

Three Fundamentals of the Introceptive Philosophy

Part 9 of 16

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Certain thoughts have come to me in the interim since the dictation of that which is on the tape already that may or may not be pertinent to the subject. Bear in mind, the material with which I deal does not easily fit the sense of order which we expect with respect to external knowledge; and yet, all valuable material comes from within and the organization in terms of external form must give way and perhaps later developed.

It is a fundamental in the approach to the present philosophy that we start with consciousness as the most immediate fact in our cognition. There is a tendency in our science to assume a material object, such as the brain, as the originally given, and then the attempt is made to determine how consciousness is produced. But there is a logical and an epistemological flaw in all this. The fact is I do not have an immediate awareness of a brain. I have an immediate awareness of consciousness, its contents, its states or modes, and of the center which we call the subject to consciousness. This material is immediate so long as no interpretation is imposed upon it. Interpretation, however, is an important factor in the development of our knowledge, but we must always remember that so soon as we enter into the field of interpretation, we experience the possibility of erroneous interpretation or of interpretation that is in part true and in part not true. But the original material, the immediate material, is the foundation. As a matter of strict analysis, I do not know immediately that there is within the skull of this person, as we ordinarily conceive it, a brain. I infer that if one were to cut open that skull, he would find a brain within it. But that's an inference, a probable truth, not a certain truth. The certainty is my immediate cognition of consciousness, its contents, its modes or states, and the subject to consciousness. That I know immediately.

Now, in this philosophy we take this immediate ground as our base of reference and approach all things from that perspective. It is maintained that this is a rigorous method; that, on the other hand, the starting with anything objective, namely, some object such as the brain, is starting with something that is not an immediate fact of consciousness and therefore involves assumptions, not immediate certainty as the starting point. If, then, we take consciousness and its states, contents, and subject, as the base of reference, we have an approach different from that which is characteristic of our Western science.

Now, the importance of the base of reference is something concerning which we should say a few words. There is the familiar shift in base of reference in the field of astronomy that has been very important in our scientific orientation, namely, the shift from the Ptolemaic system to the Copernican system. The Ptolemaic system consisted in establishing the coordinates of reference as fixed with respect to the earth—a perfectly valid position. Then, with respect to that base of reference we developed the system of a cosmic view, and with respect to that system certain facts are true, but true relative to the

base. Those facts are, in part, that the sun goes around the earth, that indeed the whole stellar universe, with its galaxies and stars, goes around the earth making an orbit in twenty-four hours. On the other hand, when the shift was made to the sun and the ecliptic as the base of reference—the ecliptic being the plane of the orbit of the earth—then it appears that the earth goes around the sun, and so on. Now, many things are made simpler, many doors are opened, by simple shifting of the base of reference.

In earlier days we did not realize the importance of the conception of the base of reference. It is, however, a familiar fact in mathematics, and in the cosmo-conceptions of the universe it became a familiar fact in this shift from the Ptolemaic system to the Copernican system. But it can be applied to other fields of knowledge, and was so in the case of the Kantian contribution made in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. In fact, Kant himself referred to it as a Copernican shift in the base of reference. In that case, we shifted from the view that the mind was a blank tablet upon which experience registered impressions and that everything was built up in this way—all of our knowledge. But careful analysis revealed the fact that in this way we had no certainty concerning relationships in that body of experience. As David Hume said, observing the sun rise a million times gives us no certainty by itself that the sun will ever rise again. From the basis of this assumption there can be no conception of an order or uniformity in nature. The shift that was made by Immanuel Kant was to the effect that the mind of man brings a system of organization which defines an order in the impressions upon our consciousness. Whether or not his definition of that order is permanently valid is not the relevant question. The order may be otherwise viewed than it was viewed by Immanuel Kant himself, but the fundamental principle which he introduced, which appears as a permanent value, is the idea that man himself brings the forms of his cognitions, and experience must conform to those forms. This is a shift in base of reference in the sense that in the earlier view the form was supposed to lie external to the consciousness of man, whereas with Kant the forms were brought by man. He cognizes, therefore, nature not as it is in itself, but through the forms which he imposes, mostly unconsciously, upon his perceptions and his reasoning concerning those perceptions. This opened a new door and led to a rich development in philosophy.

