

Three Fundamentals of the Introceptive Philosophy

Part 8 of 16

Franklin Merrell-Wolff

January 4, 1974

This morning I have been brooding upon the transcendental function or that which I called in *Pathways* the “butterfly valve”; and although I have discussed this subject elsewhere in another tape,¹ I think I have something more to say this time so we shall proceed to a further consideration of this function.

This function became recognizably active during the period in 1936 running from August 7th to September 9th. Whether it is active without one’s being conscious of its functioning is a question I cannot answer positively. I, in fact, suspect that this function may be active sporadically and unconsciously, in the sense of the individual not being aware that there is a distinct function here, yet active nonetheless. I suspect this to be true in the case of the works of genius in general, but in the period named in 1936 it became a recognizable function which I could distinguish.

First we may consider the psychology of it; and bear in mind when speaking of the “psychology,” I mean the word in the sense of development of existential judgments, not judgments of value or content. There is associated with its functioning a sense of thrill which may involve tingling in the spine, but not always so. It involves a feeling of excitement and of enthusiasm. One feels himself to be more conscious, to be more alert, to have a higher order of knowledge at the time of the functioning of this instrument of cognition. In fact, it may be very well that it is more than an instrument of cognition because the values which come with it have the coloring of delight, though not necessarily in the extreme form that was experienced, or rather imperienced, in 1936 when the delight was so intense that one gave to it an extreme valuation. It is now more like a gentle function which carries with it a quality of delight in a more gentle form.

Now, it has been present intermittently as a fact in my consciousness ever since that date in 1936; however, it does not function all the time. It precipitates itself at times spontaneously, or I can by a conscious effort here cause it to function, though the effort is very easy and not at all difficult. When it is not functioning, I find that my cognitive processes are more or less difficult, do not carry any particular authority with them. In fact, I would say that since the experience of some 37 years with this function, the older way of thinking without its conscious action is rather less capable than it was in the days before 1936. As a matter of fact, I would say that all significant production which it has been my fortune to develop has been dependant upon this function, although I would not say that it operates at all times when I have written or when I have spoken. Nonetheless, it gives the material that is of value. Without it, I do not regard my own functioning as more than ordinary.

¹ See audio recording “Three Fundamentals of the Introceptive Philosophy,” part 3.

Typically when this function operates, breaking into my consciousness spontaneously, it does not bring an ideational content. On the contrary, it seems like a flow of an indefinable somewhat. Nonetheless, it acts like an insemination of the mind so that the mind can work with more ease and more authority than is normally the case. It tends to overcome the tendency to delayed recall, which I find is one of the hardships connected with growing old. One might say it is like a force of illumination in the intellectual mind. One is inclined to speak in terms suggesting luminousness; but in my experience it is not a sensible luminousness.

If one goes through the literature on the subject of mystical unfoldment or of yogic Realizations, one finds a large reference to an experience of light, which is usually represented in terms that one would call sensible, that is, like the light which one would see through the sense of sight. I have not had this particular experience of sensible light, and, knowing in the early days that this was a common experience, I raised the question to the attention of the one that I called the Sage, and he said the experience does not always involve sensible light. It does so when the mind is not prepared for it. If the mind is prepared by study and thought, it becomes an illuminated ideation. And this leads us to a subject that was discussed in a certain chapter of *The Life Divine* by Sri Aurobindo. This is the chapter called “The Methods of the Vedanta.”² There he speaks of two types of imperience. One he calls the direct action of the “sense-mind,” or the *manas*; and the second he calls the direct action of the pure reason, or the *Buddhi*. If we have a case of the direct action of the sense-mind, there is a vast amount of phenomena that have been identified in which one derives a sensible-like material without the use of the ordinary organs of sensation. This gives a capacity to see events at a distance in space and time, or on other planes, or to sense them otherwise than by the sense of sight. It renders possible perception in the ordinary sense without the use of the sense organs. In other words, there is here, also, a light phenomenon such as that which has been described at length by Gopi Krishna in his autobiographical volume.³ But in contrast to this, which we may call sensible clairvoyance, there is another kind connected with the direct action of the pure reason. In this case one does not have the experience of sensible-like objects. One does not have any peculiar capacity to speak concerning the problems or conditions of a unique, concrete *particular*, but on the contrary, it is as though one had a direct apperception of *universals*, he had a kind of ideational *seeing* into these universals without deriving them from concrete particulars. They arrive in the consciousness as immediate apprehensions, as something which one knows more completely than he knows any concrete particular.

