

# Lectures to University Students

## Part 5 of 7

Franklin Merrell-Wolff  
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Fellow Students, that includes you all:

This is my fifth time here and it seems to be becoming a habit. I certainly enjoy the meetings I've had with you in the past. Tonight, I do intend to give some attention to the problems exemplified by many of the students in colleges all over the world—a sense of rebellion and particularly the rights of the feeling of conscientious objection and of nonviolence.

But at first, I'll say this. When William James was preparing for his Gifford Lectures, which later were published as *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, he made an extensive search of the religions of the world to find the features that were common to all and he found only two features. Every religion proclaimed the fact of a “wrongness” in the world and also every religion suggested a cure for that wrongness.<sup>1</sup> The interpretation of the wrongness varied from religion to religion and so did the offered cure. Now, I'm impressed with the fact that the young people in the universities today, perhaps as never before, have been impressed with the wrongness in this world. In the day of the atom bomb, that wrongness is not too hard to see. Students here and in all other parts of the world, on this side of the iron curtain and on the other side of the iron curtain, have risen in substantial numbers to protest against a wrongness, as they see it. They often feel that we of the older generation have made a botch of this world. Well, that was the way I felt when I was your age; and a good many of us in that day, though not so numerous as today, also felt that those that preceded us had made a botch of this world, and we were also quite sure that we could do it better. After sixty years since those days, I have realized that it's not so easy to do it better, and I'd like to bring out some of the problems before we're through tonight.

I sympathize with the revolt. I, too, revolted; but I remained revolted, many do not. I traced the problem far back toward its roots, and I saw that it was much more than a sociological problem, an economic problem, or a political problem, but, in the last analysis, a religious problem. Anything that we may be able to do in the field of practice, such as sociology, economics, and politics, is only of subsidiary value in tackling the fundamental problem of wrongness. Actually the sense of wrongness in the world is the negative cause of the yogic search—the search for a release. There is a positive pull from the transcendent level as well, but the *vairagya*, that means disgust with the world as it is, leads to that search. And so it was with me. I've gone over some of my own experiences in this respect and I don't intend to dwell upon them tonight because I have another subject, but I searched for a solution. I also found one, for the individual.

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<sup>1</sup> William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: The Modern Library, 1902), 508.

Yes, one of the answers to this question of the wrongness is given by Buddha. When he discovered that life as it's predominantly experienced in the world is a state of suffering—it's plagued by illness, poverty, and death—he found it impossible to enjoy his relative comfort and searched for seven years to find an answer. He found it and then spent his life trying to bring that answer to men. The answer was the attainment of *Nirvana*. Again, the problem was faced by another known as Shankara, who esoterically is closely related to Buddha, and he said the problem was one of ignorance and the resolution is knowledge—not academic knowledge, not mere knowledge about, but a spiritual knowledge; that this world in which we move, that produces problems for which you can find no durable answer is actually only a *maya*, an illusion, a something like a bad dream, and the solution is awakening from that dream. The awakening is the yogic Liberation—entirely possible to attain. I'm not speaking academically because I went that way and proved it. And then Christ, again dealing with this problem of the wrongness in the world, produced his solution; and it has since his time been interpreted in the Christian world as due to a perverse will, and that will needs to be domesticated and to brought in line often by very austere practices. Again, there is reason to believe, in fact more than believe, that here hidden behind this figure is the same Blessed One that was behind Shankara. These three brought a solution that has certain things in common, solution by escape: *Nirvana*, *Moksha*, the Kingdom of Heaven—as Christ said, “My kingdom is not of this world.”<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to this, there is in virtually our own day, another approach to the problem of human suffering, of the ugliness, irrationality that makes up our common lot in our experience of this world, and that is the one of Sri Aurobindo, which has its line of descent not from Buddha, but from Krishna, and does not make much use of the conception of *maya*, but proposes to deal with the problem on this plane and not simply seek an escape from this plane. In particular, the message of the *Bhagavad Gita* is interpreted by Sri Aurobindo as not simply a symbol of a problem in the individual life, but as explicitly dealing with an actual situation involving war in those ancient days. And Arjuna, a *Kshatriya*, the warrior, is told to not depart from his *dharma*, but to face the issue on its plane so that the forces of *Adharma*, or what we might call the forces of evil, may not be triumphant and so that humans may be protected in their living of the *Dharma*. Here's a totally different approach to the problem.

