

# On the Meaning of Realization

## Part 1 of 16

Franklin Merrell-Wolff

October 7, 1951

. . . this month, in a series of lectures and classes, to develop in some measure both the theory and the practice which leads to Realization, or that which has been variously known as Enlightenment, Liberation, the attainment of Cosmic Consciousness, of Transcendental Consciousness, and by other names. Tonight we shall be concerned principally with a clarification, as far as that may be, of the meaning of Realization. I shall not attempt to define it in an initial statement since the whole talk, and indeed the whole course, will constitute but a partial definition.

But first a word to those who for the first time may have heard of the conception of Realization, I will say this: it is impossible to prove to one who is confined to relative consciousness that there is such a thing as Realization, Enlightenment, or Liberation. The only proof lies in the experience itself. We may regard this fact as unfortunate, but it is not difficult to see that it must be so. Indeed, suppose you were to take some creature less evolved than man and were to try to prove to him the existence of such a consciousness as belongs to an advanced mathematician. Would you not have difficulty? Being something entirely outside the range of the consciousness possessed by that creature, proof would be impossible.

However, there is a large body of presumption favoring the actuality of the Realization. This can briefly be indicated by directing your attention to a few of the names of those who stand among realized men: there is the Christ, there is Buddha, there is Lao Tze, Shankara, Krishna, Sri Aurobindo, Ramakrishna. In the West: Meister Eckhart, Jacob Boehme, St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa, St. Francis, and I believe I would class in this list Spinoza. Among the Greeks: Pythagoras, Plotinus, the pseudo-Dionysius, and many others. Even in America, certain native mystics: a Thoreau, a Walt Whitman, a J. William Lloyd; men that have known some consciousness different from relative consciousness, in differing degrees to be sure, exemplifying different degrees of power but possessing something that was important as evidenced by effects. Today, whether we call ourselves Christians or not, Buddhists or not, Vedantists or not, we have a culture, an ethical orientation, a view towards the nature of being and a possibility of aspiration which would not have been ours if these men, or their equivalents, had never lived. If we had known them in their own time we might well have failed to appreciate what they were. They may have seemed fairly ordinary to the ordinary vision, much less important than other figures upon the theater of the time, and, yet, their true measure becomes evident by the influence coming down through the centuries and even the millennia. They possess something—a power. That power is part of what we mean by Realization.

To present the conception, I shall ask you to undertake an imaginary visualization, or if that is impossible to your organization, build a conceptual image rather than a visual

one. Imagine a space unfilled; in other words, without any gravitational field within it. Imagine further in that space a sphere of finite radius. Bisect the sphere by a plane of indefinite extent. That means passing the plane through a great circle of the sphere. Let us now arbitrarily predicate that the portion of the space and of the sphere on one side of the plane is *up* and the portion on the other side is *down*. This we have to predicate since we are not in a gravitational field. We may call the point on the sphere ninety degrees from our intersecting plane on the upside the *North Pole* and on the downside the *South Pole*. Along the polar diameter, place an image of a human body so that it centers on that diameter. Have the top portion of the head pierce slightly the sphere at the North Pole. Have the feet extend down below the South Pole an undefined distance. I'm told that an artist might indicate this by enclosing those feet in a sort of cloud. Now, the portion of the head above the sphere corresponds to the pericarp or the *sahasrara*. That may be a new term to many of you. It is the Sanskrit term for the highest of the seven *chakras*. I cannot now elaborate any further. Let the space represented by the sphere symbolize our ordinary relative consciousness—the consciousness that we have as our everyday consciousness. Not only that, it is the consciousness with which the scientist works and with which much, even most, of philosophy is exclusively concerned. Consciousness marked by this characteristic, that in all of it we are concerned with an objective content that stands in a polar relationship to a perceiving subject, or self, or ego—this objective content standing in a relationship of separation or distance, essentially, from that perceiving subject.

All of our psychology up to within perhaps forty years ago as developed in the West, and most of our philosophy, practically all of our objective sciences, made the assumption that the whole of consciousness was like unto this relative consciousness represented by the sphere—not quite all Western philosophers, but in general this is the view. More is known today even in the fields of our Western science, particularly our psychology, but up through the nineteenth century especially, the whole of consciousness lay, it was thought, within this restricted zone.

