise about reality; its search for knowledge, moreover, leads to an illusionary sense of being in control. Besides, in talking of 'left' brain and 'right' brain ways of accessing reality, we must not forget that we know as little of the brain as we do of the whole cosmos. Even the brain has its 'dark energy'. Although brain scans are able to point out that certain areas are involved in certain activities, it actually proves as little as saying that our hand is used for grasping objects. What does that say about the whole of our being? And when it comes to consciousness itself we even know less than nothing – it is a total mystery. But experience teaches us that there are different ways of being. If we focus on the 'ego' and its survival concerns we are caught by "the optical delusion of our separateness", as Einstein put it. If we let go off all thoughts and images and pay attention to our prayer word only "we awakento a complete communion of all beings in Being itself." as John Main described it in 'Word into Silence'.

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