

# Three Fundamentals of the Introceptive Philosophy

## Part 1 of 16

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This discussion I had originally intended to deliver extemporaneously next Sunday, but I have found that when I think deeply and pregnant thoughts come to me, they very easily slip away from the mind. So I am putting this down on tape now, before that can happen. This morning I wish to direct your attention, again, to the three fundamentals of this philosophy. Though I have discussed them before, I have now something more to say.

After a lifetime of thought, plus the enormous aid of five Realizations, three of which may be viewed as propaedeutic and two of which may be considered as transcendental, after all of that thought has eventuated or has been distilled into three fundamental propositions which are in their formulation very simple. And, indeed, the point may be made that the attainment of essential simplicity is the most difficult achievement for thought of all its efforts. But when I speak of simplicity, I do not mean it in the sense of crude and incompetent or of popular thinking, but rather in the sense that pure mathematics is the simplest form of all thought because it is the most pure. These three propositions, as you will remember, are as follows: first, that *Consciousness is original, self-existent, and constitutive of all things*; second, that *the subject to consciousness transcends the object of consciousness*; and third, that *there are three, and not two, fundamental organs, faculties, or functions of cognition*.

We shall consider these fundamentals in the order of presentation, so therefore we start with the first, which I shall repeat: *consciousness is original, self-existent, and constitutive of all things*. This is derivative from the final conscious stage of the Realization called the High Indifference. It is contained in the last substantial paragraph of the discussion of "The High Indifference" in the volume *Pathways Through to Space*. This paragraph is the most important paragraph in the whole book, and the last sentence of that paragraph is the most important sentence. I shall repeat it to bring it back to your memory.

I moved about in a kind of Space that was not other than Myself, and found Myself surrounded by pure Divinity, even on the physical level when I moved there. There is a sense in which God is physical Presence as well as metaphysical. But this Presence is everywhere and everything, and, at the same time, the negation of all this. Again, neither I nor God were There, only BEING remained. I vanished and the object of consciousness vanished, in the highest, as well as inferior, senses. I was

no more and God was no more, but only the ETERNAL which sustains all Gods and all Selves.<sup>1</sup>

This was the culminating point of that whole journey in consciousness, which was reported in *Pathways Through to Space*, and produced a revolution in my personal philosophic thought. Perhaps the implications of this paragraph have failed to attract the attention of the reader, but they are of a most fundamental sort. First of all, bear in mind that at this particular stage of consciousness, the whole of the world, or the universe of objects, was known in an interior or higher sense. They were not any longer the purely secular objects of our experience which consists of the mountains and valleys, the rivers and lakes, the buildings, the cities, the railroads, and beyond this, the celestial objects, the planets, the stars, the galaxies. All of this, including in a subtler sense the objects of thought, that which we call our conceptual world, all of these objects had gone through a transformation so that their nature was Divinity itself. They were no longer secular. They were all Divine. And the Self, which is the subject of all our cognitions, had also been transformed into its inmost meaning, that which is suggested by the Sanskrit term *Paramatman*. We might thus say that all that there was there was the *Paramatman*, as the eternal, underlying, ontological subject, and the *Parabrahm*, as the eternal, underlying object. I am God; we are all. And these two have been known through a Fundamental Realization as essentially identical, but viewed from different perspectives.

Now, what that paragraph affirms is that at this highest point of the development of the fifth Realization, the object of consciousness in this highest sense, which is identical with the Divinity, or *Parabrahm*, and also the ultimate and eternal subject, the *Paramatman*, vanish in a more fundamental somewhat, which I called in *Pathways* the ETERNAL, but which I have since developed as the essential, Pure Consciousness—not in our ordinary sense in which we conceive of consciousness as a relationship between a knower and a known, but as a Consciousness which preexists the knower and the known, the knower and the known being derivative, the Consciousness, the original and eternal reality, that which is not created, not made, not constructed, not in any sense derived from something more ultimate, but as the ultimate in so far as we conceive it in the deepest level of our apprehension. To be sure there are difficulties in conceiving of consciousness in this sense, for we are in the habit of thinking of consciousness as a relationship between the knower and the known. We are also in the habit of thinking that the objects about us are self-existent. This is very characteristic of our science and of our everyday mundane habits. But the implication here is that all of these objects, even the Divinity itself, and the ultimate Self or subject to consciousness, are finally ontologically derivative from a greater ultimate which is here called Consciousness-without-an-object-and-without-a-subject, and which may be identified with the Tibetan conception of *Rig-pa*, a Consciousness that is not aware of phenomena, but is eternal awareness.

