

Precaution Against Misinterpretation of the Philosophy

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It is entirely possible that the material I have put down in written form or oral form that has been recorded may lead, after I depart from this plane, to the formation of a philosophical school, or a religious movement, or even possibly a combination of the two. Of course, this may not happen at all; but in case it does, there are certain precautions which I wish to establish while I am still here—a precaution against a gross misinterpretation. The point is important for there was such gross misinterpretation both in the case of Buddha and of Christ.

In the case of Buddha, his teaching was interpreted by some followers and non-followers as a doctrine of annihilation. That the resolution of the problem of suffering was achieved by radical annihilation, for certainly that which does not exist does not suffer. This most certainly was not his meaning.

Now, in the case of Christ, there has developed an interpretation that throughout the centuries has had a great currency even to this day, and that is that there is no point in trying to live a morally acceptable life; that, in fact, the achievement of redemption was entirely beyond the resources of man and could be achieved only by a belief in the efficacy of Christ himself, and that has led to carelessness with respect to moral practices. Christendom, in fact, has been very warlike; and insofar as it has been very warlike, it has been an exemplar of antichrist. The message contained in the Sermon on the Mount does emphasize moral practice, but this has not been the center of emphasis in the Christianity that developed afterwards, particularly at the time of the Church Councils. The emphasis seemed to be upon a magical power supposed to exist in connection with the crucifixion and the following resurrection as recorded; and that by this, if one just believed, regardless of what his sins or his immoral actions might be he would be saved entirely independently of his conduct. This I regard as entirely contrary to the intent of Christ himself, and would imply that Christianity, in the conventional sense, incarnates more of the spirit of antichrist than it does of the true meaning of the Christ.

Now, in the case of Shankara, it would seem that serious misconception was avoided, but he left a record, a written record, something to which we can refer even to this day as having come from his own hand and not simply as something handed down by those who heard and perhaps not understanding too well interpreted falsely.

I know that a body of teachings can be misinterpreted, but I also know that they can carry implications of which I myself have not thought to which I would have no objection. However, in these tapes at the present time I'm doing everything I can to make my meaning clear and to guard on every side against a malicious interpretation, one that would be foreign to my intention. I've guarded in every way that I can see, but there may be ways that I don't see.

Now, in the writings that occur in *Pathways*, there are certain entries under the heading of the “Record” or “The Record Continued.” These serve an office that is often lacking in the words of those who have had the experience of Realization. What is it that happens actually in the immediate experience of the individual involved? This is material that is of psychological importance. When William James made the search that led to the writing of *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, he found something of such record among the instances of mystical experience in the West, but virtually none at all from the great Eastern mystics. Now, there is a reason here for this. The Eastern mystic emerges, say, with a philosophy or a metaphysical statement, sometimes in poetic form, but also sometimes in formal logical exegesis, or it may take a form of artistic production. They may lay down certain rules, as in the case of Patanjali, which one is supposed to follow if he wishes to have the same kind of Realization or something akin to it. But what happened in the immediate inner life or consciousness of the individual, we do not have. In the West, there are reports on this side.

Now, there’s a reason why we today have an interest in this side that very well could not have existed back in the days of ancient India, or even of Greece, or even of our own Middle Ages, and that is that within the last few hundred years there has emerged a science or discipline which we call psychology. Psychology deals with the psychological or psychical facts insofar as they can be placed upon a scientific basis. Jung has said that the factor that led to the emergence of the psychological evaluation or criticism was the earlier emergence of epistemological criticism in connection with which the name of Immanuel Kant has a premier importance. How valid is our knowledge? What are the circumstances surrounding it? What are the facts, the existential facts in connection with it? And then there’s the question, how do these existential facts in connection with our thought affect the validity or the extent of validity of that thought?

We have thus today, two forms of criticism, epistemological and psychological, and if one is going to speak to modern man, he must take these factors into account. It is not enough, if he’s going to meet the modern sophisticated scholar, to simply say that which he thinks, but also he must consider the ground upon which he bases that thought. It was with a view to serving this need of modern man that I introduced the “Record” in *Pathways Through to Space*, having in mind that this would afford a basis for understanding what takes place in one’s own inner consciousness. Material of this sort is to be found scattered through the letters of Sri Aurobindo to his students, and it is also found in the volume called *Memories, Dreams, [and] Reflections* by Carl G. Jung. In these cases we can see what went on in the inner consciousness of the principals involved in each case. In both cases it throws a very valuable light upon what happened in the consciousness of the individuals involved. It also gives one an understanding of what may happen in his own life.

