

# On the Problem of Redemption

Franklin Merrell-Wolff

November 30, 1969

Recently we were over at the city of Phoenix in Arizona. During the time there, we gave two discourses that were recorded, each over an hour in length.<sup>1</sup> The material that is being, I think, developed is contrary to many statements found in the literature. It could even be regarded as heretical. It bears upon the problem of redemption and involves a redefinition of what is meant by redemption from not only the Christian point of view but from even the point of view of the Advaita Vedanta and of traditional Buddhism.

The ordinary Christian conception is that if an individual entity attains to the state of a heavenly world he has been redeemed. That is here challenged, and for these reasons. The heavenly world as well as the hell worlds and this world here are phenomenal. The phenomenal order is an order in which the presence of objects, subtle or gross, is preeminent and often even dominant. Thus, if one were a good man and attained beyond this life to a heavenly world, he would be in a domain, according to the current conceptions, of a phenomenal order, but presumptively a pleasant phenomenal order where there were experiences of apparent objects. If on the other hand, he had a *karma* that led to a painful after-death state, we'd say he passed through a hellish world. The conception is that the experiences, whether in a heavenly world or in a hellish world, are proportional to causes set up during life here, and since those causes are finite, the results can only be finite. There is a limited time of hellish experience and there is a limited time of heavenly experience. And then one circles back to ordinary embodied life here in this world to experience again, and to strive again, and perhaps earning other painful experiences in after-death or other delightful experiences after death. It is the present thesis that this condition, whether of the pleasant kind or the painful kind, is a non-liberated, a non-redeemed condition. Goodness is not enough, nor is belief in the efficacy of any person however exalted enough to achieve the redeemed or liberated condition. More is involved.

More advanced religious thought has held the view that to be liberated or redeemed is to attain a *nirvanic* state. This is more nearly akin to true liberation or redemption, but in as much as a *nirvanic* state can be a shut-in or closed experience, where one cannot move out of the *nirvanic* state at will, it is the present thesis that this too is less than full redemption; that full redemption, in fact, requires the attainment of a state in which one can move at will between the worlds of experience, or *Sangsara*, and the *nirvanic* worlds which consist of a consciousness which is not phenomenal but is Pure; that the movement shall be at will between the two; and that therefore an individual actually abides in a state more transcendent than *Nirvana*—the one which has been called

---

<sup>1</sup> See the audio recordings, "Sangsara, Nirvana, and Paranirvana," parts 1 and 2.

*Paranirvana*, which I have identified, at least tentatively, with that state of consciousness previously called the High Indifference.

Now, that it is true that heretofore the two states of external experience, or *Sangsara*, and the state of *Nirvana* have been mutually exclusive is accepted as a partial truth—a truth heretofore. If, therefore, we take a position that appears contrary to that in Buddhist and Vedantist and Christian teaching, there is no repudiation of the validity of these three, but rather the maintaining that these are steps that represented the extent to which Realization or Attainment was possible at the time when these unfoldings were put forth, and that something more becomes possible today because of that which has been built or put forth heretofore. We view this present step as another structure or addition to the total structure of revealed truth that becomes possible because of the building of those who preceded. There is, therefore, no conflict, but there is a difference of philosophic view implied—that truth that can be made manifest is relative to the stage of development in consciousness at the time. Further, it is affirmed that no absolute truth, unconditional, unrelated to the relativity of time and space, can be formulated.

That these ideas that have been recently advanced are important has not only the support of my own personal conviction, but even more emphatic support from certain others. Erma, for one, has given it even more emphatic importance than I have. A certain communication which Lillian received, and which was authenticated by Erma, has given it a still more radical importance. And at the time that we were down in Phoenix, on one occasion someone spoke through Erma in most emphatic terms.

