

General Discourse on the Subject of My Philosophy

Part 8 of 12

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In the last four tapes, we have been discussing four of five Realizations. Three of them were covered in two of those tapes and the fourth one has occupied the last two tapes, and we shall continue to consider it in this particular part. These Realizations are here reviewed after a period of thirty-six to fifty years since they occurred, and, thus, we are considering them in the light of a time perspective. They have been treated already both in *Pathways Through to Space* and in *The Philosophy of Consciousness Without an Object*. In the case of *Pathways*, they were written up during the actual process of the unfoldment of the fourth and fifth Realizations. The material was written down with no time perspective, but as it appeared immediately before consciousness. Then after completing this statement, I immediately proceeded to a statement after fact which formed the preliminary material in *The Philosophy of Consciousness Without an Object*. It must be borne in mind that without these Realizations there would be no reason for the writing or dictating of this philosophy. They are fundamental to it. It has been pointed out that other material has a place within the philosophy, but the Realizations are the prime epistemic determinants. That point must not be forgotten if one is to understand the bearing of the present statement.

The discussion of the fourth Realization is as yet still in complete. There are further remarks to be entered into the record. There is one point in connection with method that has not been dealt with completely heretofore. The one essential principle of conscious method, insofar as the seeking of a Realization was concerned, was the use of self-analysis for the identification of that which I really am. I have noted elsewhere, and more than once, that the isolation of the Self, the *Atman*, involved certain subtleties that were not uncovered and understood until after the passage of some years. The breaking of self-identification with anything that is objective proved to be quite easy, but the identification of that which in reality I am proved to have certain real difficulties.

Usually in the action of our consciousness we may think of it as a flow from the subjective pole, which ordinarily we know only by inference, toward an objective content. To know is to have a content in consciousness such as an idea or a sense impression. It would, thus, appear correct to say that consciousness, in this relative sense, that is, our common reference in the use of the term, has a vector quality—a direction of flow. The ultimate secret to the discovery of the Self lay in a step which we might describe this way: conceiving of this relative consciousness as a vector flow from an inferred subject to an object of consciousness, then, reverse that vector flow by turning it through the angle π so that it returns toward its Source without projecting an object in

consciousness, no matter how subtle.¹ It becomes a consciousness concerned only with its Source; and with this step it is possible to isolate the pure subject to consciousness, not, bear it well in mind, by a projecting of it outwardly as an apparent object, but resting in it as a pure subject. It is as though that inversion of the directedness of the consciousness flow animated unconscious contents so that there was a buildup of an energy potential. The subject is realized, not as an object, but through a principle which we may call “knowledge through identity”—a knowing by being identical with that which is known. This is another form of cognition, not like sense perception or the conceptual use of ideas. It is a third form and part of the meaning of the introceptual pattern in the three forms which I employ. This is the essentially secret, simple secret, of the yogic Awakening, as I know it. The difficulty in this whole process is not a matter of proceeding into great complication, into abstruse ideas difficult to understand, it is simply by achieving a Realization of something which is so simple and obvious that it is everlastingly overlooked. Yoga, in the true sense, is the mastery of a difficult simplicity.

In much of Oriental yogic literature, it is affirmed that the attainment of a state of Fundamental Realization depends upon entering a *samadhi* trance—presumptively in the sense of a blackout of consciousness in the relative sense. I had known of this, and I had also known that there are recorded instances of individuals who have entered into such a deep trance and only with difficulty ever returned from them; and in some cases, it might seem they never returned from them. Thus, it is said that Ramakrishna was locked in to a *samadhi* trance for a period of six months. In view of this danger, I was very reluctant to take any chances with the entering of such a blacked out state of trance unless there were present someone who had the power to draw me out. But in place of this, there was a technique which somehow I knew, though I had never learned it. And that was to effect a certain division in consciousness, or in the mind, whereby one part stood upon the sidelines and witnessed the process while another part went through the process. Somehow I knew how to do this; and in that there lies a mystery. At any rate, the witness self, in this case the lesser consciousness, not the higher as it is sometimes employed to mean, stood upon the sidelines, as it were, while another portion of the consciousness went through the process which seemed like an ascension followed later by descent. This sense of I was present in both phases, and to distinguish them I suggested calling that portion which stood upon the sidelines, the “witness self,” and that portion which ascended and descended, the “escalator self.” I do not know of any similar report in the literature at the present time, but at any rate this technique had the advantage that there was an avoidance of a blackout trance and at the same time a capacity to record what happened and to place it in the memory on the part of the witness self. The witness self was at all times cognizant of the environment. There was, thus, no loss of external or ordinary awareness. But the value of the environment, the value of the objective world around, seemed to be so far reduced that I have little or no memory of the external world of that time when penetrating deeply within.

