Three Fundamentals of the Introceptive Philosophy

Part 12 of 16

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This tape is a continuation of the discussion started in tape Number 11.

Someplace Sri Aurobindo noted the fact that Western science today had achieved the point where it was possible to conceive of matter as being capable of transformation into energy, with, of course, the reverse possibility of energy being transformed into matter. He noted the fact though that science has not yet achieved the position where both matter and energy are reduced to consciousness and conceived as derivative from consciousness, but indicated that this was a future possibility. What we are doing here, and in a sense what I have been doing throughout my writings and tapings since 1936, in one sense may be viewed as a contribution, perhaps minor, to this very effort of reducing matter and energy to consciousness. The problem is inherently very difficult because of our experience of an apparent non-conscious thing or existence which has properties independent of consciousness. Nonetheless, I am attempting to do what I can in this zone.

If we go back to the nineteenth century about 1880, and take a view of the scientific position at that time, we find that we have two fundamental conceptions then, namely, the conception of the conservation of matter and the companion conception of the conservation of energy or force. These conceptions were to this effect: that matter could be transformed as to state in the various forms of chemical substances, but could not be destroyed as matter. The conception existed that matter was composed of irreducible atoms which always remained as matter in spite of the fact that they could enter into combinations producing different forms of matter, but always remaining matter. And there was the joint conception of a conservation of force or energy which implied that energy was indestructible—the amount remained constant, though it may be transformed as to form. The discoveries beginning around 1896 in the field of science connected with the development of the x-ray and later of radioactivity in certain forms of matter such as uranium and radium in which it became evident that matter actually was vanishing from the condition of being matter and becoming a kind of energy, from that moment on there has been a development in physics which led away from the dual conceptions of conservation of matter and conservation of energy to a conception which might be called the conservation of matter-energy; so that today we have the conception of matter under some conditions being destroyed and being then replaced by a flash of radiation which is known as energy. The whole principle underlying the power of an atom bomb consists in this: that a certain small fraction of the matter in that bomb is destroyed as matter and becomes radiant energy. It is, in fact, a very small portion. However, something does remain constant, so far as our experience goes. There is something invariant as between the state of matter and the state of radiant energy, and the name for this is ‘energy-momentum’. We might say that the present view is a law of

conservation of energy-momentum, but not a law of conservation of energy, on one side, or a conservation of matter, on the other side. The two forms are ultimately, thus, one.

The development to this conception took considerable time and the contributions of several very able scientific minds. I would submit that taking the perspective of science as of 1880, the notion of matter being reducible to radiant energy would seem as far out or inconceivable as today may seem the notion of matter and energy both being reduced to Pure Consciousness. Thus, I suggest that strange as this idea may seem, and difficult because of the apparent independence of consciousness which the things surrounding us seem to have, that, nonetheless, we are not taking a step that is essentially more strange than the step the physicists did take from 1896 and since then.

We do not here restrict ourselves to any specific scientific discipline or other orientation, but cover the whole range viewed as one integrated whole. We may step from physics and mathematics, to psychology, and then to religion, treating the whole as interlocked. It is therefore a philosophy, for philosophy is the only orientation which is truly holistic, which participates in all forms of human interest, be it scientific, artistic, religious, or practical.

Let us now turn our attention to that which appears to happen under the experimentation of the physicist when an electron meets a positron. It is found that when these two meet they destroy each other as forms of matter and become a flash of radiation. The energy-momentum of the combined electron and positron is exactly equal to the energy-momentum of the flash of radiation, or at least so it appears in the zone of our physical experience. When speaking of a flash of radiation we must bear in mind the present conception of the light scale. This is conceived to consist of a system of electromagnetic waves extending from very long waves which are called radio waves, some of them of multiple kilometers length, and from that, extending upward in a series in which the length of wave gradually is reduced while concomitantly the frequency of the waves is increased, and, so far as I know, the multiple of these two remains constant. This passes through a series from radio waves, to infrared, to visible light, to ultraviolet, to the decay products of radium, and ultimately up into the zone of the cosmic rays. There are several octaves in this series, something, I believe, on the order of 60 octaves currently known of which only one octave is visible light. But, nonetheless, all is called light. In other words, light is not simply that which is visible to the organ known as the eye, but carries a much broader connotation and denotation. This I find very interesting indeed.

Now, let us step over into certain experiences that we commonly place in another field, namely, that of the mystical Awakening. As one goes through the literature connected with the mystical experience, one aspect which recurs over and over again is a report of an experience of light, a light that is not dependent upon the physical organ of sight. It is a light-consciousness. In some forms, and probably the most common forms, of the mystical experience, this is a sensible-like form of light, but it is not always so. It may appear in the form of an illuminated conceptuality in which case it is not in the form of a sensible light, but it carries the connotation of illumination which is essentially a light terminology. Now, what we are having here, I suggest, is a tie in between religion and physics. Light, so the psychologists tell us, has always been a symbol of consciousness: sensible consciousness in the form of sensible light, but also consciousness in the sense of an illumined conceptuality, and of something also which

transcends both the sensual pattern and the conceptual pattern. And in its highest manifestations this imperience carries the quality of sacredness or holiness, so that one feels he's standing on sacred ground and may feel the impulse to kneeling or prostrating himself before it. This is the supreme experience, yet through the conception of light we have a tie-in between this experience, this most supreme mode of consciousness, and the experience of the modern intra-atomic physicist. We have here a principle of integration. But light becomes a symbol of consciousness. We have actually made an approach to that integration in which all that we know, all that is, is found tied together, and supported by, and composed of the substance of consciousness itself.

