

Is Proof Possible Before Realization?

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Let us consider the following subject, “Is proof possible before Realization?” For an individual who has had no Realization, Mystical Awakening, or Enlightenment, who hears, nonetheless, of reports which emanate from what is claimed to be such Realization or Enlightenment, very naturally asks: how can we know that this is valid; how can we know that there is such a Door to Consciousness; and how can we trust the reports that come from such a source as may be claimed? No doubt this question is quite reasonable, and I’m entirely sympathetic with it; but there are reasons why it is impossible to prove the actuality of such a psychological state as that from which a Realization or Enlightenment is reported, and, equally, it is impossible to prove the validity or authenticity of the content reported from such a state. There are reasons why this is so that are not difficult to understand. In fact, the same problem arises in connection with the exercise of unusual functions, in the sense of rare sensory capacities, such as those of telepathy, clairvoyance, psychokinesis, and the direct action of the pure reason.

Let us consider first these lesser manifestations. Most human beings do not have these particular functions known as clairvoyance or clairsentience, telepathy, well developed intuition, telekinesis, the capacity of what is sometimes called mental clairvoyance, and other types of functioning in this way. This subject has been handled rather well by Sri Aurobindo in his chapter in *The Life Divine* called “The Methods of the Vedanta.”¹ There he distinguishes between two orders of such functions: one he calls the direct action of the sense-mind and the other the direct action of the pure reason. It is there pointed out and affirmed that in the direct action of the sense-mind there are a number of capacities that are potential in the human being but which are active and functional only in the case of a few individuals. Among these, very prominently, is the power of clairvoyance. This is a power which, it is said, enables the individual to see events at a distance in space and a distance in time, both past and future, and also to be able to perceive not only here on this particular plane of consciousness, but even on other subtle planes such as the zones into which an individual who has died may pass or entities who may be occupying the *Nirmanakaya* vehicle. It is also affirmed that the direct action of the sense-mind can lead to the dispensing with the function of the senses themselves and to perform these same functions without the intervention of such senses. Thus, an individual with eyes closed would be enabled to see the normal physical environment about him in the same way that he would see it if his eyes were open. There are also affirmed the capacity to transmit thought so that it can be picked up at a distance, or that thought may be read which has not yet been formulated by an individual who may do it either consciously, knowing that he’s reading the thought in someone else’s mind, or unconsciously, and may answer that thought not knowing that he’s answering a specific thought in someone else’s mind. These are capacities which have been affirmed as

¹ Aurobindo Ghose, *The Life Divine*, vol. 28 of the *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centennial Library* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, 1970), 63. The exact chapter title is “The Methods of Vedantic Knowledge.”

existing, but they are not possessed by the majority of people. For one who does not have this capacity, naturally the question arises as to the authenticity of such capacity: the question as to whether it exists, and if it exists how reliable is it. These questions are very valid, but there is a certain difficulty in supplying a completely satisfactory answer to the question of their existence.

I would illustrate this difficulty by the case of an individual who is born blind. For such an individual, the experience of color, which is absolutely dependent upon sight, would not exist; and if one wished to prove to such an individual that there was a capacity to perceive color, we would face precisely the same difficulties. All we would have is a very extensive testimony from normal individuals that there is such a thing as the experience of color and that it adds a whole lot to the value of experience or life. Since the testimony would be very general by most of those who surround him, he would have a large probability that here was something that actually existed, but he would not have any proof of its existence. That is clear. To find proof of the existence of color would require his recovering of the power of sight. Then, and then alone, would he know; before that he might make the judgment that since there is well-nigh universal testimony by those who surround him to the effect that color existed, there was a high probability that this was true, but he would not know.

In the case of the rarer functions of the sense-mind, the number of individuals who have developed these capacities are relatively quite small as compared to the total number of individuals; therefore, the individuals who do not have this capacity, and who naturally form the mass of human beings, would not have as high a probability as to the factuality of these functions as would the man who was born blind in connection with the possibility of the experience of color. But the difference here is only relative and not essentially logical. If there were only one individual in all the world who claimed the possession of such capacities, there would not be any strong presumption that they exist which would be compelling with respect to individuals who did not have the capacities.

Here we have evidence that is based upon a statistical foundation; nonetheless, a statistical foundation for truth is sometimes all we have to justify action in the practical world. Sometimes we do dare with much less evidence than we have concerning these functions of the direct action of the sense-mind to lead to adventures and darings—take, for instance, the first voyage of Columbus in which the New World was discovered. At his time the general opinion of society was that the world was flat. But there were those daring thinkers who propounded, with good reason, the idea that the world was in the shape of a sphere. The conclusion was easily drawn that if the world is in the shape of a sphere one could travel westward and find India, which normally had been attained by traveling eastward. And so Columbus dared upon this theory of the form of the world, although he did not know it and the general consensus of those surrounding him was to the effect that the world was flat. He dared. Dared even the risk that if the world was flat, he might sail over the edge and drop into oblivion; but he was successful. The theoretical basis of his trip was verified. Now, that called for courage and daring, and the same thing applies in connection with the awaking and use of these unusual functions of the direct action of the sense-mind. One may be justified in daring to . . .²

² This audio recording ends in midsentence and appears to have been either inadvertently recorded over or lost.