But there is a step involved in my own philosophy that goes beyond this, for here we have in the point of view introduced by Immanuel Kant and developed by the post-Kantian philosophers that centers around the cognizing subject, around that which is conscious, in other words, around the ego, or the self, or the transcendental ego, or the *Atman*, or the *Paramatman*. I have taken the step of shifting the base of reference again, from the subject to the consciousness itself, and regard that as the primary datum with which we start, and from that base of reference we view the whole universe and all of our relationships in life itself as derivative from that basis. The criticism of taking an objective basis for our reference is this: that we're neglecting the fact that every object whatsoever exists for us only as an object in consciousness. If we make the predication that that object existed as an independent thing entirely apart from consciousness and that consciousness comes along and cognizes it and reflects about it, we are making an assumption that goes beyond our actual imperience.¹ We are neglecting the fact that we

¹ For the definition of 'imperience', see audio recordings "General Discourse on the Subject of My Philosophy," part 10, and "On My Philosophy: Extemporaneous Statement." In speaking of introceptual

know only that which is in consciousness; and to predicate existence beyond consciousness is to make a violent and uncheckable assumption. What I propose is that we abandon that assumption entirely and build upon the secure foundation of consciousness containing objects, objects whose existence is, so far as our cognition can determine, utterly dependant for their existence upon that consciousness. To do otherwise is to make an assumption which we cannot check because we can check nothing out in a supposed zone of total unconsciousness.

I know consciousness immediately. I do not know the existence of a brain, or even of a body, immediately. I infer the existences of these entities from data immediately within consciousness, but all such inferences are subject to the possibility of error; therefore, knowledge of a brain or of a body is only probable knowledge, not certain knowledge. What we propose is to build upon the foundation of certainty, not of assumptions concerning a nonconscious somewhat which we find it convenient to predicate, but which we do not know and cannot know immediately.

We have now the basis of a theory of *bondage* and a complementary theory of *redemption*. We stand in bondage because we are surrounded on every side by a multitude of assumptions—some of them scientific, but some of them the handed down assumptions that are part and parcel of our ordinary life. We are in the habit of viewing ourselves as conditioned by the environment, by circumstance, by the world, the cosmos, social conditions, and so forth. And taking material handed down of this sort, we draw conclusions that bind our personal lives or our personal path of consciousness; whereas, the consciousness itself, being the root of all that is, is bound, apparently, by these various assumptions, grounded ultimately in a somewhat which cannot be known because it is assumed as existing there outside in a nonconscious zone. And we live in bondage to these chains of assumption.

This yoga, then, is something which radically abandons manipulation of consciousness through manipulation of an object in consciousness, namely, objects like the body, or circumstances surrounding us, apparently, but moving, rather, directly through the instruments of consciousness, its cognitions, and its ideas, thus freeing ourselves from the great bondage. Consciousness in its purity is totally unconditioned. All conditioning lies within consciousness, and by breaking our dependency upon those conditionings, we liberate ourselves. So this is the yoga of direct approach, which depends in no way upon the manipulation of a supposed body, which depends in no way upon supposed external existences, or supposed energies in that body. Oh, no doubt, a correlation can be established between states of consciousness, on one hand, and another entity in consciousness, which we call a body, or a brain, or by any other name, but that is simply a correlation which in turn is ultimately only an existence in consciousness. Therefore, throw away all dependency upon external manipulation and affirm the full majesty of Pure Consciousness itself. This is the royal yoga.

Perhaps we have outlined here a possible one step yoga instead of the two step yoga which I imperienced. By this I mean, that instead of taking the step of first attaining the Realization of the true Self, the true Subject to Consciousness, or the *Atman*, which

knowledge, Wolff says, “The third function therefore gives you imperience, not experience. It is akin to sense perception in the sense of being immediate, but is not sensuous.”

we have identified with that which is known in the literature as the vestibule to *Nirvana*, that instead of taking this step, we take a one direct step to that which I called the High Indifference or the place of Equilibrium, and which may indeed be that which the Oriental had in mind when he referred to *Paranirvana*. Mayhap this is too difficult a step, but it seems to me that there is here a possibility that may be followed.