Now, one feels a certain diffidence dealing with this kind of material and speaking about it. It’s revealing the intimate psychical facts of what happens in one’s private consciousness, and one feels a certain diffidence about expressing it; for it’s a little like taking one’s clothes off in a public place. Jung was so diffident that he insisted that the book should not be published during his lifetime. However, I know that in my own experience that if I had had access to such material at the time of searching, I would have found it invaluable. If we could have the inner record of what transpired in the

intimate psychical consciousness of, say, a hundred individuals who had gone the mystic way, we would have a better basis of determining what is common to all and what is variable. We would know something of the root source of the rules that have been laid down in the yogic manuals. We would be able to see better how far they are universally valid and how far they are only relatively valid—perhaps valid to a psychological type in one case, not to another type, in another case. This material we need. It is of psychological importance. The consequence that comes out perhaps as a philosophy or as a work of art has this background, and the background is important as well as the finished product.

Now, there was one “Record” that was not included in *Pathways*—one that was written on May 19, 1937, and gives a view of the state of consciousness of myself at that time and of my experience and valuations. This, I thought I would read into the tapes and then make some comments upon it afterward which would be part of, say, a “Record” as of this date. But reading from the text as placed down at that time, it is as follows:

On November 16, 1936, I wrote the final “Record” which covered the last phases of the transformation which began on the 7th of the preceding August. At this time, the productive impulse of those early days had sufficiently completed itself so that I was no longer filled with material requiring expression. By that time there was noticeable a marked tiring of the organism through the exercise of the creative faculties. The casting into thought form had lost much of its spontaneity and was a good deal more difficult. So I drew the book to a close and withdrew once again with my family for a couple of weeks at Michigan Bluff. Here I found relief from the high psychic and intellectual tension of the past month in physical effort underground. Apparently this step was necessary as the protracted tension had clearly been a strain on the organism.

The underground activity proved to be the effective antidote, so that upon our return from Michigan Bluff I found myself more nearly on the usual level. However, the difference was only one of degree since at no time since August 7th do I seem to be completely out of the force field that I then penetrated. I seem to have entered permanently into a new relationship to the sensible or form world that is quite different from that known by me prior to the hour of the transformation. But the intensity of this new force field is variable, and on the higher levels the tension is too great for the organism to endure it indefinitely. Clearly there is here a problem or organic adaptation.

Since the return from Michigan Bluff, I have done some writing and continued my studies of the various manifestations of mystical Consciousness. We organized a class partly devoted to the study of cosmic Consciousness, but more largely to the stirring to life of the latent germ of cosmic Consciousness in the students. Of necessity, this work was partly experimental. It was felt that something could be done by the force that I have called “induction.” The results have verified the correctness of this idea. Through a period of ten weeks of class work, a large proportion of the

students reported adumbrations of the mystical or cosmic conscious type. It was quite clearly possible to introduce the force field into the class work in such a way that practically every student was consciously affected by it. In some, latent negative qualities were stirred into action of such strength as to cause some students to drop out of the class with an antagonistic reaction. Among those that remained, states of exaltation and joy of more or less duration were reported by nearly all. At the present time there remain a few of the students who are continuing the effort started in the class with evidence of growth in the mystical quality of consciousness.

Connected with this class work a method of catharsis was evolved designed to purify a portion of the hinterland of the psyche. Catharsis of this type has long been recognized as a vital part of the technique in yoga training, for psychical purification must attain at least a certain degree of completeness before the transformation is possible. The technique we evolved has proven to be a real aid. Practically all of the students who completed the catharsis not only reported a rising to the surface of hidden impurities, but, in addition, reported and revealed relief at the culminating stage. This process was unquestionably effective as far as it went.

The main defect that has kept this work from being as effective as it was hoped it would be seems to be a lack of sufficiently persistent desire for the higher consciousness. For the most part students seem to bog down when they have left the immediate influence of the class. In spite of the fact that nearly all sampled a state of consciousness that they reported as being of an exalting and attractive type, only a few at the present time reveal a persistence of effort directed towards the winning of such consciousness as an individual right. Clearly something more is needed to fill the gap between most aspirants and the level on which I have spoken and functioned in the class work.