As one looks abroad in the world and considers the religions of mankind, he finds that in the vast majority of these religions the Ultimate is viewed as an objective Being, an entity from whence all else is derived. The point in this Realization that has just been presented is this, that at best this Ultimate conceived as an object or a Divinity, as

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<sup>1</sup> Franklin Merrell-Wolff, *Pathways Through to Space* (New York: Richard R. Smith, 1944), 123.

*Parabrahm*, as Allah, as Yahweh, as God, or by any other name, is only a relative Ultimate at best. There is also the implied possible view that the Ultimate might be approached as the transcendental subject to consciousness, the pure Self, the *Paramatman*, and it would be maintained here that this view is still more fundamental than the view that the Ultimate Source of all is the final object of consciousness. But nonetheless, the Realization reveals this fact, that at best, these two are only relative Ultimates, only approximations to a somewhat which is neither an object nor a subject, but from which both the ultimate object and the ultimate subject are derived.

Now let us view the common experience of these two. It is in this form: I, a subject to consciousness, stand in a relationship of awareness with respect to an object of consciousness. There are here, then, three terms: the 'I', the 'object', and the 'relationship'. Perhaps because of this fundamental trinity, it was the practice of the Great Buddha to formulate all important things three times, thereby implying that there is something very important in threeness. In this philosophy, we have given to the middle term, that which we ordinarily think of simply as a relationship, the value of being the key to the Ultimate Truth, or Reality; that the key does not really lie in the subject or the object, either in the mundane or the transcendental sense, but, rather, lies in that which binds them together. Could this, then, be the deeper meaning of the Blessed One's emphasis of the middle way. Ordinarily we think of this middle way in connection with the principle of moderation, the avoidance of extremes, such as the extremes of self-indulgence and of self-flagellation. But behind that meaning lies this deeper one to the effect that in the ultimate trinity, consisting of the knower and the known and the relationship between them, that relationship, the middle term, is indeed the Ultimate, the Ultimate from which all else, subjective and objective, is derived.

This that we have developed so far may be viewed as the *microcosmic* aspect of the Ultimate Truth as revealed in the fifth Realization, the one called the High Indifference, and it does imply that the key to the great secret lies hidden in our common consciousness, there to be made explicit by sufficiently keen self-analysis. But beyond this, there is that which we may call the *macrocosmic* picture or pattern, and for this I'll direct your attention to three fundamental Buddhistic conceptions. These are *Sangsara*, *Nirvana*, and *Paranirvana*. By *Sangsara* we mean the domain of all objective development, the world in which we move or seem to move, the whole cosmos, the whole content of our ideation, the domain which includes the familiar heaven worlds of the popular religions, and also the hells of those religions, and all of the intermediate *lokas*, or spaces of consciousness, all that is represented by the "Hall of Learning," or by the "intermediate zone" of Sri Aurobindo. Then in contrast to this is that complementary other, called *Nirvana*, of which little can be said because it is not objective. These two can be seen as corresponding to the end terms of our trinity of relative consciousness organization. The *sangsaric* zone is the zone of the object and the *nirvanic* zone is the zone of the subject—a position foreshadowed in the second of the five Realizations, which took the form, "I am *Nirvana*." Then, there is a third state characteristic of Buddhism, although not characteristic of the Vedanta. There are those who view *Moksha*, or *Nirvana*, as the *summum bonum*, but not so is it with the Buddhists. That *summum bonum*, insofar as we humans can conceive it, is called *Paranirvana*, and concerning this, little is to be found in available literature. But what I point out here is that the *paranirvanic* state is not a deeper kind of *Nirvana*, a still further movement toward the

subjective pole, as I think we have been inclined to conceive it, but rather it is that which binds together the *sangsaric* and the *nirvanic*. It is not something beyond *Nirvana* in the same direction as *Nirvana*, nor something beyond *Sangsara* in the same direction as *Sangsara*, but rather the third term which in one sense lies between these two, or in a larger sense encloses and embraces both. It would therefore be more objective than *Nirvana*, as well as more subjective than *Sangsara*. It is the third, or middle term, that which here may be viewed as reflected in the relationship that binds together the knower and the known.