I'm free to admit that my natural inclination has been oriented to the line identified with Buddha, Shankara, and Christ, and I've been inclined to give up this world as it is as a bad mess, and that release through the realization of *Nirvana* would be the most attractive solution. And I found the release. And I can say to you it's not too hard to find. If you give yourself to the search concentratedly, you might very well succeed in three or four lives getting there—it usually takes seven—and that's not very hard. But you would have released yourself and left a humanity still in the midst of suffering. You would have reached a point when you could do something for that humanity, and yet deserted it. And then there is the larger problem of a redeemed humanity—the humanity faced today by the devastating power of an atom bomb that could make life here impossible for anything—vegetable, animal, or human. That is only

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<sup>2</sup> See John 18:36.

the most dramatic feature. So, one may choose, on the day that he could find his own release, to turn back and do something about it. There is that which is known as the vow of *Kwan-Yin*, running this way: “Never will I seek nor receive private, individual salvation; never will I enter into final peace alone; but forever, and everywhere, will I strive for the salvation of all creatures throughout the world.” Note, it says all creatures, not merely all humans. I wrote, in the last of this book, a few lines in a final poem which run this way, “I, Free, but [yet] not wholly Free, While these, bound, remain, travailing.”<sup>3</sup> The whole of our own identity is not confined to this particular separated individual that we are. We interlock to others, in fact ultimately to all humanity—at least through the collective unconscious we can see this—and more than that, we’re interlocked with the whole of life and all that is, and no part can be wholly free while the rest remain bound travailing. And these words are intended more as introductory.

I wish now to speak more about the revolt of the students and that portion of them who have felt the call to conscientious objection with respect to war, and feel as though they wish to go the way of Gandhi with his *Satyagraha*, or nonviolence. Now I can speak to them with a great deal of sympathy because I, too, faced the First World War as a conscientious objector, and I went through the mill. Without the support of a religious organization, well recognized, that has as one of its tenets nonviolence, like the Friends or Quakers, there is no formal provision in the law for the conscientious objector who bases his objection upon an individual moral conception or philosophy. The problem becomes somewhat complicated.

The experience of being inducted into the military comes with quite a shock, and some of you probably will be facing it and might tell you something about it. First of all, the experience of barracks life is an experience of a psychic cesspool. The experience of close order drill is an experience of a systematic process to break you down as an individual and make you into an interchangeable part that will ultimately obey blindly and automatically. To become made or transformed from a self-judging individual into a part of a human machine, that is an experience of peculiar torture, psychological to be sure; but if that which you had viewed as a desirable goal was becoming a self-determined individual, this violated the very essence of your moral code. And then further, in bayonet drill, the code of the non-killer is systematically broken down. You’re trained to have the morality and the psychology of the killer. This can come as a very severe moral shock. Now, I had a guiding principle that came to me from some higher source that I recognized which said, “A greater than I has said, ‘Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, but render unto God the things that are God’s’; and God’s law says, ‘Thou shalt not kill.’” “It would seem,” the statement went on to say, “that if there is conflict between God’s law and Caesar’s law that God’s law should take priority.” One of the points in this double dictum is that there’s a duty to Caesar as well as a duty to the higher power. A difficult question arises, when is the moment when one will take his stand? At what moment does the obedience to the law, “Thou shalt not kill,” take priority over Caesar’s law? Will one take a stand when it’s merely some routine order to be obeyed? You’re not required yet to kill, but you’re being prepared to kill. Yes, at the battlefield one could say, could refuse to shoot. But it’s not easy to draw the line and the

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<sup>3</sup> Franklin Merrell-Wolff, *Pathways Through to Space* (New York: Richard R. Smith, 1944), 252.

result is you struggle with a sense of guilt; you feel wrong all the time; there's no clear-cut point of decision, of division. For my part I was ready to face imprisonment or the firing squad, but it had to be on the issue of obedience to the divine law, not on some issue of failure to obey a technical order; and they'll put you into that position. They're clever enough, too. Ultimately, they gave me a certain recognition. I volunteered for a certain work that was not in the field of violent activity and finished the period of the war in the spruce production division up in the northwest part of this country.