At this point I feel myself at a loss to know what to do. There is no doubt concerning the potency of the powers with which I am now able to work. I can give clarity of formulation on a level where the rule is ambiguity; but this clarity presupposes a certain amount of mental discipline on the part of the student, and only a few seem to come with this equipment. So much of my effort at this point fails of being efficacious. I can induce adumbrations of mystical Consciousness in a larger extent than I expected in those who will come into rapport to me. I can consume and transform much psychical impurity by means of a certain spiritual fire in the case of those students who are willing to meet certain conditions. But something more is needed. It seems to be of the nature of a kind of psychic sympathy I do not feel. It is as though the very peculiarities in me that made the whole process of Recognition remarkably easy after passing a certain critical point in understanding, implies a sort of psychical gulf between me and the average student. I simply do not feel, and apparently in this life never have felt, a whole group of problems and valuations that are close to the hearts of most men. This fact seems to

destroy the basis of a certain concrete sympathy that in the field of social influence is very important. On the other hand, my own great problems and valuations have been of a type not generally felt. Where the latter has been felt, I can almost certainly establish an effective rapport. But where can I find such individuals? Is it possible to cross this gulf? At the present time I do not know. In my gropings in that direction I continually find a blank wall.

In my efforts in this direction, I have been reading some, of late, of the writings of modern psychologists who are aware of the problem of the psyche—particularly Dr. C.G. Jung. In an academic sense, I think I begin to see where the problem lies; but it seems to me like something unreal and foreign. In addition, I have a strong distaste for filling my mind with the problems of this field. Much of it is essentially the Herculean problem of cleaning the Augean stables. For my own part, I'm disposed to handle the whole problem in the way Hercules did, that is, in the massive sense of turning a purifying stream through the stables. This involves no concrete relationship with the specific impurities. But it seems that, on the whole, fellowship in this world requires the capacity to sit down in some corner of the stables for mutual communion. Apparently fellowship is established more on a basis of a commonality of weaknesses than of aspirations. Given the commonality, the spiritually stronger man can influence the weaker in the direction of greater purity; but lacking this kind of common ground, the potentiality of the influence is greatly weakened.

What I should do or can do in this matter, I do not know. I have had and have my problems, but they do not seem to be typical. I can become effective with respect to certain psychical problems that are quite foreign to my personal experience. I do not see a positive answer to this question. Would it not require the cultivation of what I would regard as at least the simulation of a vice? Then assuming that I succeeded in doing this, could I keep my own insight clear and avoid a new entanglement? The Indian literature indicates that such fresh entanglement is possible. It seems that Walt Whitman did not escape this price as is revealed in his loss of the cosmic sense toward the close of his life. That would be a frightful cost, and at the present moment I cannot bring myself to accept it even assuming that it would be the more effective way.

But then comes the next question, would it be the more effective way in the long run? It is difficult, if not impossible, to unite clarity of insight with compromise. The essence of entering the Augean stables, in the concrete sense, is compromise. The values that I have won in this life which I regard as of enduring worth have been possible only insofar as I refused to compromise, but insisted upon being content with nothing less than perfection. Practically, I've had often to compromise and deal with approximation; but inwardly, I have never identified myself with this, but stood aloof. The fruit of this policy came on August 7th. This being so, can I hold to what I have, even sufficiently to be socially valuable,

and at the same time enter the field of compromise. Mayhap it is possible, but I doubt it.

There is an alternative course that I see, and that is to remain as uncompromising as possible and at the same time give as correct a formulation of my insight as is within my resources. This would be a permanent written record which in turn could reach in the present or the future those others who can fill the gulf which I am not at present able to cross. In this way I can certainly make more accessible that which I have found than it was when I started on the search as a Westerner in a Western body. If others had left landmarks such I can leave, and have already left, I for one would have found the way much easier. Surely there are others that can read such signs. And perhaps some of these can do that which I do not find myself capable of accomplishing. At any rate, I'm applying myself at present to this task as it is clearly a possible one and may prove valuable.