[After] the breakthrough on the 7th of August, there followed a period of a little over a month which stands in my memory as the most utterly delightful period which I have ever known. Analysis of the state of consciousness after acquaintance at a later date

¹ Wolff has elsewhere offered the term ‘introception’ for this process which he defines as “The power whereby the light of consciousness turns upon itself towards its Source.”

with the psychology of Dr. Jung, I realized that it was a period of protracted and unusually deep introversion. Although the environment as a system of objects before consciousness was defined and clear, it seemed to be, in the sense of valuation, at a distance and essentially irrelevant. After a period of ten days, the Sage, of whom I have already spoken, suggested to me that I might write up the experience, which I proceeded to do, at first with a bit of boredom since I did not care to write. I enjoyed being in the state too much. However, after a time the writing became easier and very interesting; and it resulted in a period of composition which ultimately lasted for something like 100 days. And the result of that was the volume known as *Pathways Through to Space*.

There were certain facts about this state that became evident. It was entirely possible to perform the operation of writing without breaking the state. It was possible to deal with the ordinary chores connected with the living process, but it was incompatible with the state of consciousness required for driving an automobile, and, I would say, for the handling of machinery generally. There was a reason for a trip into the city during this period and that proved to be dangerous. The control was uncertain. It became ultimately quite obvious that the handling of a traffic problem safely depends upon rather strong extraversion of the consciousness, and, indeed, should not be attempted by anyone when in a subjective state such as I was then in.

During this period, I found it quite possible to move upward, as it seemed, in consciousness at will and to descend at will, and that rendered it possible to execute something of an extended study of the state and of the process. One feature which stood out in connection with this movement was that in the process of ascension, the consciousness that is oriented to the world about ascends up to a certain point when there seems to be something which we might call a "point of discontinuity." Passing through this involved a momentary blackout of consciousness, then consciousness immediately was functioning on a different level, from a different base, as I've explained before, and the total world view changed, in the sense of valuation, not in the sense of being aware of the outlines or forms of sensuous consciousness. Actually, the consciousness was of a sort that I would call quite different from sensuous consciousness. It was not primarily concerned with external objects that stand before our senses, but with another way of consciousness. And, yet, it was also clear that this other way of consciousness was not the same as our conceptual consciousness—the consciousness that moves in logical forms and of which the development of pure mathematics is the supreme expression. It was consciousness in another sense, and that is the basis of my division of cognition into three instead of two forms, as is generally current both in Oriental logic as well as in Western epistemology.

Now, in connection with these steps in consciousness, I found that always on ascending one entered into a state of an inner delight, and that it was possible to penetrate into this almost indefinitely; and there was a strong inclination to so penetrate. But I also found that these experiences that were so supernal in their immediate value imposed a certain strain upon the physical organism. In fact, it aroused in me a certain disgust with that organism that it set a limit upon the delight which could be enjoyed. I found, though, that it was possible to reduce the intensity of the quality of delight until, finally, the organism could endure it. Coming out of such a state, when one has penetrated deeply into it, I found left a feeling of a subtle fatigue throughout the physical organism. This

was not experienced while in the state, but only when coming forth from it. By reducing the degree of intensity, a point was finally reached where the organism had no difficulty. But this state was so reduced that it was positively disgusting to have the inhibition imposed by a gross animal body. There was even an impulse to cast it off, which, however, was overcome.

The question arises as to the identification of this state. It did not appear to follow any of the patterns reported in connection with Christian mystical experiences, or of the naturalistic experiences of certain Western individuals, nor was it quite the same as that which was reported by Plotinus. It seemed to be in conformity with Oriental patterns, and, indeed, there was the sense in the state that this was at least an aspect of the *nirvanic* experience—perhaps that which has been called the threshold of *Nirvana*. In addition to this impression that grew out of the state itself, that point of view was confirmed by the one whom I have called the Sage. But there are questions as to whether this state is identical with what the Buddhist means by *Nirvana*, or the Vedantist by *Moksha*. That it was not identical with the Buddhist's conception would be implied in the fact that there was not here the sense of *Anatman*. It was rather a strong development of the identification with the *Atman*, and the transformation of that *Atman* into the *Paramatman*, so that the subject to consciousness of the individual appeared as only a reflection of a larger Selfness which was universal—a sort of Universal Subject, or I, which was reflected in the individual, but in its permanent identity was one, or monistic.