However, there are those that sensed something more. Among the first, Immanuel Kant made reference to those thoughts which we think without knowing that we think them, that nonetheless have unmistakable influence upon our lives, are determinant forces in unmeasured degrees in our lives. This recognition was carried further through several representatives of the German Idealistic School of philosophy, ultimately had a systematic representation and elaboration in *The Philosophy of the Unconscious* of von Hartmann. Later, in more empiric terms, and less metaphysically profound understanding, Freud rediscovered the fact that there is something more than our relative consciousness which must be predicated to understand what happens in the psychical life of man. He predicated, therefore, an unconscious which was inferior to consciousness—very largely made up, as he supposed, of elements which were forgotten or repressed into this unconscious. But in the more profound work of his famous disciple, Carl G. Jung, the conception of the unconscious is forced to take a wider meaning to account for the facts which psychology had unearthed. Jung soon found that this unconscious included more than elements which were originally conscious and then repressed into the unconscious; that it consisted of, in addition, determinants that molded the form of one's future consciousness; that there were even fundamental archetypes there—elements that took frequently in spontaneous formation in the hands of patients the structure of the mandalas

that have played so important a part in Oriental yoga—mandalas drawn automatically, not as a conscious fulfillment of a plan, but something welling out of somewheres else. He therefore developed again the psychological conception of an unconscious psychical nature composing an unknown vastness which is not simply a blind nonconscious, as we suppose very frequently material objects to be, but is like unto consciousness in that it involves psychical process and is strongly, often predominantly, determinant in the life of the individual, of the group, of the race, and even of the whole of humanity. Western psychology and philosophy arrive at the point of recognizing that there's something more than the consciousness within that sphere, but for the consciousness beyond the sphere we have only a blanket-term, namely, unconscious—*the unconscious*; although, the insight of von Hartmann was sufficient to recognize that this was a valid term only with respect to the human view of it, that from its own standpoint it was superconscious.

The Orient has long penetrated into this realm. It is not for the *Siddhi* a realm that is merely one blanket-unconscious, but rather a zone of vast delineation, ramification, planes upon planes, levels upon levels, depths and heights, which can be explored, measured in some sense and reported in some degree. One important distinction that is introduced is that in this zone we have a portion, the zone outside the sphere, which lies below ordinary consciousness. We can call this subconscious. It has effects upon our lives, and upon the lives of all creatures. It is the root source of the instincts and of many movements. It's the root source of the psychical element that governs the life of the cells and the organs of the body. But there's a vaster zone and one immeasurably more important for us, namely, that which lies above the dividing plane, and this we may call the superconscious, or following the rather beautiful terminology of Sri Aurobindo, the 'superconscient'.

Now, the purpose or meaning of Realization is the breaking out of bondage to the consciousness within the zone of the sphere so that the entity may awake in some portion or some degree of the superconscious consciousness. In a word, in the simplest possible term, this is what we mean by Liberation, by Enlightenment, by Realization. But we learn very quickly that there is no such simple thing as one Realization or one degree of Enlightenment alone; but as we shall see as we go on, that there are many Realizations, many levels, many possibilities, until the imagination is positively appalled by the vast immensities lying beyond.

He who dwells within the relative consciousness of the sphere may so dwell for many lives throughout ages, fairly content. But there comes a time as the soul becomes more mature, when there is a realization that this life is very much like that of a rat caught in a cage; that not only the individual but the races and the nations repeat, perhaps in a little different key, old patterns over and over again; that beyond mere perfecting of details in the consciousness, there is no significant enrichment within that zone. Questions are raised by the soul that cannot be answered by any of the knowledge that can be gathered within that zone. Those who have reached this degree of insight and maturity typically react with an attitude of enormous pessimism with respect to the ordinary life. We have, thus, the example of Buddha, of Shankara, of Schopenhauer—yes, even of a Bertrand Russell. I know a passage in one of Bertrand Russell's works where he looks forth upon the life of man here as something scorned by an inconscient nature that goes its way, that poor man is a vain Atlas holding up his ideals which will

ultimately be destroyed by the holocaust of unconscious nature—for him only the heroism of carrying on without any hope of a final issue for his ideals. It's a paraphrase, not the exact words, but the clear insight of a man who lacks spiritual vision, but very great clarity of perception concerning this order which he imagines to be the only possible order of consciousness.

The reaching of this point in one's consciousness is typically the starting point of the search for Realization. One need not have come to that tragic point before he starts, but typically most do. Disgust with life and disgust with relative knowledge, for they answer not the questions which they raise in any satisfactory form, becomes a first step. This is known as the attitude of *vairagya*, disgust with the world. To be sure, one may be drawn by a light beyond, even though life and this garnerings of relative knowledge still seem to him beautiful and interesting, yet because this light beyond gleams more brightly through a veil, he may be attracted by it before suffering has become a mighty force in his life. And his, in general, is the sunlit way to the Realization. But it so happens [that] man, with his stubbornness, does not choose the sunlit way. He requires the painful punch of nature and must suffer, perhaps keenly, before that he seeks to knock at a higher door of consciousness.