As has been previously noted in the "Record," when I faced the choice of accepting, in a relatively permanent sense, the spatial state of Consciousness or of turning my back upon it and focusing upon the problems of the relative world, I chose the latter course for reasons that seemed and continue to seem adequate. I had no illusion that in so choosing I was taking the course of the greater individual satisfaction. Larger considerations were determinant. The writing of the book occupied the first hundred days, and this was followed by the preparation for the class experiment and the actual class work. During this time, secondary exaltation and interest, both in the creative sense and in that of discovery, held the focus of attention. All of this operated to hide from me much of the significance of the choice. But at present I see its bearings more clearly. So far my experience confirms *The Voice of the Silence*. There is more reality in the sacrifice than I had anticipated. I continue to hold a rare power and source of knowledge, but the freedom, bliss, and particularly the rest are left behind. As time goes on I become aware of an inscrutable kind of agony. I've been told that there is a kind of crown on my head, but I have not seen it. Instead I feel something that hurts in such a way that there is no place for pride, vanity, or egotism. My private choice would be obscurity without the hurt rather than any position or honor with that hurt. I am forced to resist this private choice, for my deeper judgment has seen clearly. The hurt is not native to me, it is rather the tearing of two worlds to which I am voluntary bound but which tend continually to draw apart. There is a strain in this that seems to tax all my strength. At times I wonder if I can fulfill my choice. I should certainly hesitate to advise others to follow the course I've chosen, yet the need does unquestionable exist.

The relationship to relative consciousness has become something entirely new when compared to anything I have known heretofore. Formerly, at least, something of knowledge, skill, feeling, and sensation was a source of interest—at times for their own sakes and,

finally, as means leading towards the Realization. But the culminating Consciousness not only absorbed and completed every relative value, but added an undreamed of and transcendent richness. Now, facing back to the relative world, I find a certain vacuity in all the old values save only those that have a relationship to the soul as that soul is reflected in the various other parts of myself, namely, mankind and the other creatures of the world. All these relative things seem to be no more than toys. To be sure, there's much concrete knowledge that I do not possess, and many skills with which I am not familiar, but my relationship to all this may be illustrated by the instance of the student in algebra who has mastered the general solution of the quadratic. That solution affords an absolute formula for the solution of an infinite number of particular equations. That student can quite correctly say that he stands in command of all equations of the quadratic form despite the fact that there is an infinite number of particular examples he never has solved nor ever seen, nor could he in a thousand lifetimes come one step nearer the complete handling of all these cases in the concrete sense. The Transcendent Consciousness gives an universal, terminal command that is faintly suggested by the general solution of the quadratic. The latter synthesizes all the significance of every special case that comes under it and, in addition, gives command of any particular instance if for any reason it is desired to make the application. The Transcendent Consciousness is such a synthesis of significance covering the whole of the terminal values of the world of becoming. From the latter perspective, I do not find it possible to take the same interest as formerly in any concrete powers or knowledge. It is all like getting down on one's knees and playing with the toys of a child. If doing the latter increases the happiness or facilitates the growth of some child, one does derive a secondary interest from the activity, but that interest is wholly related to the child and not to the pleasure directly derived from the toys. From the higher perspective one values new relative knowledge and new skills for pedagogical reasons only, but not for their own sakes or for instrumental values that concern himself individually. Of course I do not mean that it does not still require work to acquire new knowledge and new skills, but neither of these represents any longer a road to significance in the higher sense.

It is clear that in this intermediate zone, which is neither the external world nor the supreme spatial domain, one must find a new kind of basis of interest. He who dwells here, however much he may be identical with the central core from which all things hang suspended, has nonetheless turned his back upon the glorious Consciousness that alone is to be realized when immersed fully in that core. He faces interests that forever more can have no more than peripheral value. At present I feel this as a terrible anticlimax. I contemplate the phrase, "for unnumbered *kalpas*," and it is only with difficulty I avoid a sense of horror with respect to the appalling

tyranny of time. I suppose the combination of unfamiliarity with the state with a rather active imagination may make it seem worse than it will actually prove to be. Adaptation is a law of nature and so time may also supply the anodyne to deaden the sting of this interminable duration. Enlistment for the duration of the war takes on a new meaning when one thinks of duration in terms of unnumbered *kalpas*.

Of course, the coming years may bring a new kind of adjustment, but I am reporting what is true with respect to my consciousness at the present moment. I am not a little disposed to wonder whether the game is worth the candle. Yet when I think back to those days when I walked in a darkness that was not wholly dark simply for the reason that there were those who in past days had chosen to hold high the torch of Truth and realize how sorely needed was that Light, then I realize that I cannot in honor do other than hold aloft such torch as I may be able to carry in my hand. Even Liberation does not exempt a man from the code of decency. Someone with an artists hand has somewhere drawn a picture of a vast crowd slowly marching in space where all about is darkness save for a figure in the center of that crowd. The crowd is drawn by an invisible attraction to this central figure and for the most part but dimly senses the light that radiates from him. But apart from him there is no light at all. As he walks slowly, slowly on, the whole crowd is drawn forward though many curse and revile him since their natures are divided—part drawn toward the darkness and part toward the Light. Yet he strikes back at none and feels only compassion for them and continues ever on. How can a beneficiary of such a Light who has come to the hour of understanding do other than attempt his part in a similar endeavor?

