

General Discourse on the Subject of My Philosophy

Part 10 of 12

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In the critical statement relative to Buddhism, or Buddhistic philosophy, as given in the preceding part, it must be emphasized that this statement is relative only to the presentation of Buddhistic philosophy as given in the *Buddhist Logic* by Stcherbatsky. It has no reference to Buddhism as a moral system or as a religious practice, nor is it concerned with possible other *sutras* than those presented in this particular text. It is, thus, a critique of a certain presentation and not a critique with respect to Buddhism as a whole. And bear in mind as I use the word ‘critique’, I do not employ it in the popular sense, but rather in the sense in which it is used in the Kantian work the *Critique of Pure Reason*. It is thus an evaluation, not necessarily at all an adverse criticism.

The relevance of this critique relative to my philosophy, lies in this: that it stands in the strongest possible contrast with the basic assumptions or presentations that form part of my philosophy; and it may well be that it involves a contrast that presents the essential difference between Buddhistic thinking on one side, and perhaps all Oriental thinking, as contrasted to the characteristic thought of the West. The presentation as given in this text implies that the Buddhistic philosophy is a radical sensationalism. This is based upon the first point given from the quotation under the chapter “Ultimate Reality” or “*Paramartha-sat.*” Quoting again: it, the reality, is:

1. the pure object, the object cognized by the senses in a pure sensation, that is to say, in a sensation which is purely passive, which is different in kind from the spontaneity of the intellect;¹

It thus is a position that is more radically sensationalistic than perhaps any philosophic system indigenous to the West with which I am aquatinted. It was pointed out in the last part that this sensationalism is more radical than what we commonly know as experience or empiricism, for ‘experience’, in our common usage of the term, does give a world which consists of objects about us that are more or less determinate which seem to exist in space and time; whereas, the pure sensational object, as given in this text, is not an existent in space and time, but is a point-instant that is purely sensational, before there is any interpretive construction placed upon it; and the point-instant is regarded as not being in any sense an extension in space or an extension in time or duration.

The text tends strongly to confirm the thesis of Dr. Northrop in his work *The Meeting of East and West* to the effect that the Oriental position, generally, is to the aesthetic component in consciousness, and by the aesthetic we here mean the sensational component in consciousness. And he there presented the two facets of this aesthetic

¹ Th. Stcherbatsky, *Buddhistic Logic* (New York: Dover Publications, 1962), 181.

component which he called the “determinate aesthetic component” and the “indeterminate aesthetic component,” as I have pointed out earlier. The determinate aesthetic component would appear to correspond to the meaning of the words ‘experience’ or ‘empiric’ and ‘empirical’ as used in our present text, the empiric and the empirical giving something determinate such as the various objects about us. But the pure sensational would seem to correspond to Northrop’s indeterminate aesthetic continuum because it does not give defined objects—anything that can be identified and can be formulated or expressed. The words are, about it, to the effect that it is unutterable. Thus, it would seem that in this purely aesthetic component we have the purely sensuous aspect, a sort of radical sensationalism. And if Northrop’s identification of the indeterminate aesthetic component with the conceptions of *Jen, Tao, Nirvana, Brahman*, is to be regarded as correct, then we are forced to the conclusion that, as presented in this text, the *nirvanic* state is one of an absolute sensationalism.

My own Realizations do not at all tend to confirm this position. I found them more as a form of cognition quite different from *both* sensation and conceptual cognition, and for that reason I viewed them as a *third* organ of cognition. It may well be that sensational cognition and conceptual cognition stand in a relationship of derivation from this third form, but there is no closer affinity between the third form, which I call “introception,” and sensation than there is between it and conception. And it would probably be true to my experience to say I found it more akin to the conceptual pole than to the sensational pole; for while it is true that the fourth Realization had a quality of extreme delightfulness, yet this, which is more connected, no doubt, with the sensational aspect of consciousness, was not the whole of the story. More impressively, at least so far as my own consciousness was concerned, was the fact that here was an answer to the eternal questions, the problems that badger life. From the Realizations came the realization that the passage through life here is not a meaningless process, but on the contrary, it has significance; there is a purpose behind it all that is well worthwhile. And that is essentially an answer to a theoretical orientation rather than to a sensational orientation. A supremely great delight, something that is well-nigh overwhelming, could be no more than a kind of intoxication if there were not an answer to the great theoretical problems, the problems involving meaning or significance. And this I rate as the greater value out of the Realization, although the supreme delight was highly appreciated.