Now, the question arises, when is conscientious objection valid? Surely, it is not valid as an excuse to hide cowardice; and that has been done. It is not valid with respect to the particular wars that you disapprove of. It's valid only when it is the definite issue between two authorities, the authority of Caesar and of what I prefer to call the "transcendental modulus," because not all religions view the supreme as personal—some are non-theistic. But there always is a transcendental modulus, and so as to be in terms that are perfectly general, I like to use that. At what point, or who may take this stand? I'll say this, he alone who eschews all violence under all conditions, including violence of feeling. And this is where *Satyagraha* comes in—truth-force or soul-force, as used by Gandhi. Violence in battle, physical violence, is the offspring of violence in feeling. Have you reached the point where someone could come up to you and speak in a most insulting manner and you do not come back violently physically or violently in feeling? If so, then you're ready to be a conscientious objector. And the world needs them. I would like to see emerge from you those who should so qualify. But you wield the force of the saint when you do and you face the battles of the saint to qualify. It's not an easy thing. It's not something that a person can casually say, "I don't like this war, therefore, I am going to claim conscientious objection. I don't like the pain of it. I don't like to face the hardship of it. Therefore, I'm going to claim conscientious objection." That is only weakness. It means that you're going to face within yourself a struggle more severe than the soldier with a gun will have to face. And it also means that you may die violently. I think of three figures that are well known to us who have been exemplars of nonviolence: Christ, Gandhi, and of late, Dr. King. All three died violently. We have reason to believe that at least one, maybe more, maybe all, died without violent condemnation of the source of the violence. Such are justified in conscientious objection.

And here's another thing that complicates our problem. It would be so nice, so easy, so beautiful, if you felt that the unlocked house, the unlocked car—and this is part of nonviolence, you might say, *Satyagraha*—that the being harmless would bring to you the greatest security. In the last analysis, of course, it will; but in the intermediate zone it may not. I'm going to read a little something to you before we're through that deals with the complications involved in the whole conception of truth-force applied prematurely. Yes, that would be lovely, but it's a battle—yes, a moral battle now, a spiritual battle, a mental battle—to establish nonviolence as a dominant way of life in this world—something not easily accomplished, but something of the utmost importance that it should be accomplished.

I thought of the two men who might rate as perhaps the two greatest criminals in our known history. I would list them as Genghis Khan and Joseph Stalin. Whether you know Genghis Khan or not, I'll speak a bit about his principle in war: kill off everybody—man, woman, and child—in the country, and their animals, and tear their

cities down so that not one rock stands upon another, and the country doesn't rise up again. That's his principle in war. And he is said to have said this: that the greatest delight of the warrior is to sleep on a victorious battlefield with his slain enemies around him, listening to the wailing of their women—a lovely character. Joseph Stalin has said the same thing. Koestler has estimated that the total number of deaths produced by his rapacity was something like 15 million. And they died a very slow, painful way, up in the arctic cold. Underclothed, underfed, and overworked, they died on an average in about three years; and he, too, made remarks that are almost a paraphrase of those of Genghis Khan. And yet both of these men died from natural causes in their beds.

Now, these are painful facts. The moral ideal, if we visit it alone, can be beautifully painted, but if we're going to tackle the problem of this world we've got to see the facts as they are. I'm going to read you a couple of little things—one is from Machiavelli. This man is not formulating any ideal. He's merely describing what is. The way of the politician—which in this case is the prince, but it would be the politicians in a republican form of government—the course of action they must follow if they are to be successful.

It is not, therefore, necessary for a prince to have all the above-named qualities, but it is very necessary to seem to have them. I would even be bold to say that to possess them and always to observe them is dangerous, but to appear to possess them is useful. [This is practical politics.] Thus it is well to seem merciful, faithful, humane, sincere, religious, and also to be so; but you must have the mind so disposed that when it is needful to be otherwise you may be able to change to the opposite qualities [direction]. And it must be understood that a prince, and especially a new prince, cannot observe all those [these] things which are considered good in men, being often obliged, in order to maintain the state, to act against faith, against charity, against humanity, and against religion. And, therefore, he must have a mind disposed to adapt itself according to the wind, and as the variations of fortune dictate, and, as I said before, not deviate from what is good if possible, but be able to do evil if constrained.

A prince must take great care that nothing goes out of his mouth which is not full of the above-named five qualities, and, to see and hear him, he should seem to be all mercy, faith, integrity, humanity, and religion. And nothing is more necessary than to seem to have this last quality, for men in general judge more by the eyes than by the hands, for every one can see, but very few have to feel. Everybody sees what you appear to be, few feel what you are, and those few will not dare to oppose themselves to the many, who have the majesty of the state to defend them; and in the actions of men, and especially of princes, from which there is no appeal, the end justifies the means. Let the prince therefore aim at conquering and maintaining the state, and the means will always be judged honourable and praised by every one, for the vulgar is always taken by appearances and the issue of the event; and the world consists only of the

vulgar, and the few who are not vulgar are isolated when the many have a rallying point in the prince.<sup>4</sup>

That's practical politics. And the painful thing to say is that the men who work by those principles succeed in the political field and the idealists fail. Just recently it's been pointed out that Lindsey, an idealist, the mayor of New York, has had a very bad time in his city in bringing about fairly decent results; whereas, Mayor Daley, a machine politician, in other words a Machiavellian, has been reasonable successful. He works with men as they are. The practical politician does. I despise their code, but I've got to admit the fact that it works.