There seems to be no easy nor comfortable solution of this problem, but there should be somewhere the records of those who have met it in the past. I have found only the record of the bare fact that some have met it and the outline of the significance of such a course as given in *The Voice of the Silence*. But concerning the problems after the return, *The Voice of the Silence* remains silent. I'm speaking frankly partly to fill that gap. So far I see only that which would stir enthusiasm in the heart of a real warrior, one of a kind who is stirred to emulation by the announcement of a daring venture affording a certainty of much hardship but also more than a chance to win a royal victory.

Despite all that I have said, there are satisfactions. I see in others adumbrations, and in some cases more than adumbrations, of the liberating Consciousness; even when I may be most conscious of the agonies, others are finding peace and joy. What I carry beyond myself in the narrower sense and what I feel within myself, also in that sense, are by no means the same thing. There is a very real satisfaction in this. My main regret is that many do not receive this value. It is hard to make the men and women of this world understand and many seem to fear the greatest of all treasures. It is difficult to avoid feeling a kind of scorn when one sees individuals

more concerned about the case containing the jewel than for the jewel itself. Yet, no doubt, man must be met where he is.

On the physical and personal side, there are also problems. I do feel very tired, and while part of this may be traced to physical causes, much of it runs deep. Those grand, though critical, days that began in August seemed at the time much simpler and easier than they actually were. I centered my consciousness so largely on the transcendent side that I had practically no awareness of a personal ordeal. But with the perspective of this distance, I see that the personal man performs something of the function of a mother in bringing to birth the inner man. It is curious that the personality should have this degree of importance, but such seems to be the case. In all this there was more effort and strain than I knew, particularly when combined with the antecedent effort. At present, I dread effort. I find it peculiarly hard to drive with the will. Undoubtedly, this fact colors the rest. There is also a profound sense of solitude. I knew another solitude in the years before the culmination, but it was less complete and quite resolved at the culmination. There are many guiding lights to relieve that earlier solitude, but in this latter one, I have to be my own light. I have power that I have not begun to plumb, and that, of course, is an important difference; but the sense of fatigue complicates the use of this.

In the present “Record,” it should be clearly understood that what I have said does not apply to the progress toward and in the Realization. In the latter case, the antecedent travail culminates in a glorious Consciousness which in turn grows progressively richer in a series of steps that generally take several lifetimes. To turn one’s back upon all this is quite a different matter and is entirely a matter of voluntary choice. In the earlier stages of the Realization when the dawn breaks, a glory is cast over all nature and even life in the world seems sweet. The pilgrim may linger a lifetime or more at this stage and it is unquestionably a very happy time. He is also more within the understanding of those who have not yet gone so far. Later he will know greater glories, but for these the world-field becomes a progressively less adequate foil. Here is one of the reasons why many modern mystics fail to understand the pessimism of the great Eastern sages with respect to the world-field. The early glory cast upon the world-field is shed from out the compassionate heart of *Amitabha* so that the earlier steps along the way might be easier than otherwise would be the case. The great battle involving the final test of strength comes generally in a later life when the pilgrim has more strength. Still for a season the greater hosts of *Mara* are held back. But the final battle with *Mara* is grim, for once this is won, no longer does the pilgrim face any danger from the lower worlds. Because of an unseen aid, these final battles are far less severe than otherwise would have been the case.

Now, that was written thirty-three years ago. There was reference there to a subtle feeling of agony which no longer applies—possibly a matter of adjustment; possibly a matter of reconciliation of the two opposed fields which I have likened to being as two

worlds on each of which one had a foot and they were turning in opposite directions. That physically would be an impossible situation, but psychically it is possible, but not pleasant. But as time goes on, there is not only an adjustment to it, there's a certain success in it. And it can become, and has become, a state in which there are two fields of consciousness in happy adjustment—thirty-three years and that has become so. So the end term is not simply as grim as was painted in the last pages of *The Voice of the Silence*; there is more than was said there at that time.

And that's enough for this morning.