There is a problem dwelt upon at considerable length by the Buddhistic logicians and also by other Indian philosophers which is also a problem with which Immanuel Kant was deeply concerned. This is the problem of the relationship between the sensuous perception and the conceptual cognition. In general, in the treatment presented in the text, the conceptual cognition is viewed as the offspring or effect of the sensuous perception. But that there is a great difference between the two is rather an obvious fact from the examination of the two as we know them. The sense perception gives us a highly concrete particularity; in contrast, the conceptual cognition gives us a logical universal. The perceptual sensuous cognition in its purity is incommunicable; the conceptual cognition, in contrast, is highly communicable. And delving into the qualitative difference by immediate introspection, I think it is quite evident that in other respects not so easily analyzed, their nature is obviously different—that, in fact, from one it would be impossible to infer the other. I am aware that there are speculative thinkers who regard them as of essentially the same nature, but that does not appear to me as valid. This is an

introspective matter, a matter of immediate self-analysis, rather than something which one can present in terms of logical discourse.

Now, in the general theory presented in the text, the conceptual cognition is viewed as an effect, or child, derived from the sensuous perception, namely, that the sensuous perception is the cause of the conceptual cognition. It is, as it were, a sort of parthenogenetic derivation, or virgin birth. And, incidentally, this came to me as a considerable surprise, for while the dogma of the virgin birth occupies an important place in Christian theology, I never expected to find it again in Buddhistic philosophy; however, there it is. And this presents some real difficult problems which have evidently been discussed dialectically at length among different Buddhistic philosophers and between Buddhistic philosophers and other Tibetan and Indian philosophers who were not Buddhistic. It is a point of very grave importance because even Immanuel Kant, the greatest of our epistemologists, was presented with difficulties in finding an interrelationship between conceptual cognition and sense perception. And it would seem that no ultimately satisfactory answer has been presented so far. I have something to offer on this, and I will present this conception of my own in due course.

One objection raised by Indian thinkers to the idea that sensuous perception could be the cause of conceptual cognition was the obvious fact that the two were so very different. There is a tendency to think of the effect of any cause as being akin to the cause. But it is asserted by the proponents of the virgin birth of conceptual cognition that the effect of a cause is not necessarily similar to the cause but can be dissimilar; and I think we can see how this may be so. With respect to some types of cause, similarity of the effect is fundamental, but in other types of causality the effect may be radically dissimilar; and this may be illustrated by two examples. If, for instance, a pair of mice of different sexes mate, we would fully expect that the offspring would be of a certain fundamental likeness to the parents, that the offspring would not by any possibility be an elephant. Here the principle of similarity of cause and effect is quite obvious. But, on the other hand, if we take the causality that is present in the field of catalysis, we will find that the effect may be radically different from the cause. In the effort to effect chemical combination between different substances, often it is possible to effect this combination by simply exposing the two substances to each other directly—as bringing together an acid and a base. But among the products of our chemical industry today, there are involved certain chemical compounds that will not be effected by bringing together the different substances. They do not react and form new compounds directly, but will react in the presence of another substance known as a catalytic agent. This, incidentally, is very important in the current process of producing gasoline from the crude oils. Two substances that will not unite often do combine in the presence of a catalytic agent, which in the end is no part of the final product. One of the most common of these catalytic agents is platinum, but other agents are also used. In my earlier conception of this process, I thought of it as something taking place merely in the presence of a catalytic agent, but it appears to be much more complex than that. Indeed, what seems to happen is this: that at least one of the two substances brought together will combine temporarily with the catalytic agent, and the result of this process will combine with the other substance and produce the desired product; but in the second step, the portion of the catalytic agent which was employed is deposited and remains no part of the final product.

Now, here, the catalyst may be called the causal agent, the ultimate effect, the new combination in which the catalyst is not at all present. And we would have a case of an effect that is radically different from the causal principle. So the conception that the effect may be quite dissimilar with respect to the cause is something known to us, as well as having been affirmed by the Buddhistic logicians.