This has an important bearing. It implies, among other things, that the vehicle of expression would naturally tend to be philosophical, in the broad sense of the word, rather than artistic. Very frequently when there is an unfoldment, the expression is artistic—as something painted, or it could be produced in the form of music, or in the form of poetry. On the whole, I would say that the breakthrough in this sense, if one is to

² Aurobindo Ghose, *The Life Divine*, vol. 18 of the *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centennial Library* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, 1970), 60-70. The chapter is actually titled “The Methods of Vedantic Knowledge.”

³ Gopi Krishna, *Kundalini: The Evolutionary Energy in Man* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1967), 11-14. See also the audio recording “Three Fundamentals of the Introceptive Philosophy,” part 5.

judge by the reports in the literature, is more frequent than the breakthrough in the sense of the direct action of the pure reason. I suspect that this was a function that operated in the case of Plato—something which he referred to in only one place, so far as I know, namely, in the “Seventh Letter” attributed to him. Aurobindo identifies this direct action of the pure reason with the *Buddhi*, and that is consonant with the definition of *Buddhi* as given in the Sanskrit dictionary and in the Aurobindian usage, but there may be a question whether it is the same meaning attributed to the word by H. P. Blavatsky in her writings.

The discussion so far may be said to deal with the psychology of this function. Now we shall consider its epistemological bearing. This aspect of it is the part to which I attribute by far the greater importance. Bear in mind that epistemology deals with the subject of sources of knowledge, not in the psychological sense, but in the meaningful sense, in the sense of the content of the knowledge and of the values; and logic deals with the formal relationships that differentiates sound thinking from erroneous thinking either deliberate or unconscious.

There is a reason why I feel impelled to give a special attention to this particular aspect. There have been two statements to the effect that I have made a logical contribution, from persons who are really quite competent; and yet I did not feel that I had made any particular logical contribution, although I did know that I had made an epistemological contribution. I will refer to the sources of these statements by reading the material as it was given. In a December/January issue of a paper called *Changes*, of 1973, there is an interview of Dr. John Lilly, and I shall read a portion that comes under the heading, “The History of Religion is the History of Madness.” The question presented is:

Question: In a sense, this is what we all are into: the question of the history of madness and what has changed about it.

Dr. Lilly: But the history of religion is also the history of madness, and the present attitudes toward mental illness are very, very much the same as they were during the Inquisition about any doctrine which was not that of the Church. A heretic, at that time, was burned for the good of his soul. Nowadays, you take a psychotic and lock him up for the good of the community. What’s the difference?

Question: Is there anything left for you in the category of madness or is that an empty category?

Dr. Lilly: Well, it’s an arbitrary kind of assignment of value which doesn’t mean anything. It is a convenient system. Psychosis, psychiatry, and all these things are arbitrary definitions of human activities which are useful to the particular people involved so they can carry on their planet side trip. That’s all. It hasn’t anything to do with reality. See, I use a five valued logic. There’s true. There’s false. There’s ‘as if’ true. There’s ‘as if’ false. And then there’s meaningless.

An interjection by Toni, who was Dr. Lilly’s wife: Give an example.

Dr. Lilly: Your belief system says, “I’m going to define the following ‘as if’ true”; and then suddenly you realize, without noticing, you’ve changed that to, “I define the following as true.” The transition goes bing-bing. Whereas, if you pull back a bit and look at it carefully, it’s all ‘as if’ true.

Question: You’re saying there is no true? It’s all ‘as if’ true?

Dr. Lilly: No. There is true. But that has to be directly experienced as true or as false. True, the experience can’t be by definition. All of your simulations, all of your models of reality, are ‘as if’ true; and you know this. If you get too involved in them and take them as true, then you go around and kill people and start wars and do all that nonsense. So the new logic—and it’s being worked through very, very carefully by G. Spencer Brown in England in his *Laws of Form*—the new logic is five valued. It’s not like the old dichotomy logic with its symbols for ‘neither nor’ and ‘either or’. We have now got ‘both and’, and all kinds of values which were left out. We even have the ‘excluded middle’ which Aristotle threw out. Logic, the science of logic, is finally making some progress, and the two people who are leading it are G. Spencer Brown in England and Franklin Merrell-Wolff in this country with a book I am just reading now called *The Philosophy of Consciousness Without an Object*. It’s incredible. It will be published by Julian Press.

Now, with respect to this, I did not feel that I had made any particular contribution to logic; although I felt very flattered that Dr. Lilly should have made this statement, for I most certainly would enjoy making a contribution to logic. I did feel, however, that I had made a contribution to epistemology, to something of the principles underlying the knowing process *per se*. But since that time, I have received a letter from one known as Gardner Reid, in which he reaffirms the position of Dr. Lilly.⁴ In this letter, which is dated December 23, 1973, the writer says in one paragraph:

I’m going to search out a copy of *Changes* magazine so that I can read the Lilly interview. I agree that Yogi is a framer of the new logic. His logic combines *epistemologic* with *ontologic* in a way that few other philosophers have dreamed of, yet it does not pamper itself with obscurantism.