Now hear from a great man—a very different kind of man, but thoroughly realistic—namely, no less than Aurobindo himself speaking in his *Essays on the Gita*; and this has bearing upon *Satyagraha* and the problem of *Satyagraha*, showing how complex it is, showing how merely to see that the world is not what it should be doesn't mean that you have all the know-how for bringing about a good solution:

War and destruction are not only a universal principle of our life here in its purely material aspects, but also of our mental and moral existence. It is self-evident that in the actual life of man intellectual, social, political, moral we can make no real step forward without a struggle, a battle between what exists and lives and what seeks to exist and live and between all that stands behind either. It is impossible, at least as men and things are, to advance, to grow, to fulfill and still to observe really and utterly that principle of harmlessness which is yet placed before us as the highest and best law of conduct. We will use only soul-force and never destroy by war or any even defensive employment of physical violence?<sup>5</sup>

And at this moment, let me interject the answer of Gandhi to the question put to him, suppose a vicious character is attacking some children intending injury, even death, how would you handle that in accordance with the principles of *Satyagraha*? He says the individual could place himself between the attacker and the children, protest the acts of the attacker, and, if necessary, accept death imposed by the attacker; and that possibly, then, the children might escape. But Gandhi would not compromise in even that situation. Well, see what Aurobindo says, further:

Good, though until soul-force is effective, the Asuric [that means the dark, the force that is definitely oriented to evil, consciously, choosing it] the Asuric force in men and nations tramples down, breaks, slaughters, burns, pollutes, as we see it doing today, but then at its ease and unhindered, and you have perhaps caused as much destruction of life by your abstinence as others by resort to violence; still you have set up an ideal which may some day and at any rate ought to lead up to better things. But even soul-force,

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<sup>4</sup> Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1935), 93-94.

<sup>5</sup> Aurobindo Ghose, *Essays on the Gita*, vol. 13 of *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centennial Library* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, 1970), 39.

when it is effective, destroys. Only those who have used it with eyes open, know how much more terrible and destructive it is than the sword and the cannon; and only those who do not limit their view to the act and its immediate results, can see how tremendous are its after-effects, how much is eventually destroyed and with that much all the life that depended on it and fed upon it. Evil cannot perish without the destruction of much that lives by evil, and it is no less destruction even if we personally are saved the pain of a sensational act of violence.<sup>6</sup>

Now, he's for the triumph of the principle of soul-force, but he says there's no point in putting a blinder before your eyes and not looking at the real world as it is. Now, here, I'll read just one more paragraph that gets at the crux of the matter, and I think has been recently illustrated here since the death of Dr. King:

Moreover, every time we use soul-force we raise a great force of Karma against our adversary, the after-movements of which we have no power to control. Vasishtha uses soul-force against the military violence of Vishwamitra and armies of Huns and Shakas and Pallavas hurl themselves on the aggressor. The very quiescence and passivity of the spiritual man under violence and aggression awakens the tremendous forces of the world to a retributive action.<sup>7</sup>

Now, I'll finish that point on that. Now notice what broke out after the death of Dr. King quite recently—violence, rather massive for a time; of course a repudiation of the ideas proclaimed by Dr. King, but illustrates the point that Aurobindo brings out here.

Now, I'm not going to give you an answer to these problems. I'm placing the elements of the problem before you, and think out your own answers. Some may decide that the course for them is to accept the duty of the soldier; some, I hope one or more, may feel the call to that greater battle within themselves that leads to the true conscientious objection, the true nonviolence, involving the overcoming of the violence in one's own feeling, which is the heart of the matter.

I wished to speak of this to you because this is an issue among college students in a peculiar degree at this time. I wish that you tackle the problem and work out your own solution—not my solution, not the solution of somebody else. And remember, we owe a duty to Caesar as well as a duty to the transcendental modulus; and so long as there's no conflict between the two, we can easily perform both duties, but when there is a conflict, then there must be a choice. And one of those struggles within oneself, though it involves no physical bleeding, can have the force of a crucifixion. Gandhi pointed out that we grow and rise by suffering. Suffering can either be suffering imposed upon others, but in the case of he who moves on the plane of soul-force or truth-force, it must be suffering taken in to himself. It's a heroic path, more heroic than that of the soldier in the last analysis. The pain is greater than the pain of physical suffering for it goes in deeply into

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

the very heart of the man. But we need those who will follow this way. Some day this must be a better world, or else we'll have to take the path of escape—one or the other.