But what we have here is merely an answer to the objection that dissimilarity between cause and effect shows that the relationship is impossible. It does not explain, practically, how the relationship is, in fact, a possible relationship in the case of the supposed parthenogenetic production of conceptual cognition from perceptual sensation. To present the problem I shall make a quotation from the text on pages 160 and 161, for here an idea is introduced that becomes particularly suggestive and has a certain correlation with the conception which I shall myself present later. Quoting from the paragraph at the bottom of p. 160, we have this:

Dharmakirti seems moreover to have disagreed with Dignaga in the appreciation of the understanding in our cognition. According to the latter the understanding is a source of illusion, since it constructs images of reality instead of a direct intuition of it. Although Dharmakirti shares in this opinion, intuition is for him much wider in extension than sensation. Sensation or sensible intuition is not the only variety of direct cognition. The opposition is for him not between sensation and conception, but between direct and indirect cognition, or between intuition and conception. [Note this point now especially.] Sensible intuition is not the only way of direct knowledge, there is moreover an intelligible intuition. A moment of it is present in every sense-perception.²

Continuing quoting from the next section following this:

The Sanskrit term for perception therefore contains more in extension than sense-perception alone, it means direct knowledge or intuition, as contrasted with indirect knowledge or knowledge by concepts. Sense-perception is only one variety of intuition. There is another intuition, an intelligible one. Ordinary humanity does not possess the gift of such intuition, it is the exclusive faculty of the Saint who, according to theory, is not a human, but a superhuman being. A moment of this intelligible intuition is admitted to be involved in every perception in its second moment, the moment following on pure sensation.³

The suggested crossing from pure sensuous perception to conceptual cognition is in the following way: first, one moment, or point-instant, of sensation followed by one moment of intelligible intuition which effects the crossing over to conceptual cognition. This appears, here, to be a speculative suggestion. It is asserted that the intelligible

² Ibid., 160-161.

³ Ibid., 161.

intuition is the same as the consciousness of the Saint, but of which one moment is permitted into the consciousness of ordinary humanity in order to effect this crossing. We might say that the intelligible intuition acts very much like a catalyst, as developed in the illustration referred to earlier, that it is an agency that effected a crossing from these two apparently incompatible forms of cognition, but was not a part of the final result, since intelligible intuition is given as the prerogative of the Saint, or perhaps it would be more correct to say the *yogin*, and not a part of the consciousness of ordinary humanity. In as much as by the presence of this predicated moment of intelligible intuition ordinary humanity does not thereby become the awakened *yogin*, we may therefore conclude that it acts like a catalytic agent which does not become a part of the final product.

This looks like a bit of speculative thinking of the type with which we are commonly familiar, but nonetheless it is quite suggestive. As the term ‘intelligible intuition’ is used, I infer that they mean essentially the same thing as I mean by Realization or as the term is used by Aurobindo, that this is a factor in cognition over and above that of sense perception and conceptual cognition. And what is implied here is, in a hidden way, a third form of cognition, so that in the last analysis we do not have only two forms, sense perception and conceptual cognition, but the third form which is here called intelligible intuition and which I call Realization.

It is to be noted that within the text the word ‘perception’ is used to cover not only the field of sensuous intuition, but, as well, the field of intelligible intuition. And this throws a certain light upon a sentence to be found in the article “Absolute Perfection” by Herbert V. Guenther in the *Crystal Mirror*. The sentence in this text to be found on p. 31 is near the bottom of the page, and referring to the higher consciousness it there says in this sentence: “It is intrinsic or aesthetic perception (*Rig-pa*).”⁴ This statement now has a certain clarification. As the term ‘perception’ is commonly used by us and certainly by myself, it refers exclusively to a sensuous foundation and does not include intelligible intuition. Therefore, when I read this sentence originally I felt a considerable objection to the statement; I certainly would not identify *Rig-pa* with something so humble as sense perception. But if the term ‘perception’ is used in the dual sense that throws a light upon the statement that clarifies the understanding of it. I recommend, however, that we refrain from using ‘perception’ in this dual sense, or rather as equivalent to immediacy, and restrict it to the domain of sensation, that all perception is sensuous perception, that perception is not a synonym of all immediacy, but only a representation of the consequent of a sensation combined with whatever else is necessary to render that sensation perception. And for the other kind of immediacy, namely, intelligible intuition, I have suggested the term ‘introception’ and to restrict this term to that usage to represent a kind of cognition which is other than conceptual cognition, and, just as much, other than sensuous cognition. Also, I suggest the use of a term, suggested by someone else, namely, ‘imperience’ to represent this kind of cognition just as experience is related to sense perception.