In the light of these two quotations from independent and competent individuals, I have been forced to reexamine my work to see if, indeed, I have been an unconscious logician in the sense of making a contribution to the theory and structure of logic. This seems a most improbable event. Yet, nonetheless, in reflection on the subject this morning, there is a sense in which I may indeed have made a contribution. But before going into this subject, I wish to make certain comments concerning another aspect of the quotations just presented.

It will be remembered, no doubt, that in the case of the quotation from the *Changes* magazine, it was given under the heading, “The History of Religion is the

⁴ Wolff meant to say, “. . . a letter from one known as Reid Gardner . . .”

History of Madness”—a very startling statement to say the least. But in connection with that, I would like to read into the tape, a brief introduction by G. Spencer Brown to Dr. Lilly’s book, *The Center of the Cyclone*. This is as follows:

Discoveries of any great moment in mathematics and other disciplines, once they are discovered, are seen to be extremely simple and obvious, and make everybody, including their discoverer, appear foolish for not having discovered them before. It is all too often forgotten that the ancient symbol for pre-nascence of the world is a fool, and that foolishness, being a divine state, is not a condition to be either proud or ashamed of.

Unfortunately we find systems of education today that have departed so far from the plain truth that they now teach us to be proud of what we know and ashamed of ignorance. This is doubly corrupt. It is corrupt not only because pride is in itself a mortal sin, but also because to teach pride in knowledge is to put an effective barrier against any advance upon what is already known, since it makes one ashamed to look beyond the bonds imposed by one’s ignorance.

To any person prepared to enter with respect into the realm of his great and universal ignorance, the secrets of being will eventually unfold, and they will do so in a measure according to his freedom from natural and indoctrinated shame in his respect of their revelation.

In the face of the strong, and indeed violent, social pressures against it, few people have been prepared to take this simple and satisfying course toward sanity. And in a society where a prominent psychiatrist can advertise that, given the chance, he would have treated Newton to electric shock therapy, who can blame any person for being afraid to do so?

To arrive at the simplest truth, as Newton knew and practiced, requires years of contemplation. Not activity. Not reasoning. Not calculating. Not busy behavior of any kind. Not reading. Not talking. Not making an effort. Not thinking. Simply bearing in mind what it is one needs to know. And yet those with the courage to tread this path to real discovery are not only offered practically no guidance on how to do so, they are actively discouraged and have to set about it in secret, pretending meanwhile to be diligently engaged in the frantic diversions and to conform with the deadening personal opinions that are being continually thrust upon them.

In these circumstances, the discoveries that any person is able to undertake represent the places where, in the face of induced psychosis, he has, by his own faltering and unaided efforts, returned to sanity. Painfully, and even dangerously, maybe. But nonetheless returned, however furtively.⁵

⁵ John C. Lilly, *The Center of the Cyclone* (New York: The Julian Press, 1972). This quote is reprinted from G. Spencer Brown, *The Laws of Form* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1969), 109-110.

The picture of a psychiatrist who, if given the chance, would have treated Sir Isaac Newton to shock treatment makes one to think of an ant that suddenly came into the presence of the Divinity, and because he could not understand that Divinity, regarded the state of consciousness of the latter as a state of madness. How inflated can a mere ant become? What must a caterpillar think concerning his brother who becomes a butterfly? No doubt the butterfly deviates from the norm which is the pattern of the caterpillars; and if deviation from norm is evidence of being a psychotic, then the brother who prefers to fly instead of crawling, no doubt would seem to be mad. Oh, there is no doubt that there is deviation from norm which really is a movement towards inferiority with respect to the norm, but also movement to superiority is deviation from the norm, and the caterpillar who becomes a chrysalis and then is born again to fly has moved into an order of real superiority regardless of the opinion of his brother caterpillar, or the ant, or the psychiatrist. Thus, there is a sense that those who have authentic religious experience may be classed by the psychiatrist as mad. But what is the norm? What is the norm, for instance, of a lunatic asylum? Deviation from norm there could be judged by the typical representative of such an asylum as being the abnormal one. But what of this world? What is the norm of this world—a world that still employs the sword for the resolution of international problems, a world of violence and criminality? Is it any better than a lunatic asylum? Any superiority would be deviation, necessarily, from such a norm, and therefore taking the norm of the unilluminated psychiatrist, all superiority would be regarded as madness, particularly that superiority which is a breakthrough to authentic religiosity.