Now there's another subject I wish to speak on tonight, not specifically related to what I've already said, and I have still a third subject for tomorrow night. I wish to say something about the difference between *speculative thinking* and [transcriptive] transcriptive—I have trouble with words sticking—*transcriptive thinking*, thank you.

The main purpose of the university is to teach one *how* to think, not *what* to think; we often make a mistake on that. Everything else is secondary in the particular business of a university. The what to think may come out of your lives, out of your inner experiences, out of your own observations, but the how to think, the learning how to use the mind that we have acquired over the centuries, especially since the time of Socrates with whose queries there finally emerged in the hands of Aristotle the first formal logic. Information that can be added to one is a detail. What we acquire in the university is only a small part of the total information we'll be acquiring throughout life. We're never through, or we shouldn't be. We should always be going to school and that's why I said "fellow students" when I addressed you in the beginning, because I, along with you, though 80, am still a student. There are still things to be learned, and some of the most interesting things you may find after your college years. But the kind of thinking that you can learn in the college, and the only kind that's teachable in the ordinary sense, is what we know as speculative thinking. I'm using the word in its strict sense as the directed kind of thinking, the kind that can be very hard work, can be more fatiguing than the heaviest of physical labor. You perhaps don't often reach that, but you will if you go far in mathematics. And I can recommend one thing: take the metaphysical and transcendental deduction of the categories in Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*; try reading that. Now, that will be thinking directed apparently by your own effort. It's very hard to realize that it is not a case of "I think" here because the effort is so severe.

There's another kind, however, and to illustrate this I'll take a figure that wouldn't have been available in an earlier day, in other words, wouldn't have been available B.C., that is, before computers. Let us suppose that a computer had built into it the power to program itself and to tap the source of power on its own motion, on its own initiation. Then you imagine that this computer gets very busy building up programs and making the rest of itself work out the problems that it poses. And here comes a human being who wants to use the computer, and he finds it so busy that he can't get any use out of it. Now, that is the state of man ordinarily, he's like the computer that is using itself; doing his own programming from an egoistic basis.

Now, if one is reaching out towards that level where there may be the descent of the transcendental modulus, or what many would call the descent of the Divine or the numen, and he wishes to open the Door, an often asserted requirement is that the mind should be made quiet, just like the computer remaining quiet until the human operator gives it a command. Now, this is a difficult practice. First, you may say, well I'm going to hold the mind quiet, not allow any thoughts into it, and you find that you've been thinking about holding the mind quiet, you have been occupied with that thought. You haven't succeeded. You try all sorts of devices and labor with great difficulty, but if you analyze closely, you'll find that that mind is not really quiet. I found in the Tibetan book,



*The Tibetan Secret Doctrine and Yoga*, one Sutra that dealt with this particular problem.<sup>8</sup> They called it chopping off the heads of thoughts. It gave an exercise of not trying to stop thoughts coming into the mind but of just chopping off their heads when they came. If you keep that up, oh, maybe weeks and so on, months, you finally come to the conclusion that you can't stop them, and that was the lesson you were being taught.

What do you do, then, to get a quiet mind? Well, I discovered this is possible, that you can consciously produce a schizoid state in which the monkey mind, the part that is continually active is put to one side and with another part of the mind you penetrate into Depth. You ignore what goes on in the part that you put to one side; just ignore it. And then it becomes possible for another kind of thought to come in. There is also one advantage in having a portion of the mind on the sidelines. There are certain states of deep trance where one would be blacked out on this plane, and if he was not with someone that was proficient, he could get locked in. Now, it says that Ramakrishna was locked in for six months at one time. So that that blackout trance is to be avoided, and yet how is one to penetrate without it? This technique works by a schizoid division in the mind and one part penetrates in, and this out here can serve as a recorder of the process so that you can know. If it wasn't for that, this book *Pathways* could not have been written. That became possible and those things were recorded by having something there to record these experiences.

Well, now if one has reached a certain point where he has isolated the Self and identified himself with the Self and has succeeded in holding it as a witness at all times, that is ever witnessing the processes in his nature, in his mind, and so forth, then you've reached a point where thought can be of the transcriptive type, and that type of thought comes in from above and uses the mind as an instrument for its elaboration. And when this happens, problems that would be from the speculative point of view either extremely difficult or even impossible can be resolved without effort. It thinks itself, as it were. It just flows in. So that this ever active mind which tries to run away with everything now becomes a tool of a higher power, and a wisdom can come down that you can speak and teach yourself as well as others. That can happen, but this is part of what is to be learned on the way of yoga. It's part of the meaning of yoga.