⁴ Herbert V. Guenther, “Absolute Perfection” in *Crystal Mirror* 1 (Emeryville, Calif.: Dharma Press, 1971): 31-38.

This, I think, leads to a clarification and brings out in greater clarity the fact that we are dealing, indeed, with three forms of cognition, all of which are distinct from each other, but each of which has something in common with the others. Thus, for instance, introception has in common with sensuous perception the quality of immediacy, but it has in conformity with conception the quality of intelligibility. It carries a potential of expressability that is greater than that of a pure, sensuous perception. It is characteristic of conceptual cognition that it deals with logical universals and in this respect differs most strongly from the sensuous perception which is the radical, concrete particular. Now, in the case of introceptual consciousness, we have a quality which we may call “field consciousness”—not quite the same as the logical universal, but something vastly more than the point-instant of the sensational impact—and by reason of this *field* quality, it is akin to conceptual cognition. Thus we have it akin to perceptual cognition in one respect and to conceptual cognition in another respect, and this, I think, gives us a basis for a cross-correlation from the perceptual, sensuous side to the conceptual side by the intervention of the introceptual.

But now I would like to suggest a schematic arrangement of these three conceptual⁵ zones that will suggest their interrelationship. As I am acquainted with them, they do not fit into one rigid relationship, but are capable of more than one such relationship. Thus, in one sense, if we represent introceptual cognition by the letter *I*, perceptual cognition by the letter *P*, and conceptual cognition by the letter *C*, then we could arrange the three zones in the shape of a triangle, probably an equilateral triangle, with the introceptual cognition represented by the vertical point, the perceptual cognition by one of the lower points, and conceptual cognition by the other lower point. This, then, would represent that perceptual cognition and conceptual cognition are both derived from introceptual cognition, that the relationship of conceptual cognition to introceptual cognition is as immediate as the relationship of perceptual cognition to introceptual cognition.

Then there is this kind of a relationship that could arise: that the conceptual cognition is brought into activity by an interaction of the introceptual and the perceptual so that the conceptual is not exclusively a virgin birth out of the perceptual cognition. We could think of the introceptual as the hidden father and that the perceptual is the daughter, and that by the combination of these two the conceptual is born so that the conceptual has a relatedness in two directions.

Now, there is also a third arrangement in which we can place the three zones in a vertical line with *P*, or the perceptual, at the bottom, in an intermediate zone the conceptual, and at the top the introceptual. In this case, the conceptual acts as the bridge, or *antaskarana*, between the perceptual and the introceptual, or, in other terms, as the bridge between the supernal and the infernal.

What we have now is something that renders a more complete picture of interrelationships than what we have had heretofore. Because of the derivation of both the perceptual and the conceptual from the introceptual, an attainment of the consciousness of the introceptual order is possible through both gates, namely, the gate of sense

⁵ Wolff probably meant to say “. . . three cognitive zones . . .” or “. . . three zones of cognition . . .”

perception, or the aesthetic component, and through the gate of conceptual cognition, or the theoretic component. This, then, would lead to an entirely new theory of *Nirvana*. Instead of thinking of the introceptual level as merely a sort of indeterminate aesthetic component exclusively, it would also involve something corresponding to that in terms of the theoretic component. Perhaps the term ‘indeterminate theoretic component’ would not be correct, but at present I have not a suggestion for a more adequate term.

