

# Lectures to University Students

## Part 3 of 7 <sup>1</sup>

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Dr. Merchant and Fellow Students:

I'm not going to deal with the subject this morning as a mere academic curiosity or as something different—maybe a research in ethnology that has no practical value. I shall deal with it as something, let us say, as true, probably and as something that will make a difference if one . . . <sup>2</sup> with a view to the possible reality of more than one existence in a body. I admit first hand that it is impossible to prove to the mind the reality of reincarnation in the sense of mathematical proof or in the sense of ordinary scientific proof, for proof would require the action of another or other organs of cognition than those of sense perception and conceptual cognition. But actually as a fact of life we do live upon the basis of working assumptions that make a lot of difference to us.

Now, I'm going to start by presenting a problem of rigorous cognition. Do I know, for instance, that this organism of mine was ever born? I have to admit that I do not. To be sure, I've been told that it was born, but I remember no such event. There is, I admit, some reason to doubt therefore that it ever was born, as a matter of logical rigor. Also, am I sure that you, who appear to be before me, are actual independent existences and not unconscious projections from my unconscious. Actually as a matter of rigor, I do not know that you are such independent existences and not merely ideas in my mind. However, I find it pragmatically convenient to assume that you are independent existences. It would work a little better and I'd find myself not so lonely as I would be if you were only ideas in my mind. These things are . . . for the assumption that this organism of mine was born. I've been told that it was, but that is only, "Thus I have heard," knowledge. I have not witnessed the event. I have not experienced it. I have not traced it out by subjective analysis. Nonetheless, it appears that being born is a characteristic of these organisms, though it so happens I never saw it happen. I've merely been told that it happens, and I have seen creatures small and getting bigger. So it is a convenient working hypothesis that these organisms are born and that therefore this organism which I carry around with me was also born. It is a convenient pragmatic hypothesis. There's no rigor there. I'll admit, on the basis of rigor, we cannot prove reincarnation, but neither can anyone of you prove that he was born nor can you prove to my satisfaction that you're anything more than ideas in my mind. That's a touch of solipsism. Schopenhauer said concerning it once it unassailable, but we'll disregard it. We won't try to take that fort in our philosophy, we'll just go around it. So, we'll just go around the solipsist's hypothesis and we will assume that birth of an organism is a fact.

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<sup>1</sup> Parts 1 and 2 of this series were apparently not recorded.

<sup>2</sup> Ellipses have been inserted into this transcription to indicate missing text due to the poor quality of this audio recording.

Now, there's hardly greater uncertainty as to the existence of multiple births for a given entity. Let us consider certain indirect considerations. I find that I have a faith, or prejudice if you will, that this universe, that this existence that surrounds us is such that if I put questions to it, I can get reasonable answers. That is the unproven assumption and faith of every scientist. We can conceive that an existence might be wholly irrational, that it has no order, and that there would be no meaning or answers derived from it for any questions we put to it. But I find that I have as an article of innate faith, a certain assurance, that it is possible to get answers to questions that are reasonably acceptable, that are understandable. And because of that faith, we have science and philosophy. I'll also add another thing, that there is analogous to the principle of reason, the quality of justice in the existence—that that which happens to creatures is not wholly arbitrary. That there is an order involved, not only on the level of things, but on the level of morality in the deepest sense. And that this world, however much it may appear to the contrary, is at base reasonable and just.

Yet, I look abroad upon the facts of life as I see them within the limited range of one life. I see creatures that are born to lives of suffering and others born to lives of comfort and opportunity. Are these the wayward results of the fiats of an arbitrary God? That assumption would violate the basic faith that this existence is reasonable and just. But, if I've lived before and I have acted and thought and willed—wisely or unwisely, generously or selfishly, compassionately or cruelly—and then I reap the life that is the natural consequence of such living in the past, then I can see how this difference of circumstance apparent now belongs to an ordered whole. I may not be able yet to trace the background of causal connections that led to the results now, but I have a conception that enormously favors my basic faith that the existence is just and reasonable; and as a result, I feel at home in this world. I feel that I can trust its central core and I am not passing through a meaningless arbitrariness.

I don't intend to give more concerning evidences favoring the conception of reincarnation. And bear in mind it must be combined with the companion conception of law which is commonly known by the Eastern term *karma*. But bear in mind that it is simply the law of equilibrium, a principle universally valid, the great law that maintains the stars in their courses and equally the electrons in theirs, and the courses of all creatures and . . . between. So that at no moment is there ever a violation of this fundamental equilibrium. *Karma* is the universal law of equilibrium, spread out in time. And because of this law, and only because of it, can you put questions to nature and expect reasonable, understandable answers.