Now, the practical bearing on what I said earlier this evening is that the problem of humanity is beyond the capacity of our speculative thinking and calls for the resources of this transcriptive thinking. The way that is not available to the ordinary sight becomes available to this higher power and can be made to work among men. The more there are who are so qualified, the better our chances of finding a solution to the world problem which seems so insoluble to us. Of course, this is a call to yoga. But yoga is not only a way for the greatest illumination and delight of the individual, it is the way also to the resources needed by a poverty stricken humanity—poverty stricken even though they have millions—poverty stricken in terms of spiritual values, and a humanity that left to itself would do itself to death.

Tomorrow night, I'm going to take up a problem that I think—or I'll present a resolution of a problem that I think will help to bridge the gulf between Shankara and Sri

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<sup>8</sup> W. Y. Evans-Wentz, ed., *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1935), 128-134.

Aurobindo as between universal illusionism and universal realism. It'll call for a little mathematics, not more than trigonometry though, in this case, so it's not too formidable. I thank you for listening to me this evening.

Merchant: Thank you very much Dr. Wolff. If you have any questions you would like to ask of Dr. Wolff, I'm sure that he will be happy to answer them for you. Well, while the others are thinking, I have one question—

Wolff: Okay.

Merchant: —if I may ask.

Wolff: Sure.

Merchant: Dr. Wolff, you mentioned Joseph Stalin and Genghis Khan—

Wolff: Mm-hmm.

Merchant: —among the people whose values were, in terms of perpetration of man's inhumanity to man.

Wolff: Yeah.

Merchant: Where would you place Adolph Hitler, who sent six million Jews to the gas chambers by distorting—

Wolff: Yeah. I know.

Merchant: —the Christian religion?

Wolff: I'd say about 6 million as against 15 million, I'd say about that proportion.

Student: It's a matter of efficiency, of higher production standards, I think.

Wolff: You see the gas chamber is relatively quick. The other, up north in the arctic was three years. I think I'd rather take the gas chamber. There are other candidates for the supreme criminal. But I think Genghis Khan and Joseph Stalin are pretty hard to beat.

Student: In World War I, you were a conscientious objector, and yet you allowed yourself to be inducted into the armed forces, apparently. Why?

Wolff: Because, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesars." Is it a violation of God's law, "Thou shalt not kill," to allow yourself to be inducted? Does it come at that point? At the point where you're told to shoot and kill that individual, it would be a sharp violation of, "Thou shalt not kill." Now, at what point between becomes the point of decision. It's not a simple problem. You've got an obligation; also, this obligation is formulated by Christ, an obligation to Caesar as well as an obligation to God.

Student: Well, I believe that at one point in your talk you mentioned the warrior class, and if I understood correctly, you mentioned a possible, or a justification for the existence of such a class, but you didn't state it.

Wolff: Yes. There is such a class, whether recognized or not, there are *Kshatriyas*, as well as *Brahmins*, *Vaisyas*, and *Sudras*. And a few may have learned it; there's a good deal you can learn from their attitudes and so forth. Now, there's some things—the military discipline and the conditions of life, of war, of battle, and so forth, are precisely

the conditions in which the *Kshatriya* grows. It's a condition that would be a violence to the very essence of a *Brahmin*, and it would be beyond the capacity of a *Sudra*, and something of a strain on a *Vaisya*, you see.

Student: Mm-hmm.

Wolff: We're not recognizing that in making everyone go through the same measurement, as it were, everybody being required to be measured by the same yardstick, do work a very gross injustice. Now, there are some things about the *Kshatriya* that force my respect. There was a German field marshal who said that the ideal of the soldier involved final death on the battlefield. He had not fulfilled himself unless he died upon the battlefield. Now, one who had this feeling is not violating the Golden Rule when he seeks to kill the other because he welcomes it himself. That makes a difference.

Student: Yes.

Wolff: There's a story told of two soldiers that came for service to a certain Raja in India. And the Raja, before employing them, questioned them at length and finally asked them if they had courage. And each drew out his sword and ran it through the other and they proved that they had courage.

Student: In other words, there's possible merit in, let's say someone of the *Kshatriya* class, rendering unto Caesar's, and let's say ignoring what he should be rendering unto God, something along those lines?

Wolff: He may not be called to that decision, but you see, if one happens to be a *Brahmin* in disguise—

Student: Yes.

Wolff: —the command from above takes a great priority.

Student: Yes.