But this feeling of disgust with a relative zone, a limited zone of consciousness, is not itself enough. There must be a glimpsing, a faith, that there is something beyond—a sense that somewhere, somehow, these problems of thought and these problems of life will be answered satisfactorily. I think if most of us will look close into our subtler and deeper consciousness we will find that that faith is there. It may well be that the doubting of our mind silences its voice, but I'll say this: when one has found the barrenness of a rat-cage existence, isn't it better to gamble on the faith and chuck the doubting. Oh yes, I don't mean throw away dispassionate discrimination. Doubting is not dispassionate discrimination. Doubting is a perverse tendency of the vital mind, not of the true intellectual mind. And you'll find that when people are in that stage of doubt, their doubts can't be answered even by the best and most trenchant logic. They're attached to their doubting, and so forth. Well, if one enjoys the state of barrenness that goes with it, and of unfilled hopes, let him have it. But he who wishes more, and many people do wish more even though they doubt, I say: listen to that voice of faith. There comes a time when faith is transcended in positive knowledge.

Faith is a guiding line in a dark passage—a passage which is not yet luminous. And following that thread, that line, one not only may hope to emerge, but if he obeys the rules of the *sadhana*, the practice, he will ultimately inevitably emerge into the zone beyond the sphere; and there in that zone the questions that were unanswerable within the sphere, the life problems and tangles which could not be resolved, are in one way or another resolved either through ceasing to exist, through being transformed so that they are different and no longer problems, or even answered directly in their own terms. But they are resolved. The misery that marks relative existence ceases. The state of being bound to the pairs of opposites is no more; in this sense, that the essential life of the realized one transcends the pairs of opposites, his identity transcends the pairs of opposites. Though he experiences and witnesses the pairs of opposites in a level of his own nature and of the world which lies below him, here on the surface they do not touch him, do not move him where he lives. They exist as instrumental powers of

nature upon which he mayhap may act when he has become a *Siddhi*. Nature must work in certain of our phases through the pairs of opposites, but man can transcend the bondage to the pairs of opposites.

The one point I will touch upon now with respect to this matter of the pairs of opposites which we shall have occasion to deal with from time to time throughout the whole course. I suppose with most human beings that the strongest drive is the drive of pleasure. The pleasure may be variously defined. It can take anything from something of an infantile sort up to the pleasure of a very mature and cultured intelligence, but the driving motive that typically is strongest with most is the pleasure motive—with some the power motive, and with a still fewer number, the knowledge motive. Now, we typically desire that which gives us pleasure, happiness, joy. But what do we experience? We experience much frustration—typically frustration. We pay for such pleasure as we acquire with the price of much pain; and when we succeed in genuinely acquiring that which we have desired—and that happens from time to time; it may be great wealth; it may be fame; it may be some superior talent or skill—it isn't long until we get into another experience of boredom: life passing through a state of want, which is pain; a brief satisfaction of want, which is pleasure; and a long period of boredom because of satiation with the pleasure. Now, we go on thinking that the next thing upon which we place our heart's desire will follow some different pattern, so through a later phase of our life or in another life we try something else and find the same pattern repeated. We pay for a little pleasure with a lot of pain or boredom.

Now, it is true that without desire for this pleasure and joy, the motive force that keeps human beings going would not be here. Human beings would sink into a *tamasic* inertia. If you're not familiar with the Sanskrit term, I'll say that *tamas* means the principle of inertia, of the quality that is predominantly strong in a stone for instance, and very strong in our physical bodies. It corresponds to a sagging down into a dead-like indifference. Without the driving force of desire for pleasure, ordinarily man would sink down into such a *tamasic* inertia, and that would be a worse state. One of the inescapable conditions of Realization, one which is repeated over and over again in the *sadhanas* that in other respects are quite different, is this: that the desire for pleasure, and desire in general, must be killed out—along with it, egoism, which is the basis of desire.