But let us return to the subject of logic, and first let us take a brief view of the logic with which we today actually work. For this, let us first consider the logic of the empiric sciences. By the empiric sciences, I mean all of those sciences that are based upon the principle of observation, beginning with physics, through astronomy, chemistry, geology, and so forth, through the life sciences, and ultimately up, or down, into the social sciences—all of which contrast with the normative sciences known as logic and pure mathematics.

The logical principle upon which the empiric sciences is based is that which is known as “inductive logic.” And it operates upon the principle that first a series of observations are made and then the investigator considers the results of his observations or experiments, and may invent some general hypothesis that leads to an explanation of these results. The hypothesis must be of such a sort that the consequence of some possible future experiments can be predicted and then the actual experiment can be made, and if the results are consonant with the prediction it tends to confirm the hypothesis. If this prediction is confirmed repeatedly, the hypothesis becomes a theory; and if over a long stretch of time the theory works, it is regarded as a law of nature. Now, the difference between the hypothesis, and the theory, and the supposed law of nature, is only a difference of degree. There is no absolute attained by this method, nor is it possible to determine an absolute law by this method. The great experience of the breakdown of the formulations of Sir Isaac Newton with respect to the laws governing bodies in space after 200 years of successful operation, and then the replacement by the relativity theory of Einstein, was an experience of premier importance. It implies that by empiric methods we can never reach to certainty but only to probable truth. The greater the number of observations or experiments that tend to confirm a formulation of a theory, the more

probable it is that the theory is true. But to achieve absolute certainty by this method would require an infinity of observations. Right here we see the bearing of the statement made by Dr. Lilly in the interview to the effect that if we take the so-called system of laws of science as true instead of “as if” true, we prepare ourselves for again having the traumatic experience which we had when the integrations of Sir Isaac Newton failed. We have derived by this means only probably or pragmatic truth, not truth *per se*.

Now, let us look at the two other scientific disciplines, that of the normative sciences logic and pure mathematics. In the case of pure mathematics, it used to be the view, which we inherited from the Greeks, that there were certain self-evident truths with which we start, and from these truths as universal we draw conclusions by rigorous logic, and that therefore mathematics gave us certain truth. But here again we had the traumatic experience of finding that we could assume something different from the parallel axiom of Euclid, and yet develop self-consistent geometries. And in mathematics, any system that is self-consistent is said to exist. But the very fact that we could build such self-consistent systems implied that there is no self-evident truth which must be inevitably accepted by everyone. And it is a most interesting fact that one of these non-Euclidean geometries fits the conception of the cosmos which was presented to us by Einstein, whereas the Euclidean geometry failed. The result has been that we no longer think of our systems as being built upon self-evident truths, but simply upon fundamental assumptions, which may be quite arbitrary. The implication, therefore, is that no matter how perfect the logic by which a mathematical system is built, it is vulnerable at its roots because the fundamental assumptions may not in fact be true. Again, it follows that even in this normative science we achieve only probable truth, not certain truth. And as to logic, in the formal sense, it may be quite correct to say that if all men are mortal, and if Socrates is a man, then, inescapably, we must conclude that Socrates is mortal; but what about the assumptions here? Only empiric data justifies the statement that all men are mortal, and we have made an empiric judgment when we say that Socrates is a man, and therefore it is possible for error to enter in even though the process is rigidly correct.

In another field, that upon which traditional religions are generally based, we have the presumed presentation of truth in a conceptual form from which we draw our present conclusions. Thus, we have what are called the Vedic sources, the sources of the Upanishads, and the root sources of all religious texts or bibles. Now, here we have also an inherent source of error. Let us assume that in one or more or all of these presentations, we have a communication from the Divine, or as I'd rather put it, from a spiritual source, or still better, from a *bodhic* source, but communication from such sources in their purity is not in the form of verbal statements, or even of pure conceptions before they have been clothed in verbal statements. If one receives directly or reads a communication given through someone else that is of necessity in verbal form, it is not a pure communication from a spiritual or *bodhic* source, but a *transcription* of it. A pure communication from these transcendental sources is not anything like what we would call language. It rather is like a complex flow in consciousness from which supernal value is received directly, but it is not at all like any conceptual or verbal structure in its purity. Such a flow received into consciousness may be by some process, which I have not yet been able to trace in detail, transformed into some conceptual form; but the act of transformation is complex. The original flowage may be likened unto the flow of lava, or rather, more correctly, the flow of magma, into crevices in rock which in the process of

time will become more or less completely crystallized. The crystallized state of this mass represents conceptual organization. The flow itself is not so organized.