There, thus, could be a return to the Root, or that which is generally conceived of as *Nirvana*, by more than one route; and let us think what is involved here. To return by way of the perceptual domain is something like a return to the womb of Buddhahood, a giving up of the process of evolution, repudiating it as something of a vast mistake, and returning back to the womb from which we all came. This would be a rejection of the adventure of life and thought. There would, however, be another route; a route whereby, from the perceptual base—which is characteristic of the most elemental consciousness in which both man and animal overlap—through the high development of the conceptual to its highest possibility, and from that, returning by another route to the introceptual Source. This would involve the acceptance of the adventure of life, or greater than that, the acceptance of the adventure of thought, and from thence, reaching up to the crown of Buddhahood instead of simply returning to the womb of Buddhahood. This is what I wish to suggest as the higher possibility.

There are certain other thoughts which I wish to suggest for the consideration of the auditor. The content of our consciousness as we know it immediately consists not alone of objects before consciousness, either in the sense of point-instants or of more extended existences, it consists also of interrelationships between contents. In other words, we have a complex which we may call “terms and relationships.” Something of this is implied in the *Buddhist Logic*, for there, not only are the point-instants of immediate sense perception recognized, but also there is acknowledged that there is a principle of law, a principle of causal connection. Causal connection is a relationship. We, thus, have two components, and it is possible for the individual to be oriented more to the one or to the other. And it would appear that the relative emphases of these two components corresponds to the difference between the East and West in large degree, at least, as suggested by Dr. Northrop in his *The Meeting of East and West*.

Now, the key word for the higher value as given in the *Buddhist Logic* is *Paramartha-sat*, or in other words, Ultimately Reality. And this is associated there quite clearly with the point-instant everlastingly changing sensuous element. This is called Ultimate Reality. Now, the pair of concepts which we call the real and the unreal, or the real and the illusive or illusionary, would seem to apply to metaphysical conception, to the idea of ultimate existences or ultimate components conceived simply as components apart from the notion of relationship.

Now, in the consideration of the relationship aspect, we have the syntactical element, the logical element, the mathematical element. And here we are dealing with what would seem to be a different kind of conception than that of reality. Instead of being orientation to a *metaphysical* standpoint, it is more orientation to an *epistemological* standpoint. And the key word here would be ‘truth’ contrasting to ‘error’.

Now, I'm not suggesting that there is an absence of this element in the Eastern component or that there is an absence of the term 'element' in the Western component, but what I am in fact suggesting is that there is a difference of emphases, and that we may associate these differences of emphases with the two conceptual pairs: "reality and illusion" on one hand, contrasting to "truth and error," on the other hand. Truth, as a conception in the West, is a matter of judgment. I'm aware that there is some usage of this term in Eastern literature that would seem to suggest that it is used somewhat like the term 'reality', as a metaphysical conception rather than an epistemological conception, but I advise, for clarification, that we use this term here in the Western sense as an essentially epistemological notion. Therefore, the characteristic orientation which would be truly Western, in this sense, is an orientation primarily to truth rather than to reality, an orientation to the principle of judgment—since truth involves a judgment and a proposition which may be true or erroneous—rather than an orientation primarily to reality, which we could view as the typical Oriental orientation. This I throw out as a suggestion.

Orientation to sense leads to art. Orientation to relationship, in its most perfect manifestation, leads to pure mathematics. Therefore, pure mathematics for him who follows primarily the path of truth, rather than the path of prime orientation to reality, would be through mathematics, in high degree. Thus, I suggest that all of pure mathematics is a kind of *sutra*, and a very lofty kind at that, for here we do not have to apply Buddha's rule of saying thus I have heard, for the proof of the truth is there present. The great motivation for the study of pure mathematics is the motivation of truth seeking. That I know.

And there is a final question which I should like to submit to the Buddhistic logician. If it predicated that all is a stream of becoming, that indeed nothing is durable for any passage of time, but that everything is merely an efficiency lasting for a point-instant, does this principle, then, of eternal process, of eternal becoming, of eternal changing, apply also to the *sutras* that are handed down to us? Or are those *sutras* to be regarded as an exception to the rule, and, therefore, a negation of the thesis of eternal change? And if it applies to the *sutras*, then it would follow that every *sutra* would in time cease to be valid. And would this also apply to the dictum that all is eternally changing, so that this dictum also would be subject to decay and change?