There has been, however, a problem in connection with the bringing forth of this knowledge which is related to a certain critical position. Between the state of Realization known to me first on August 7, 1936, in the ascension to the state of Consciousness, there was a certain critical point which I have called a point of discontinuity, in which there was an inversion of consciousness. An important characteristic of that inversion was that whereas in the ordinary state the self seemed to be like a *point*, a sort of center with an environment around it, namely, the environment of the whole universe, on the other side of the point of discontinuity, the Self seemed to be like a *sphere* which embraced the whole universe. There is obviously an incompatibility between these two perspectives. The problem is the integration of them. Without the integration, if one side is to be identified with a *nirvanic* state of Consciousness and the other with a *sangsaric* state of consciousness, the point of discontinuity would imply that the two shall not meet, and that may be the reason why all the literature, ordinary literature at any rate, on the subject implies that one is either a *Sangsaree* or a *Nirvanee*, but not both. And because of that, those who chose to become instruments or agents for effecting redemption of humanity, if they attained to the possibility of a *nirvanic* Consciousness, were urged to renounce it, thereby abandoning the *Dharmakayic* robe and taking the *Nirmanakayic* robe. It was an either-or proposition. Now, what is suggested here is that it is possible to bridge the point of discontinuity. And if that point of discontinuity is bridged, an interflow between the *sangsaric* state of consciousness and the *nirvanic* becomes in principle possible; and that rendering this possible is a preeminently important contribution to the problem of redemption.

Way back in 1936, I did have the experience of seeming to be on both sides of that point of discontinuity. It was an unpleasant state and I then evolved the figure to suggest it of a man standing with one foot on one world and the other foot on another world and that the two worlds were rotating in opposite directions—in the physical sense, an impossible position, but not therefore impossible in the psychical sense. Nonetheless, it was a very unpleasant state, actually involved an agony, and was so reported.<sup>2</sup> But in time, the position becomes tolerable and even, ultimately, delightful.

It is my thought that bridging this gulf caused by the point of discontinuity, a direct intercourse between the *sangsaric* and the *nirvanic* zones becomes possible. Now, the definition of the *nirvanic* state we have had heretofore has been in the nature of release, of rest, of withdrawal from the field of action. What is now suggested is that that is not the whole of the story; that there is a force, a dynamism, in the *nirvanic* field of Consciousness, something that we have already called the Current; that this has a value of refreshment. But it also has a value as a transforming agency; that it tends to transform the state of consciousness of him who contacts it, even though his contact is merely that of the threshold of *Nirvana*. I know that it tends to melt the hardnesses in one; that it tends towards inclusiveness; toward a feeling of an underlying sweetness in the very heart of all that is. Now, let us suppose that something of this dynamic Consciousness could be intruded into the *sangsaric* field; not now thinking in terms merely of leading one individual here and another there to that state of Realization where they could enter *Nirvana*, but thinking in terms of bringing *nirvanic* value into the *sangsaric* field with its transforming effects. How would that be a help?

In answer to this question, let us look forth upon the condition of *Sangsa* as we find it in this world. I won't pretend to say anything about *Sangsa* as it is elsewhere. But *Sangsa* as we find it in this world is a domain of many, many problems that seem essentially insoluble. History is the story of man's inhumanity to man in many ways, and even the efforts of the men of good will so often bring not good, but evil—efforts that fail to resolve the problem. If we look back, say 5,000 years, can we say that in the essential moral and spiritual sense, that the world today is any better than it was? To be sure technically it's far advanced as compared to what it was. But technology solves none of the essential problems, none of the moral problems, none of the spiritual problems as such. Man through his technology and through his skills has brought about a condition in which he could, today, render all life impossible in this world. And we live with the danger that grows out of man's impurity and yet possession of such power. It means we are threatened again by an explosion of population that may result in a so breaking down of the ecology of this world that maybe life, ultimately, would become impossible because we could not produce what's necessary to live. We can see the problem, many do; but we seem to be unable to solve it. We seem only to change it from one form to have it reappear again in another form. But it's the same old problem.

It occurs to me that what's needed in this humanity is a certain transformation at the very base of consciousness itself, of the human consciousness itself, so that instead of the misresults that come from all effort, there may be progress toward a real solution of the problems of humanity. And I see that transforming force in the very Substance of the

---

<sup>2</sup> See the audio recording, "Precaution Against Misinterpretation of the Philosophy."