Now, as a matter of social fact, there are two primary contrasting religious attitudes concerning the problem of immortality. Is man an immortal being? Now, there is a sense in which I can say right off he is not. In the sense that he is a complex but organized consciousness, he is not; but in a deeper sense—and this can be verified, and I have verified it—in the sense of pure, unorganized, underivative Consciousness, he is neither born nor does he ever die. And this can be known, for there are Realizations that reach above space, time, and law to the Root from whence these spring, and to know that I eternally abide there. Not this personal I, but the "I," the Self, that is present and reflected in each and everyone here and everywhere, is eternally abiding in that timeless state. And what is timeless is neither born nor does it ever cease to exist. This certainty

can be known, and every mystic who has gone far enough has testified to that Realization. This is not simply a matter of faith. Faith may lead you to the search, but it can become a . . . to certain knowledge—not conceptual knowledge, not perceptual knowledge of the senses, but that deeper knowledge through identity. But that which becomes, also dies, and that’s the other side of the picture. It may not die soon. It may die long . . . When it dies, it may be a matter of achievement on the part of the individual or failure to achieve, but that which becomes also becomes not. So when I lay down here a general principle, it does not mean that consciousness is no more, organized consciousness I mean now, is no more than that which is associated with these gross animal bodies that . . .

So there is an enormous interest whether I transcend, in the sense of being an individual, the span of this embodied life. We find the conviction that this is so, widely spread among mankind. It’s almost the reason for the religions of the world, for if all we had was an ephemeral appearance in a gross animal body, and then they die into darkness beyond, there would not be any real reason for a religious . . . or a religious belief or practice. There would be no real reason for taking anything whatsoever serious other than the satisfying of the animal needs of the body. If you think it through, that is all you would have. There is this deep faith, or shall we say intuition, that the dropping of this gross animal body is not the end of things. Now, there’s two approaches to how this can be, for not only is there the traditional approach of Christendom, not here a teaching of Christ, but something worked up by the theological speculators in thought, and there is in contrast the point of view fundamental to India and much of the rest of the Orient.

In the Christian position—apparently our forefathers were pretty radical materialists. When I discovered this I was really quite shocked. They actually could not conceive of a vehicle of organized consciousness that was not sensible to the gross senses. So they had to handle the problem by imagining somehow that although a body is seen to die, it can be raised up again; and that fantastic conception was superimposed upon the death of Christ and his resurrection. That because he, in a unique sense, is supposed to be God—not in a philosophic sense that every being is part and parcel of God, but in a unique sense—and that because he died and raised himself from the dead, therefore a paradigm was established whereby through blind faith one could die and later that body that died would be resurrected again at the final judgment, and thus you could achieve a continuum of organized consciousness.

It was way back in the days when I was a teenager, that I saw some difficulties in this conception. Much to my surprise, our local minister actually believed in the literal resurrection of the body. Now, the picture that I had was quite an impression. We know that animal bodies decay and that the bones last the longest, and I got a picture of the resurrection where a lot of graves were opening up and a lot of skeletons were coming out and dancing. What’s with our Christian theologians that got us into a mess like that? You just have to throw every bit of reason overboard to even believe a thing like that. You have to throw overboard the whole conception of an intelligible order behind this existence. But actually men today believe this. Father Victor White, in his book *God and the Unconscious*, a man who worked close with Dr. Jung and is very broad on the whole, approvingly speaks of this as Christian materialism. I think that part of the trouble grows out of the occasion, when the Christian theologians threw overboard an orientation to

Plato and replaced Plato with Aristotle as the recognized philosophy; and among Aristotle's works is the *De Anima*, in which he propounds the doctrine of a psychosomatic unity in the radical sense—there is no mind without the body, no psyche without the body. If therefore the body falls, the psyche falls. I went to my minister—I thought this out—I said to him, we know that when a body falls it disintegrates, and we know that the molecules or atoms of that body are taken up by other living organisms, and we know that, if it's a vegetable for instance, animal creatures may come along and eat that, and when the animal creature dies, it may be . . . or it may be eaten by a human, another human and it so happened that certain of those atoms that were in the original body are also in the body of the last human when he died, so I said to the clergyman, to which individual do these atoms belong in the resurrection? He said leave it to the Lord my son. I broke with the Church then.

Now, on the other hand, in the Orient, let us see how the conception of *karma* and reincarnation fits in to the deeper conception that man is an evolving being. Not alone in the sense of a stream of evolution that builds, functions, and so forth beneath the environment and so on, not alone in the sense of the Darwinian natural selection, but in the sense of a purpose, an objective, a . . . that can be found as a reason for it, and further that this evolution reaches a point, namely, the point where the creature becomes human, where he persists as an individual, not the way as life streams to the species, and let's consider further that the various qualities of building the resources of a mind, for instance, and the rest of what makes up the total human being, is an enormous task taking an enormous time, something that could not be accomplished in the limited time of a possible 70 to 100 years of a reasonably long life. With the conception of reincarnation and karma, there now is no difficulty, for one would then evolve step by step through *karma* to correct errors, false building and so on, and encouraging true building, until finally he emerges as a brilliant mind, or a brilliant soul, a being of compassion such as a Buddha. This becomes intelligible, conceivable, something that doesn't violate our sense of order, if we predicate a fact of a rhythmical birth, leading to after-death states, and rebirth, and so on, until a certain goal is reached.