There are other reasons that bring up a question also. As one reads *The Meeting of East and West* by Dr. Northrop, it is pointed out that characteristic of all the East—including Buddhism, as well as Taoism, and Confucianism, and to some extent of the Vedanta itself—there is an orientation primarily to the aesthetic component in consciousness. Northrop has distinguished between the determinate aesthetic component, which makes up our sensuous experience of the world about—but not in its purity as pointed out in the *Buddhist Logic* of Stcherbatsky, but rather as a combination of the sense impression with recollection, or re-cognition, which involves a degree of the indirect consciousness, as there classified, or what we call conceptual consciousness—and that behind this is the pure indeterminate aesthetic continuum which Northrop identifies with *Jen* of the Confucians, the *Tao* of those who follow Lao-Tze, the *Nirvana* of the Buddhists, and the *Brahman* of the Vedantists. If it is true that this experience in the Orient is purely aesthetic, then there is a difference between this experience which I have just reported and that, for the syntactical element was present in this experience. It was not purely aesthetic, although dominantly so, for the principle of harmony was evident in it and a sense of its being rational, whereas, the world of phenomena appeared to me as grossly irrational. There may, thus, be a difference, and this is a point of very great interest. Have we here found a dimension that has been neglected in the Orient, and in the Christian mysticism, and of the other forms of mystical Realization of which we have records? This I leave as a question.

Nonetheless, I treated it as though it were a state of consciousness which should be renounced in order that effort could be put forth to bring it to others. I had been impressed for many years with the moral dignity of the vow of *Kwan-Yin* which runs this way: "Never will I seek nor receive private, individual salvation; never will I enter into private peace alone; but forever, and everywhere, will I strive for the redemption of all

creatures throughout the world.” The point had been made in the literature that he who enters the *nirvanic* state is cut away, at least for a vast period, from all of the travail of humanity in the *Sangsara*, the universe of objects, or the evolution.

And there is another point to be borne in mind that brings up a question, and that is Aurobindo’s reference to his experience of the *nirvanic* state in one of his letters. He states that soon after he began his *sadhana* with his chosen guru, *Nirvana* walked in on him and it persisted for several days. But he said of this state, it was not one of outstanding delight. That is not true of the state which I have reported on the last tape; it was a state of immeasurable delight, of something utterly transcending all the experiences of joy that belong to the universe of objects, or the evolution. So, I presented it as I have described it; but, nonetheless, I viewed it as that which calls for the Great Renunciation as formulated in *The Voice of the Silence*. So, in a sense, I turned my back upon it as a private enjoyment, intending to render something of this available to other creatures since the philosopher cannot be satisfied with the private solution of a problem, but he must labor towards a universal solution.

There is another aspect of this total experience which stood out in my mind as a matter of very grave importance, although I have found no reference to an item of that sort anywhere in the literature. I have found, merely, one other person who had a similar experience. This was the fact that on first ascending, an effort which had been difficult for many years suddenly became extremely easy. One could use the figure of ascending a mountain, a figure which is very often, in fact, employed to symbolize ascension in consciousness. As one goes up the lower reaches of the mountain, he labors; he puts forth effort; he may face difficulties; he may have to climb cliffs which are not easy to climb. But in this experience, it was as though ascension of the mountain led to the entering into another field of energy which stood in contrast to the force of gravity which the aspirant was laboring against in the earlier part of the ascension. This other force might be called the opposite of gravity, or “levity.” We might, thus, say that one was laboring to reach beyond the attraction of the objective factor in consciousness, and the drawing towards this objective factor would be symbolized by the force of gravity, the orientation to things, or more strictly in psychological terms, the orientation to the object. But as one ascended the mountain, the force of gravity, or attraction to the object, became more and more weakened, until I found myself within a field of force that drew in the opposite direction, which I here interpret as attraction towards the subject, but it could also be represented as a drawing towards space. As one ascended further and further, the strength of this levitational factor became stronger and stronger and the gravitational attraction grew weaker and weaker. The result was that that part of the process, which would be symbolized by the higher reaches of the mountain, were climbed with a growing ease and ultimately without any effort at all. The result was that without knowing it I seemed to move into the influence of the force of levity to such a degree that when I started to turn back I was almost unable to do so.