*nirvanic* Consciousness itself; and if it could flow into the *sangsaric* state, then men could become, rapidly or slowly, so transformed that the impossible problems become possible ones and *Sangsara* itself would be redeemed. Then instead of a goal of departure from *Sangsara*—which certainly would seem to be the implication of the Buddhist *sutras*, and of the Vedantic teachings of Shankara, and of the teachings of Christ, who said, “My Kingdom is not of this world,”—instead of viewing the problem of redemption as an ultimate abandonment of *Sangsara* by all creatures, we would have a transformed *Sangsara* that would be relatively real, a valuable playground for consciousness in its evolutionary progression. So what I’m speaking of is not simply the redemption of individuals here and there one at a time, a process that has been too slow, we would effect a redemption of the whole state of *Sangsara* and of its whole life; and that we would have massive effects such as are needed in this emergency; and that the life of the future would become an interplay, consciously, more and more consciously, between the *sangsaric* and the *nirvanic* zones.

Now, one thing that I was delighted to hear over at Phoenix was one day when Erma was speaking, and speaking about things not ordinarily spoken of—and I think I’m justified in saying this much: that this conception of *Nirvana* is to be found in the fourth volume of *The Secret Doctrine*; that the total picture we have known heretofore in the literature is only partial and far from complete.

The critical point in all of this is the problem of effectuation. I’ve advanced ideas. Usually, though, there’s a difference between an idea and the effectuation of an idea. In our world as we live today, the two functions are carried on by different individuals—on one side, the “knowers,” on the other side, the “effectuators.” In our business and our government, and so on, the knowers are those which we classify as scientists, scholars, and engineers; the effectuators are the practical politicians, the managers of businesses. Effectuation is primarily an act of will; the other side, the ideational side, is a matter of knowledge. I’ve been outlining a pattern of knowledge. That’s not enough. But not always is the separation between idea and effectuation absolute. He who speaks in the Current, also effectuates. But there’s another aspect to it, and that is the crossing of that gulf represented by the point of discontinuity. And this calls for those who will choose—when they are able, for it takes awhile to become able—to abide in a field of consciousness which is partly *sangsaric* and partly *nirvanic* refusing to accept either side exclusively. And that means that they cross the point of discontinuity; that in a certain sense it may be said that they’re balancing on a razor’s edge between one side and the other. It’s a balancing act, in one sense. It does permit, as I see it, of being more in the *nirvanic* state at some times and more in the *sangsaric* state at other times, but never completely in either. And that the more people, more individuals, who, having reached the point where they may take this position, choose to do so, the more does it become possible for the inflow of *nirvanic* Consciousness into the *sangsaric* field with its transforming, rejuvenating, and refreshing power. And that then, more and more will we advance toward that massive redemption which is the need of the day and which means the redeeming of *Sangsara* as a state of consciousness as well as of the individual entities that abide in *Sangsara*.

Now, that’s an outline of what I’ve been saying over the past several weeks. It has been said heretofore. This is an abstract of it. But there’s some other thoughts, now

tentative. I present them as suggestions. There is, in the so-called third volume of *The Secret Doctrine*, not the true third volume, that was part of the third edition of *The Secret Doctrine*, under the heading of “The Mystery of Buddha,” a certain discourse of the Buddha that was headed “A Hitherto Unpublished Discourse of the Buddha” in which the Buddha is represented as saying that there are three things that are real. These are *Nirvana*, the Law, and Akasha. And that these three reduce to one, *Akasha*; which to the ordinary consciousness is a *maya*, but in reality is the sole true Reality.<sup>3</sup>