Now, this leads to a very interesting consequence. Whereas it is our habit, and the practice in the vast majority of religions, to find ultimate realities or ultimate values in the referents of those terms which we call substantives, dramatically and logically, and it is our habit to view the connectives between substantives as more or less incidental, as akin to after-thoughts, as relatively minor factors; but what is here suggested is that all this is a great mistake, that the binder, the glue, the relating function, the syntactical element, is the reflection of the authentic Ultimate—and that turns our whole perspective quite around, perhaps 180 degrees. And perhaps here also, we have the key to the understanding of the primary message of the Blessed One himself, and those who followed in his footsteps. It may be the explanation of why these particular philosophies are so difficult to comprehend, because we are in the habit of thinking that philosophic statements and religious orientations are to substantives, either in the sense of objective or subjective, whereas, it is there presented as lying in the intermediate, or binding, zone. And one of the things that emerges now is that we have an interconnected structure bound together with no loose ends. And it's for that reason that I said in *Pathways* that the High Indifference was the keystone that completed the arch. On one side the pillar is the subject, the eternal subject, and on the other side the eternal object, and that binding these two is the relationship between them—the keystone that completes the arch.

It would seem that we have now reached a point where we may attempt a certain reconciliation between two radically contrasting views of the nature of the world. These are the views known as that of a universal *maya* or *shunyata* with respect to the whole phenomenal order, and in contrast to that, the view of a universal realism, which treats the nature of the world as being essentially real, but which may be misinterpreted because of ignorance—the view that the world itself is essentially real, but may be misapprehended, misunderstood. The primary names in connection with these two contrasting views are first, on the side of a universal *maya* or *shunyata* are the names of Buddha and Shankara, and with respect to the view that has been called a universal realism is the name of Sri Aurobindo. To present the issue with some degree of clarity, I shall quote the statement of Sri Aurobindo as it is found in *The Life Divine*, more specifically, the chapter on “The Cosmic Illusion; Mind, Dream and Hallucination,” p. 371 of the Greystone edition. The quotation is found on p. 374 and is as follows:

In India the philosophy of world-negation has been given formulations of supreme power and value by two of the greatest of her thinkers, Buddha and Shankara. There have been, intermediate or later in time, other philosophies of considerable importance, some of them widely accepted, formulated with much acumen of thought by men of genius and spiritual insight, which disputed with more or less force and success the

conclusions of these two great metaphysical systems, but none has been put forward with an equal force of presentation or drive of personality or had a similar massive effect. The spirit of these two remarkable spiritual philosophies,—for Shankara in the historical process of India’s philosophical mind takes up, completes and replaces Buddha,—has weighed with a tremendous power on her thought, religion and general mentality: everywhere broods its mighty shadow, everywhere is the impress of the three great formulas, the chain of Karma, escape from the wheel of rebirth, Maya. It is necessary therefore to look afresh at the Idea or Truth behind the negation of cosmic existence and to consider, however briefly, what is the value of its main formulations or suggestions, on what reality they stand, how far they are imperative to the reason or to experience. For the present it will be enough to throw a regard on the principle ideas which are grouped around the conception of the great cosmic Illusion, Maya, and to set against them those that are proper to our own line of thought and vision; for both proceed from the conception of the One Reality, but one line leads to a universal Illusionism, the other to a universal Realism,—an unreal or real-unreal universe reposing on a transcendent Reality or a real universe reposing on a Reality at once universal and transcendent or absolute.<sup>2</sup>

This subject is here discussed through two key chapters in the whole volume of *The Life Divine*—this one, “The Cosmic Illusion” and the following one, “Reality and the Cosmic Illusion.” It presents, perhaps, as fundamental an issue as there exists in the whole field of Oriental philosophy. There is no doubt that as one reads certain of the Buddhistic *sutras* that the whole domain of the world, or *Sangsara*, is there treated as essentially a *shunya*, or voidness—a somewhat that is not essentially real. And this feature becomes even more explicit in the philosophic statement of Sri Shankaracharya, and is one of the most powerful statements to be found in all philosophic literature. Sri Aurobindo’s philosophic view contrasts, apparently radically, with these two earlier positions.