Let us suppose that by some means and in some degree the compelling force of this desire for pleasure has been reduced, has become a factor that is distinctly minor—you don't have to go all the way to a complete killing out of it—there comes in another quality for which the word pleasure, and joy, and happiness are inadequate. It is what is known as *ananda*, sometimes translated delight, or which we might call the *rasa*, to use another Indian term—a quality of delight that is not dependent at all upon the objective situation. Whereas our ordinary pleasure is something that depends upon the acquisition of something desired; this *rasa*, delight, *ananda*, is an abiding quality. He who has it any substantial degree and persistently, can deal with any sort of situation whether involving the ordinary sense of pain or the ordinary sense of pleasure without the delight being affected. You can move in the field of delight at all times. It is quite an attainment to move within it at all times, but it is possible; and without having gone that far, one may know it from time to time under conditions that may be particularly favorable, perhaps during a period of quiet meditation. If one were now to ask: what is the motive, what is

the essence that keeps the life and consciousness moving when desire has passed away—desire for pleasure—the answer is that *ananda* takes over, and then by a process of action, of movement, not directed by desire but by a principle which we may call divine, all things are done in obedience to the divine will in nature; and he who functions as the instrument of this will abides in a persistent delight.

Whether in a quiet retreat in the mountains, or as a warrior in the midst of the battles of life, and the battles of nations literally, or as the businessman or the engineer in the fields of construction and merchandising, or as the keeper of houses, or as the artist, or in any one of the multiple functions that men fill, all this can be performed in the sphere of the *ananda* and with powers operating above the ordinary relative human intelligence yet acting upon the relative field producing effects within that field. As a matter of fact, genius is a case of a partial awakening to this power beyond the sphere often without the individual understanding what is operating. Perhaps the opening is more in the nature of some violent rent rather than of a true passage into Realization, nonetheless, the special power of genius which always transcends the best of trained talent is something that comes beyond the sphere from the superconscious. The difference in the case of Realization or of yoga is this: that the attainment, the correlation and identification with the superconscious, is deliberately sought, aspired toward, and when realized, is done by a shifting of the individual's self-identity from the relative field to the zone beyond the sphere. He operates, then, with more than the power of genius. He operates with what we might call the power of the divine, his personal being becoming only an instrumental factor within the relative field.

This outlines, then, a little of the significance of what we mean by Realization. What it is designed to accomplish and will accomplish for anyone who will follow it with earnestness and sincerity. We shall elaborate in the classes that'll follow this week and during the following four weeks, details in the actual practice or *sadhana*, which may well mean that you individually may start a new *way* if you are not already on the *way*. It may mean that you can find the *way* easier than you have found it heretofore. It may mean that you will undertake the path with definitive resolution, mayhap making it the prime business of the whole life. If so, the day of the new birth is inevitable and may not be long delayed. At any rate, I hope all of you who feel called to the *way*, and would wish perhaps some further help that *way*, may come to our classes and further lectures. After further music, I will open the meeting for answers and questions, for questions and answers, we get the right order.

Now in asking questions, I'm going to put this condition upon it: not a camouflaged statement under a question; authentic questions that represent a seeking or a clarification, not an exposition disguised or camouflaged. There is a place for argument and debate, but it's not here, these conditions are not the right ones for that sort of thing. So, questions if you please—real ones.

Participant: On the quest for Realization, is the emphasis, the implication that it's not to be found in the relative domain but must be sought upon some different base or plane of reference?

Wolff: I'll paraphrase the question for the record. Is it to be understood that the Realization is to not be found within the relative domain but must be sought upon some different base or plane of reference? The answer quite definitely is yes, but there must be a shifting from the base of reference on which our ordinary consciousness moves. The difficulty that human nature finds in this often is this: that the shifting of a base of reference seems like the death of what one was without fully appreciating that he's going to be immediately reborn as something superior and there is where a good deal of unnecessary fear and hesitation comes in. It takes some faith to accept an abandonment of an old identity without yet knowing, positively, that it will be replaced by a new self-identity, even instantaneously. That's the difficulty. But that is what must happen.

Any other questions? Yes.

Participant: [Difficult to hear.]

Wolff: I didn't quite get your question. Would you repeat it?

Participant: [Difficult to understand.]

Wolff: Yeah. Yeah. I gather this to be the question: is it not so that faith which is not based upon something which is actually true will not be fulfilled? Yes, of course. But I think there is a confusion here between faith and belief. We believe many things that are not true, as well as things that may be true. That is a mental act, a belief. Faith, in the sense in which we're using the term, is not the same thing as belief. It's not really a concept, but it is a kind of subtle awareness carried in the soul of one that under favorable conditions can come up into the mind so that you're conscious of it. It moves one not in the sense of concepts though it may be formulated as concepts, but it's something deeper than that: a sense of a great confidence in, let us say, the order of being; a sense that being is, in spite of all appearances, friendly; not defining it as a god or of what, but somehow it is friendly, somehow responsive to that which is deep within you. This sense, more or less inarticulate, but fundamentally natural, innate, is faith and is not the same as belief.

Any other questions?

Participant: [Missing from the recording.]