And now we have also another approach to a restatement of the *Mayavada* or philosophy of illusionism. In our previous discussions of the subject of illusionism, we pointed out that the factuality of any sense impression cannot be questioned so long as no interpretation or judgment is made concerning it. All of the impressions, including dream, hallucination, or the seeming objects of a mirage, have equal factuality with the objects of ordinary experience; and, therefore, we are forced to judge these as appearances of reality and not illusions. But if we live under the conviction that there is an external, unconscious universe about us which may in part come into the range of consciousness, but in itself is nonconscious and essentially outside consciousness, and that consciousness is an irrelevant event which somehow breaks forth, or broke forth, in the process of evolution as a sort of accident affecting the humanity of this world, if we hold such a view, then we are in bondage to a true illusion or what is truly an illusion, and that is a better way of stating it. This is a condition under which we generally live. Both the popular mind and the scientific mind, and much of the philosophic mind, does make the assumption that the universe about us, the universe of all possible objects, those that are near and familiar and those that are distant, both perceptual and conceptual, are existences in themselves apart from consciousness. So long as we hold this view, we are in bondage and the slave of circumstance. But this is a condition which we need not tolerate if we affirm our own personal, and individual, and cosmic fact that we are part and parcel of a universal ocean or stream of Consciousness and that all existences abide in this Consciousness and have no existence other than in that Consciousness. If we hold this view, we have broken away from our bondage and are liberated. This is a new statement of the *Mayavada*. It simply means that we are bound to erroneous conceptions, to assumptions that bind us and enslave us, and at any moment we can break free from this bondage and liberate ourselves by simply recognizing the eternal fact that Consciousness alone is and that all objects exist only within that Consciousness.

But here a serious mistake may be made. It can be imagined, and has been imagined, that one can deal with this problem by simple affirmation on the level of empiric consciousness. But if this is done all that has been accomplished is the production of a new *maya* or illusion. I will illustrate the point by an example that fell within the range of my own experience. Many years ago my former wife, Sherifa, and I were the guests of a friend who lived in Marin County at that time, a place north of San Francisco. Our friend did not have a refrigerator but only a cooler, a device whereby foods could be kept within a screened area, the screen supposedly excluding insects and the air keeping the items cool and unspoiled. However, there was in that country, as there is nearly everywhere, ants; and ants did manage to get through the screen. Now, our friend was opposed to the idea of killing any creatures, but she wanted to get rid of the ants so she proceeded to use a method which she called “new thought,” which handled the problem essentially, supposedly, by simple affirmation. She affirmed, so she said, the ants away with the result, so she said, that there were no ants within the cooler. It so happened that on one occasion my wife prepared a meal and she saw many ants within

that cooler and later directed our friend's attention to them and she was forced to admit that they were there. What she had succeeded in doing by her affirmation was simply this: she destroyed her power to see ants in the cooler. She did not affect the presence of the ants in reality. She was living, rather happily, in a *maya* which she had created. And, incidentally, I would suggest that most heaven worlds are no more than this.

This involves a very important point. The world about us, in the *empiric* sense, and emphasize that word 'empiric', is real. The objects do exist and they are not destroyed by simple affirmation, or they are not made into something else by simple affirmation. The world about us in the empiric sense must, therefore, be regarded as realistic. We cannot act as though the mountains and the other objects of the terrain, the oceans, and rivers, were not. We must come to terms with them on the empiric level. They are hard facts on that level. But on the highest level, that which we call the *ontological* level, they are subjective, or, in other words, idealistic. An entity who could function on this level could say to that mountain, "Be thou removed," and it would be removed. But he who functions in consciousness simply on the empiric level cannot so remove that mountain. He must deal with it as an empirically real fact, a real entity. Thus, we would say in simple philosophic formula, the universe of objects, of everything about us, is ontologically ideal but empirically real.

Now, to attain the capacity of functioning on an ontological level of consciousness is an achievement of supreme difficulty. There are those, we have every reason to believe, who have achieved this, but the 99.999, and so forth, percent of humanity has not achieved this; and that high percentage of humanity cannot effectively say to the mountain, "Be thou removed," and it will be removed. Only the small percentage left over can so command. And to achieve this lofty state is the most difficult labor that mankind has ever faced. It is a possible achievement. It is the possibility inherent in yoga. But to cheapen it to the extent of saying that by simple positive thinking in the empiric sense, which means denying the unpleasant facts and affirming the pleasant ones, it is possible to solve the problems, there is no truth in that. All that is produced by that means is a new and more treacherous *maya* or illusion. This is no task for him who moves simply on the level of simple affirmative thinking. The world here about us is as realistic, and hard, and positively existent, as ever an imagined nonconscious thing could be. It is grounded in consciousness in a profound ontological sense, but it is empirically real. This is a point of extremely important importance.

For the transcriber of this tape, I leave this direction. Reformulate that last sentence.²

² So as not to be charged with failing to follow Wolff's direction, the editor suggests this replacement sentence: "This is a point of extremely important consequence."