Now, the question we face is as follows: is there any point of view that could regard these two positions as complements in a more comprehensive conception? Is there a form of reconciliation? We shall here attempt a brief statement with respect to such a reconciliation, and that will require us to go back to the content of the Realization which may be called the attainment of the vestibule of *Nirvana*. The emphasis here is upon the word ‘vestibule’, for there is ground to believe that in the initial contact with *nirvanic* Consciousness if it is fully accepted and the aspirant identifies himself with it, then he enters into a *nirvanic* state which locks him away from all awareness of *sangsaric* or cosmic consciousness. Therefore, the impact which avoids such locking away is in the nature of a partial *nirvanic* Realization, not a complete entering into a *nirvanic* state. In other words, having reached what we call the vestibule of *Nirvana*, the acceptance of the full state of *Nirvana* may be rejected, as is recommended in *The Voice of the Silence* and implied in the Kwan-Yin vow. But, in

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<sup>2</sup> Aurobindo Ghose, *The Life Divine*, vol. 18 of the *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centennial Library* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, 1970), 415-416.

such an imperience, it is possible to identify the effect of a *nirvanic* consciousness upon the valuation of the universe of objects, or the *Sangsara*. From my own experience, or imperience rather, I can say this, that the entering into that state has the effect of making all of the universe of objects to seem unreal in the same way that a dream seems unreal when one awakens from sleep, or the snake perceived in a rope seems completely unreal when the hallucination vanishes, or as the seeming lake produced by a mirage also ceases to be a lake when it is recognized as being a mirage.

This effect is indeed very real at this stage of Realization, but I can add this fact, something that has not been sufficiently noted in what I have said and written, and which may carry an important but overlooked significance: it is possible in certain states of consciousness to ascend to the *nirvanic*-like consciousness and descend from it at will. I have pointed out that in the transition between the two, there is a point of discontinuity where there is a moment blackout of consciousness, and then a movement in consciousness organized upon a totally different basis. When one descends from the higher consciousness and returns to his normal subject-object field of cognition, the just experienced higher state again seems, also, to be unreal. There thus appears two experiences of unreality at this stage. Actually, the force of unreality with respect to the cosmic field is the stronger of the two, and I therefore identified myself with that position. But now we must consider the importance of the complementary feeling that when one returns to the relative consciousness, the transcendent state seems to be unreal also; there is apparently here a psychological relativity.

Some time ago I came across a quotation from Immanuel Kant that suggests a different approach to the whole problem that is presented by these Indian thinkers, and seems to offer a way out. The quotation is to be found in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Max Muller translation, p. 293, and is as follows:

Still less can phenomenon [*appearance*] and *illusion* be taken as identical. For truth or illusion is not to be found in the objects of intuition, but in the judgments upon them, so far as they are thought. It is therefore quite right to say, that the senses never err, not because they always judge rightly, but because they do not judge at all.<sup>3</sup>

Now, in the Indian sources which we have just considered, the contrast is set up between *reality* and *illusion*. What is implied in the quotation from Immanuel Kant is this: that the true contrast to *reality* is *appearance*, and that if there is no judgment made, there is no question as to the reality of the appearance, not because the senses, in reporting the appearance are always judging correctly, but rather because they do not judge at all. In other words, if we shift our identification of illusion from the position of being a contrast with reality to a contrast that arises when a judgment is made, then *illusion* is the opposite of *truth*, and not the opposite of *reality*. There is no such thing as unreality for a non-judging consciousness. This implies that anything that appears to the non-judging consciousness is real, so far as its factuality is concerned. But the implication of this is that the objects which we call dream objects, or the objects of hallucination, or the

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<sup>3</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Max Muller (New York: Macmillan, 1881), 293.

objects of a mirage have equal factuality with the objects of normal perception, just so long as there is no judgment. When we judge, then we may arrive in a position of orientation to truth or orientation to illusion. If I judge the snake in the rope, which is the hallucinatory snake, as having the same reality value as the snake of normal perception, then I am in a state of illusion. The same applies to the dream object and to the lake that is a mirage. This changes the approach to the whole problem of illusionism, which is now considered as the opposite of truth—there being no truth unless there is a judgment, and there being no illusion or error unless there is a judgment. This seems to be a turn in thought that does not arise in the Buddhist, at least the earlier Buddhistic *sutras*, in the thought of Shankara, and in the thought of Sri Aurobindo.

We shall go on with this subject in the next tape. This will be sufficient for today.