Wolff: Therefore, I say I cannot give an answer for everyone. I'm giving simply the elements you have to use to work out your own answers. I'm merely pointing out that there's an obligation both ways. I don't like Caesar, but, nonetheless, we have a duty to him. Maybe something about Caesar could be revealed in the symbol of the Passion. Whether that is a historic event or not, it is a symbolically significant event. I think it is probably an historical event. There are those that have questioned the historicity of Christ's life. That's the only reason why I put in those modifying words. Now, if you'll notice, the priests found Jesus an uncomfortable fellow around. He was in revolt and threatened, more or less, their religious control; and it's understandable that they were annoyed, but they could not execute anybody—only Rome had that power. They, therefore, sent Christ over to Pontius Pilot for examination, and they worked up a mob to make it seem that the populace wished the execution of this man. Pontius Pilot, as you remember in the examination, found no fault in this man and he tried to have him liberated on that ground. But the crowd cried for his death.

Now, here's the thing, let me interpose this parenthesis here. Beware of crowds. Beware of mass demonstrations. Because under those conditions, you build up what is known as the psychological crowd—I recommend to you to read Le Bon's book on the subject—and in the psychological crowd, the power of rational thought is depressed and

becomes well-nigh impossible so that the average intelligence of the crowd is less than the mean intelligence of the individual in it, probably even less than the most unintelligent individual in it, and emotional force is accentuated.<sup>9</sup> The irrational sides are increased so much so that a nonviolent crowd is virtually a contradiction in terms. You're dealing with psychological forces that are really impossible to handle by nonviolent means. Avoid, therefore, the crowd. This crowd that was brought together by the priests in that day were a plaything in the hands of those priests. A few days before they were hailing Jesus, and they played them around, one way or the other. Dr. King could never handle a crowd. Those violent individuals are the ones who have the greater potential of handling that sort of thing. Crowds are dangerous because they're irrational. The tendency to move in such terms as mass movements constitutes part of the real danger of this time because you're releasing infrarational forces. They may be generous and they may tear you to pieces the next moment. It's a very dangerous manifestation in our time. Well, now this is just a parenthesis.

Now what did Pontius Pilot do in that situation? He followed the rules laid down by Machiavelli, although Machiavelli hadn't yet written them. He didn't want trouble in Palestine. Rome was the ruler, but conquered territories can rise. It might take more soldiers to overcome the trouble than the soldiers he had at hand, so as a matter of political expediency—and this is the way the political mind works, one of the reasons why I have very little admiration for it—it was more expedient to condemn a man that in Pontius Pilot's own mind was innocent of any wrong than to release him. So he scourged, turned him over to the soldiers to be mocked, and then crucified by the army.

Political-military power is what we symbolize by Caesar, and in a peculiar sense, because of that symbol it is antichrist. And yet we cannot live in this world, as yet, without Caesar power. I would like to see the neutralization of power, but we can't have it. I prefer money power to Caesar power because it's more rational. I prefer to see them independent of each other so they can tend to neutralize each other, and we get a little more freedom out of it. In the Marxist countries, they're all brought into one unit; therefore, you have maximum power in one place, and, therefore, minimum possibility of freedom. Keep them separate, neutralizing each other, and you'll have a better chance of freedom. In the real world, in the world of practice, power is a fact we've got to live with. Aurobindo points out that religion, so far, has not attempted the domestication of power. Yes, of knowledge, of love, because both knowledge and love are naturally pure, or tend to be pure. The religious leaders of the past have shied from power as a thing that you cannot deal with. You take the vow of poverty, have no wealth, have no means whatsoever, and live as a *Sannyasin*, and you can obtain your Liberation all right, but you have not tackled the overwhelming source of evil in this world, namely, undomesticated power. Religion, Aurobindo maintains, and I agree with him, must tackle this problem. But that remains to be done. It's a problem for the future; and that way is going to be tougher than the way of love and knowledge. Well, I'm getting too verbal perhaps.

Student: I've got a question that stems from the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." Now, we're referring to one human being. Is killing the same, like if I were to kill a human being, that, and I kill an animal? Is this killing the same?

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<sup>9</sup> Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd* (Atlanta, Ga.: Cherokee Publishing Co., 1982).

Wolff: Well, I'd say there is a certain relativity that the higher the form of life that you kill, the greater the responsibility, but that the destroying of any life involves something of a sin. As you think on these things your sensitivity grows and you try to think of a life that would involve no killing whatever, and, ultimately, you wind up with this fact that your leucocytes are going to go on in killing invaders. It can't be done.

Student: We have to kill in order for our own selves to exist.