Now, *Akasha*, we are told, has a record of all that has ever happened or transpired in this world, that nothing ever vanishes. One’s first impression when dealing with a word like ‘record’ is to think of something like a moving picture or an auditory recording, therefore something that is not alive. That’s not, we have reason to believe, the true picture of the *Akashic* record, but, on the contrary, the *Akashic* record is the living reality itself—the life that was lived, not only with its sense impressions and thoughts, but with all the force of its feelings as well. Therefore, reading the *Akashic* record is, in fact, a living over again of that which was once lived and, mayhap, also of that which to us now appears to be in the future. This is a suggestion only. But the basis for the suggestion is this: time is not an absolute. It appears here in the *sangsaric* world as a tyrant, but the *nirvanic* state is both timeless and spaceless; that tyrant does not exist there. It appears here as though we were separated inevitably and unequivocally from everything of the past, and that the possibilities of the past that were not used are lost forever, and that therefore time is tragic as Spengler himself maintained it was. But if the view of time which we have, namely of a stream flowing from the past to the future, and as we sail down that stream we’re separated from the past and know not the future; if that figure is false, and that, rather, time may be likened unto a lake in which the ripples are a time, namely, the time being enclosed by a consciousness that is more comprehensive, that there is no radical separation of past from the present and of the future from the present, but this is merely a device for experience or development that has no absolute reality, then the past still lives, and also the future, it would appear to be, is equally now.

The suggestion has come to me that by taking our base of reference in the *nirvanic* Consciousness, we would find ourselves equally close to that which is distant in space and time as compared to that which is near in space and time, and that from that position, then, it would be possible to live again in the past or perhaps, in a sense, to live on in the future. It would appear, too, that memory of past lives, in the complete sense, participating in them in full detail, would be a form of *Akashic* reading, particularized form, not the broader form in which you read the history of the whole human race or

---

<sup>3</sup> H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 3 (Wheaton. Ill.: The Theosophy Co., 1910), 393:

This section is headed “An Unpublished Discourse of Buddha.”

There are three things, Bhikshus, that are everlastingly the same, upon which no vicissitude, no modification can ever act: these are the Law, Nirvana, and Space,\* and those three are One, since the first two are within the last, and that last one a Maya, so long as man keeps within the whirlpool of sensuous existences.

\*Akasha. It is next to impossible to render the mystic word “Tho-og” by any other term than “Space,” and yet, unless coined on purpose, no new appellation can render it so well to the mind of the Occultist.

participate in the history of the whole human race, or of the geology of the world, but a particular form that is more accessible for the reason that it is closer to us individually.

A picture arose in my mind in connection with this thought, and here—now I'm giving only a suggestion, but consider it. Suppose we call our present life “apparent real time” and that we call the time of the *Akashic* record, where you have an experience of process also, “apparent *Akashic* time.” Not to suggest that the conception is adequate or complete, but just to distinguish between the two, and I use the word ‘apparent’ to indicate that the conception is tentative. Suppose in the apparent real time, as we imagine our present state to be, one were to put himself into a state of *savikalpa samadhi* and project himself back into a life of the past. And he proceeds to find himself living in another day, sensing, and thinking, and feeling all of the pains and the delights of that life with all the force of reality that we know in our lives in apparent real time. But there is a witness that knows this is a reliving of something of another day. That witness Self, while present is not confused by its experience. But now suppose that something obscured the witness Self and you found yourself in apparent *Akashic* time living a life and knew of no other life than that life. You might be caught in it. You might be living it through until you die. Then the question arises, how do we know that we are now living in apparent real time and not in an apparent *Akashic* time? Have all the lives that we are living been lived over before? Are we just moving over an endless recurrence of lives that have been lived before, just circling round and round and round? This is a question, a possibility I see, that a person who penetrates into *Akashic* time might find himself locked in to a life that has already been lived and he's simply living it over again. Then I got to the point where I was on the edge of concepts I couldn't capture, where all seemed to be an all-at-once—the beginning and the end of a *Manvantara* present now and the thought I couldn't think. I couldn't get a word or a symbol for it, just an edge of it.

So I'm leaving this for you to mull over, and ask yourself the question, do I know for sure that I am living in apparent real time a life that is new whose future is not determined, or am I mistakenly living over another life that I have lived before in *Akashic* time because I permitted the witness Self to become obscured?

Now, with that unpleasant thought, I will close.