Now, then, there are those, and this has happened in the Orient, and this is where the Orient is so . . . , who have tended to view the pattern of birth and death as merely a meaningless show that has no purpose in it. This has happened . . . It's not the profounder view, but it does exist. And the whole purpose of the religious or yogic discipline is to escape from an endless . . . of psychical processes that have become very wearisome. But I say quite otherwise, and I speak in agreement with what Sri Aurobindo himself has said, there is a recognizable purpose . . .

Actually, it will be part of the material that I'll be taking up next hour. I don't know whether any of you want to or would be allowed to come into where that next hour will be, but we'll suggest something of the answer to the question, "Is there a meaning for this long travail, for in this world it is more travail than delight? Is there a reason for it all? Does it lead to something?"

Now, what is it that reincarnates? And here is where many who are convinced of the reality of reincarnation have made a serious error. It is not this human personality we see now. It is something that bears a *karmic* relationship to the human personality. Now, I'll illustrate a possible way. You may be familiar with Dr. Jung's *Psychological Types*

and his four psychological functions and of the fact that in any incarnation we tend to accentuate certain functions and repress others. We might, say, be born as an introverted intuitive-thinking type, repressing feeling-sensation. The development of intuition tends to the repression of sensation. The development of thinking tends to the repression of feeling. In that given life, feeling and sensation were repressed, were not developed; and part of the goal being a rounded complete individual, a subsequent incarnation very likely, perhaps the very next, would be one in which the feeling and sensational functions in the extraverted attitude has representation. In the end, the rounded man has fully four functions and has both attitudes, and has within his command; he can turn the word introversion into an extraversion in reverse—can introvert and extravert at will. That is when he has reached command. When he wishes to penetrate into subjective depths, he introverts. When he wishes to act externally, he extraverts. He is not now the victim of his nature, but master of it; and so, with the four functions and their interrelationships will be able to shift from one to the other giving to each its truth. But this is a position arrived at after many lifetimes of . . .

No, it is not this particular personality that is born again. You've got to have a deeper conception and that is this, that the real entity, the real bearer of the personality and of the consciousness is not visible to outer consciousness, but persists in a subtle inner domain, visible to the properly developed second-sight, but not to gross senses. And that this being, during an incarnation sends forth a ray into incarnation, and when that incarnation is finished withdraws the ray, and in the next incarnation sends out another. I call this the pseudopodal theory of reincarnation based upon the figure of the amoeba: the one-celled organism that manages to crawl by projecting portions of itself outward and pulling itself forward, then projecting another portion of itself outward and pulling itself forward, going in whatever way it wanted to go. These bodies, these forms that we see, are developed as merely pseudopods of the real entity which we are. And that when one pseudopod is withdrawn with what it has garnered of wisdom, and love, and knowledge, and other forms of experience, and brought its contribution to the general source of the entity which we really are, then again another pseudopod is sent forth, or another ray, which becomes another personality *karmically* the child of all those rays that have gone before, *karmically* conditioned by those rays, but not identical with any one of those rays.

Bear this in mind if you are ever read the Buddhist sutras, that gives Gautama Buddha's instruction on this subject where he says that which follows is like a candle which is the natural *karmic* result of the candle which was just . . . The candle representing the aggregates, and those aggregates which have been thrown back and dissolved and reintegrated, again formed a new candle; and that you have a light from this candle and a light from that candle, and since they are . . . the flame looks alike. Are the flames the same? In one sense he says they are, and in other sense they are not. They are in the sense of a continuum unseen behind the veil; they are not in the sense that the appearances of that continuum as personalities out here are not reincarnations of each other. There is a point on which many believers in reincarnation are in error.

Now, in the long journey to the ultimate fulfilment there will come a time when that entity which we in reality are, have been building through the ages, will be . . . and there will be what is called the great time of rest, which is not non-consciousness, but it is consciousness in a different form—a consciousness which in the beginning we could not

distinguish from unconsciousness, but because of this journey through life after life, we have become . . . to become conscious of consciousness without the aid of any phenomena. And then that which was absolute unconsciousness becomes absolute consciousness.

Now, this is a brief . . .

I know. All right. They tell me the time is up now. My watch must be a little off. So that will be the end of it for the time being. Thank you.