Wolff: To exist. Aurobindo brings out that point there. Yes, we kill. If we don't eat animals, suppose we drink milk and eat eggs. Well, you know what that implies? The egg has not hatched into a chick; but further than that, all of the little roosters have to be sold for meat. No farmer could afford to put all the roosters out to pastures. Not this human society could afford the number of roosters that would be around. So when you're eating eggs, you're implying the killing of the roosters and ultimately the killing of the hens. And the same with milk; you're implying the killing of the bullies. Usually, they go to make veal. Actually, when you eat beef, you're more likely to eat the flesh of an animal that has had three years of life; whereas, when you drink milk you imply killing a young bully. So you haven't escaped it by drinking milk and eating eggs. All right, suppose you go to eating only vegetable foods. Well, apart from the fact that most human beings can't do it without getting into digestive trouble, you'll frustrate the nut that you eat because it thus can't grow into the tree that it might have grown into; and the same with the seeds that you eat. There's about one thing that you can eat without feeling any guilt at all and that's fruit, because you take and eat the fruit and scatter the seed. That's what nature intended. So you serve the purpose of nature there in eating the fruit. The fruitarian, I guess he does the best job. Then, how about the gnats that are biting you and the mosquitoes that are biting you? You wouldn't dare to slap them. You couldn't deny them their meal. The Jains do go about that far. They do even put nosebags to avoid inhaling insects. They're non-killing, but they haven't mastered the problem of the leucocytes that are fighting invaders in their blood stream.

So, a complete non-killing, I had to judge was impossible. But you work out the optimum conditions. It's unnecessary to kill for fun. It's undesirable. It's quite immoral to kill for fun. They call it sport, but it isn't. To kill for necessary food has a certain justification, but not the killing for fun. And if you have raised the creatures that you eat, man has done something for them in compensation. He has provided food. He has provided a certain protection, and their average life span may well be greater than the life span of a creature in nature because of that protection. So there are some compensations there. Yes, I'd like to get rid of it, but if you're going to live in this world, you're going to face compromise. Here are the five rules of Buddha, well to live by: non-killing, non-lying, non-stealing, non-concupiscence, and non-intoxication. You reach a situation where in order to prevent someone from being killed you have to lie. There is where you have your moral issues. When there's a conflict of rules. While they're going smoothly there's no problem, but when they come in clash—and if you have more than one rule they're going to clash at some point. Actually, he who wants to be and exemplify truth and only truth can have only one rule, orientation to Truth. He can't have orientation to compassion. He can't have orientation to anything else, because sometime, sooner or later, he'd have to choose. Well, that's part of the problem of living in this world and why it's so unpleasant. We have to have the courage to face the crucifixion of a profound

moral issue and make a decision that's our decision; not the decision of a priest, or a professor, or of some authority who has written a book, but your own. And it's only by such decisions we grow.

Student: Dr. Wolff.

Wolff: Mm-hmm.

Student: You talked about the, um, not curse, but, uh, the pledge of, the pledge that one takes, uh—

Wolff: Oh, you mean the *Kwan-Yin*?

Student: Yes. And the idea to come back and to, not necessarily proselytize, but to help people—

Wolff: That's right.

Student: —having once attained that state, and many, many yogis do not come back, and I thought this, too, that it's a selfish thing; but can't they be justified and can't their hiding away and their ambitions to even further perfection be justified in the fact that perhaps they're helping anyway in the collectivity of humanity?

Wolff: Oh, yes, that's true. Our collective psyche is not something separate. The collective unconscious embraces all of us. We are, as it were, islands in the sea of a collective unconscious. If one individual breaks through to a high Realization, something is done at that moment to the whole collectivity. But if he returns, he can do much more. It isn't proselytizing. I'd agree with Vivekananda that the ideal state is where every individual has his own religion—not something that's prescribed as a common dogma, or a common ritual, and so forth, but the religion which is your own uniquely—and for all of us to reach the point where we can get along with people that have a different religion from what we have. They have learned to do that in the Orient much better than we have. So, that each would have his own religion, his own particular Door to the Transcendent, and his own particular expression of it. That's the ideal. We are not ready for it yet, but I would stir or arouse the effort to achieve that in as many as I could. And that's not proselytizing. Proselytizing is, you come along and believe in my ideas, you see, my interpretation. I put my own interpretation in that book and in a manuscript since then, but it's not something you have to take at all. A guru, in dealing with a *chela* should be particularly careful not to impose on the *chela* his own interpretation. See the point?

Student: Yes. Yes.

Merchant: Are there any other questions? Well, if not then we'll take a break for coffee and refreshments. And, Dr. Wolff, we thank you very much from the bottom of our hearts; and I express the sentiments of all of us here when I say that we are very grateful for the benefit of your many insights, and pearls of wisdom, and food for thought that you have given us. Thank you again.

Wolff: Thank you.