One could suggest what is implied here by imagining a person standing on the edge of a cliff, and he is leaning out until finally the center of gravity of his body is vertically above the open space below, then he would fall under the action of gravity, and he would be controlled by forces over which he had no moral control whatever. Nature would take over. In the same way, here was an attractive force towards space, or towards

the subject to consciousness, that was an impersonal, non-moral force which rendered it difficult to return. This was completely a surprise. There was no warning of this in the literature, and I therefore wish to emphasize it. In the case of any individual who attains to the heights, if he intends to return again to the fields below where suffering humanity abides, it is possible for him to come within the vortex of the supernal forces, and be controlled by them with the commanding force which is analogous to that of the commanding force of gravity at a lower level.

The vow of *Kwan-Yin* is a moral imperative. The dwelling upon it, the meditating with respect to it, the dedicating oneself to that moral objective in his earlier practice of the *sadhana*, is the development of a moral decision. The turning back is presented as such a moral decision; and in the literature I know, it seems to be implied that one chooses, that everything is up to the individual to choose, in a moral sense, and that that will take care of the matter. I found that that was not enough to take care of the matter; that if one ascended a little too high, it might be true that he simply could not return no matter how firm the moral imperative may have been established in his consciousness. The man who is falling can no longer apply the moral consideration that it is wrong to commit suicide; it is too late for that. Here there is the parallel problem, that one might ascend too far and be unable to return no matter how firm his moral decision to do so.

I managed to turn back, though it is not at all clear how I succeeded in doing so. There was a period in which it was touch and go. And the return down the mountain, to return to that figure, was as though one crawled down, holding on to the rocks so that he would not slide back into space. But the return involved other considerations. As the return is presented in *The Voice of the Silence*, it is spoken of as a renunciation without compensation, and for a great period of time. The figure, *Kalpas* without number, is used. And it must be remembered that from this experience of supernal beauty, unimaginable in its intensity and richness, the domain below is equally obnoxious, relatively. It is the realm of the pigs and the hyenas, to refer to a figure I employed before, and it seemed rather grim to go forth, not simply through the rest of a limited lifetime, but through a whole series of lifetimes with the best as a fact of past history, and the future a moving among the sordidness of the netherworld of experience.

This is, of course, not the whole of the story, and there was an answer to this problem that came later. The Sage, to whom I have made repeated reference, told me to watch out for a cycle involving the number thirty-three. I understood it to be a cycle of time, and so it proved to be, but I had no idea of what particular units were employed in the cycle. Was it a matter of days, weeks, months, years, or centuries? I did not know. But it actually proved to be a period of thirty-three days, and that opened the door to the fifth and culminating Realization. This will not here be discussed, but will be handled in a later tape; but this much is implied: that the words to the effect that the renunciation of the glorious state is without compensation is not the whole of the truth. And, in fact, it ultimately became evident that there is no such thing as an action without compensation. The law of *karma* is universal and operates without exception.

But for a few final words concerning this fourth Realization, I will note certain effects that are permanent. I found that there was something akin to a valve in consciousness, I called it a “butterfly valve”—something that could be moved very easily by an act of consciousness which I cannot describe. In fact, I find that I cannot describe

the process by which I raise my arm to a vertical position. We know from our scientific analysis of that movement, that it is substantially complex; yet, I can raise the arm by a simple act of will without thinking about the complexities of synchronized movements which actually are involved—the energizing of certain muscles in a certain degree and in a certain way. It is done very simply. So also, this operation of the butterfly valve is of an equal simplicity. When in one position, the consciousness functions in the ordinary sense in the relative world, in the mundane field; shifted to the other position, consciousness rises into something that seems an ascension, and there is a glow of a subtle delight, and there is an effect which can be noted by other individuals who have an appropriate development of a certain sensitivity. It is as though there was a certain animation in a collective psyche that involves people in the environment. How far this may be affected by external distances, I do not know; but at any rate, in the environment there is something like a force of *induction* whereby something is done to the consciousness of other individuals so that they know something, at least, of a certain exaltation. They may even have experiences which they can report, and I have records of such experiences which compare well with experiences reported in Dr. Bucke's *Cosmic Consciousness*. This has proven to be a permanent capacity to this day. It is possible to rise at will, or without even thinking of it when dwelling upon certain subject matters the butterfly valve will flip spontaneously, and others may be aware of this fact even before I am. This is something persistent and highly valuable. And as to the permanent effect upon the consciousness as revealed during the past 36 years, it is, in contrast to the consciousness that existed before, dominated by a sense of persistent peace, of calmness, of contentment, and of a gentle delight. This is well worthwhile.