Now, if there is any communication whatsoever which is supposed to come from a divine, or spiritual, or *bodhic* source, and is given out as having been derived in verbal form directly, one may know that this is not from such a source. If it is authentic it was not received in the form of verbal concepts, but was transformed by some structure in the receiver into those verbal forms. And here there is an inevitable source of error. It is the error that is involved in any effort to transform a curve into conceptually organized parts. In dealing with curves, and in particular with the circle, we render it into the form of a complex line made up of smaller and smaller straight portions. Unless this process is carried to infinitely small straight portions, there is inevitably a discrepancy between the curve and our conceptual evaluation of it. It is the same problem as that of translating an irrational number into rational form. All that we can achieve is an approximation, not the true statement of the original irrational. What I am pointing out is that there is no such thing as an authentic conceptual communication from on high. Whenever a conceptual communication is given forth, even though it comes from the highest sources possible, it has gone through a process of transformation in the very act of conceptualizing it which introduces an inevitable error. There is, therefore, no final authority giving us the truth as it is in itself in any book whatsoever. In a degree, all conceptualization, or, in other words, rendering into verbal form, involves the introduction of an inherent error. The result is that in all of our conceptual representation, we produce at best only an approximation to the ultimate truth, and it is valuable mainly as a pointer to that truth which must itself be abandoned if one is to become identified with that truth. Another factor to bear in mind is that this flowage, as it is received in the consciousness, is very complex, so that if one were to try to represent it, he would have to take a cross-section of it, as it were, and the best he could do in the transformation of that cross-section would be to produce a statement that was approximately true at the moment the cross-section was made, but ceased to be true immediately after.

This, then, is an analysis of our conceptual communicating equipment—of great practical importance, to be sure, but involving inherent error. The truth in its purity is a flowage in consciousness totally without the characteristics of our verbal means of communication. Presentation from it carries value, to be sure, but it is inevitably a stepped-down value, and therefore it is the part of wisdom that everyone should not attach himself to any verbal or other conceptual formulation however high the source from which it comes.

Now, this applies not only to all external communications, but it also is involved in the sources of spiritual knowledge which one may know directly. The flowage into consciousness that comes from Fundamental Realization is to him who has this flowage the highest authority of all; but let him be however great a genius, he can never communicate the truth that has come to him in its undisturbed purity. He communicates at best only an approximation. Nonetheless, as I know it, the forms that best represent the material of such pure flowage in consciousness are our universal conceptions, not our conceptions that refer to particulars. And from those conceptions we do have a base for developing thought deductively, instead of proceeding by the methods of inductive logic,

and, therefore, gives us a firmer foundation for relative truth here in this world than that which is based upon observation through the senses.

This will be enough for this time.

Three Fundamentals of the Introceptive Philosophy

Part 8 of 16 (continued)

Franklin Merrell-Wolff

January 7, 1974

This tape will be a continuation of a discussion of possible logical contributions on my part, and in that sense a continuation of new series tape Number 8.

It is my impression that somewhere I examined critically the dichotomy of the Aristotelian logic. I thought I discussed this in *Pathways*, but in a search this morning I was unable to find the discussion. I have now so much material that is written or on tapes that I am not fully aware of what I have discussed or where I discussed it; however, we can enter into the subject freshly.⁶

The dichotomy, as it has come down to us and is now understood, is a general statement in the form that all things whatsoever are either *a* or *not-a*, and it is maintained that there is no middle ground between these two compartments. An examination of the nature of the universe of discourse which carries the dichotomy brings out this fact: that the universe of discourse is my conception, or, in general, the conception of any self who is considering it. In other words, the universe of discourse is not an existence in nature, but an existence in the mind of the thinker. Bearing this in mind, what is it that is aware of that universe of discourse? It is I, the pure subject. And the universe of discourse is a statement concerning all objects that may come before consciousness. But the "I," which cognizes this universe of discourse is not an object before consciousness, though it is part of the All that is. Therefore, the I, not being part of the universe of discourse, in other words, neither lying in the *a* nor the *not-a* compartments, actually is in that which has been called the "excluded middle." Put in other words, it is that which is neither the object *a*, nor the sum total of all objects *not-a*, since it is not an *object* at all, for bear in mind that the pure *subject* is that which never under any conditions becomes an object.

This may be called a contribution to logic, and if it is so regarded, then I will plead guilty to having made this much of a contribution.

⁶ See audio recording "The Meaning of the Paradox," part 1 for an earlier presentation attributed to Gautama Buddha.