Wolff . . . does affirm that Western man cannot simply copy the method of Eastern man. Perhaps he may have to follow the line indicated by the alchemists, who are native to the West, but in any case it is dangerous for him to follow the yogic patterns of Eastern man. Is that the idea that you had in mind?

Participant: Correct.

Wolff: Yeah. I believe that it sounds as though you have been reading *The Integration of Personality*.

Participant: Right.

Wolff: There is a point, a very important point in Jung's statement that Western man cannot throw away what is native to his nature and that in his facing a transformation he must move from that point where he is. I shall certainly make use of that because I believe the same thing. However, there are definitions of the goal, as

distinct from methods employed, which are common to East and West. Techniques must be adapted. And I shall introduce you to Sri Aurobindo, who is not simply ancient Eastern man. Sri Aurobindo is an outstanding exception in this respect: that he's educated in the West from the age of six, in English, to graduation from Cambridge University—composes most of his material directly in English. He is almost as familiar with Western man as he is with Oriental man, therefore more than any other figure in all history, constitutes a bridge between Eastern man and Western man. Now, many of the difficulties that are presented by the yogas of Eastern man are thus eliminated. I know their obscurities, as for instance in the old Buddhist sutras, in the Chinese yogas that are grounded in Lao Tze, and even more ancient sources, that are quite beyond our understanding. They do not fit us. That's perfectly true. There are some principles that are universal, and I do believe that Western man must build from the base which he has established and which is in some respects definitely different from the base of Eastern man. I shall more fully deal with this later in the course.

Any other questions? I have to let it go at that because that's a big question. Another question?

Participant: Doesn't Christianity in the true sense of the word contain the message of all the higher seers?

Wolff: The means or techniques for Realization or mystical unfoldment that are characteristic of the Christian manifold or milieu are not nearly as highly elaborated as in the Orient. Typically most of the Western mystics have awakened spontaneously. The only systematic treatment that I know of dealing with the problem of means is perhaps that of St. Theresa and that falls strictly within the Roman Catholic milieu. Not all Western mystics have been Roman Catholics by any manner or means. Jacob Boehme is a great exception of a Protestant mystic, and one of the greatest the West has known, but with him it was a spontaneous awakening. Systematic development of a science of yoga, of an applied science of yoga, is far more advanced in the Orient than it is in the West. Maybe some day in the future we too will evolve our science in that respect.

Any other questions?

Participant: [Missing from the recording.]

Wolff: . . . little difficulty recasting your question, but the question bears upon this point: suppose one is fed up with the relative consciousness and has seen its emptiness as it stands; can he meet the condition of becoming a hermit and at the same time fulfill the duties of a citizen? Is that the idea?

Participant: Yes.

Wolff: Well, in the first place you're assuming that it's necessary to become a hermit.

Participant: You don't think so?

Wolff: Yes, it is not necessary; but for some natures, for some temperaments, it is the most favorable condition, and if it is the most favorable condition, by all means become a hermit, become an anchorite. But it is not necessary for all temperaments. There are those that traditionally who have retired to communities known as monasteries, but they represented a separated religious life where sexes were separated and where



ordinary mundane activities were withdrawn from the setting. Many found that a favorable condition in which they attained success. But one of the revolutionary characteristics of the *sadhana* of Sri Aurobindo is that he conceives of the process as not essentially implying withdrawal from life—possibly temporary, partial withdrawal during transitional periods, but the thing he emphasizes is coming back for the purpose of effecting transformation within the sphere. I'll go into this much more fully later on.

Any other questions?

Participant: [Missing from the recording.]

Wolff: . . . in sixteen lectures we'll . . . here again.<sup>1</sup> Is . . . if you realize that, if you can make that your life, you will have destroyed egoism. If you've done it completely—you will have established an aspiration which would effect an Awakening. But let me assure you, you'll have plenty of difficulty in destroying the egoism. You'll arouse all of the forces that are opposed to the ideal formulated in the Sermon on the Mount, and if you don't look out, they may prove stronger than your aspiration. There are difficulties on the way. One can afford to use some help.

Tomorrow night, then, we'll have the first of the classes. What room?

Audience: 723

Wolff: 723 in this building at eight o'clock; then Wednesday and Friday night of this week; and again next Sunday here at eight o'clock. Now if you'll all rise, I'll repeat certain closing words and you repeat them along with me. Some of you know them all right.

Let there be peace within the universe.

Let the power of the warriors of light be made manifest.

Let wisdom guide us and love protect us throughout our lives.

Peace be with you.

And with you, peace.

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<sup>1</sup> Although this series of lectures and classes was apparently meant to be delivered in sixteen parts, we are, unfortunately, missing parts 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12.