It should be clear that the word 'consciousness' as it has been used in this discussion is not limited to the meaning of the word as it is given in our dictionaries and generally in our epistemological texts. In that latter sense, it is generally indicated in the dictionaries by a contrast with the state of sleep, namely, that which you become when awakening from sleep. Consciousness in this sense is to be identified with subject-object consciousness, or that which the Tibetans call *shes-rig*. It is not consciousness in the sense of *Rig-pa*, of the Root Consciousness upon which all is based, or as Consciousness-without-an-object-and-without-a-subject. However, we approach the greater conception of consciousness through our initial identification of it. We identify it by use of the principle of contrast, and indeed, in our ordinary awareness we know by this principle of contrast. We know up by its contrast with down; we know good by its contrast with evil; and so on through all dualities. We have here a contrast between a dualistic order and a non-dualistic order. Cognition in the sense of that which is the universal all-in-all cannot be by our ordinary means, the latter being based upon this principle of contrast. It is known, rather, by being *identical* with it and becoming aware of that fact. If one has not achieved this capacity to be conscious of Consciousness, then awareness in a field which has no content would be indistinguishable from complete unconsciousness. In the relative sense, the subject-object sense, there is a contrast between a state such as that of sleep and that of being awake. In the sleeping stage, we would say that we were unconscious, but if we analyze this subject more carefully, we would raise the question: is it possible to be conscious of non-consciousness? Is not that a contradiction in terms? Do we ever have an experience of non-consciousness? We have experience of contrast. We have experience of content in consciousness and of absence of content. But by what standard can we say that the state of absence of content is a non-conscious state? Actually, it is impossible to distinguish between a universal consciousness and a universal unconsciousness except by becoming conscious of Consciousness itself without dependency upon content. This is evidently a difficult simplicity to achieve.

Consciousness in the subject-object or relative sense is manifestly not a substantive Consciousness. It is, as it has been treated, a relationship between a knower and a known. We might call it linear. But in contrast we would speak of that Consciousness which is called Consciousness-without-an-object-and-without-a-subject as *n* dimensional, as like a space of no delimitation whatsoever, but containing the possibility of being the source of delimitation. Concerning this latter Consciousness, certain things must be understood as belonging to it which are lacking in the ordinary linear consciousness. It is substantive in many respects that we can identify. It can be colored by the various affections, as for instance the affection of love and the affection of hate, the affection of anger and the affection of peace, the sense of beauty and of

ugliness, and so on, many qualities that are not cognitive objects or contents in the noetic sense. Here, then, we have already, by reference to something that falls within our common experience, determined that Consciousness is not merely a relationship, but a qualitative state as well. And immediately we have seen that Consciousness has a certain substantiveness about it. What we have to extend too is the conception of all objects whatsoever, including the whole stellar cosmos, and all the objects before us here on earth, as apprehended through the senses, and all the objects of our conceptual cognition, are composed of the stuff of this Consciousness.

This Consciousness is not simply awareness, although it most certainly is that, but it is more than that. It is also volition and therefore energetic, dynamic, that which has been called *Fohat*. It is thus not passive. It is dynamic. Aurobindo speaks of "consciousness-force" as a translation of the ancient Indian conception of *Chit*. It is a capacity to produce as well as a capacity to apprehend. What we have suggested in the previous tape is that the apparent independence of the object is due to the fact that the apparently independent object belongs to another sheath or zone of consciousness and has been projected into the particular space, sheath, or zone in which we are currently functioning, and is not subject to the creative manipulation of that latter zone; thus, is truly objective and must be reckoned with, as we have to reckon with the apparent objects that surround us like the mountains, like the oceans, like the buildings, and so forth.

In tape Number 11, I briefly discussed the difference between empiric science and its methods and in contrast the methodology of pure mathematics. A little more needs to be said here to bring out certain points with maximum clarity. Let us assume that we have made a certain group of observations, five in number, connected with the positions of an object as those positions are altered in the passage of time. For this purpose we may set up a system of coordinates. We shall select the simplest and commonest form, namely, that of the rectilinear Cartesian coordinates in a plane to make our case as simple as possible. The rectilinear coordinates consist of two right lines at right angles—one usually horizontal, the other vertical. It is a convention to call the horizontal line the abscissa and the vertical line the ordinate, and together they are called the coordinates. We will use the abscissa to measure points in time corresponding to positions of an object in space which will be measured vertically to the abscissa, and thus will be the ordinate value. Conventionally we call the abscissa the *x* axis and the ordinate the *y* axis. Now, let us assume the position of some object in a series of five observations connected with time. Now, let us then think of the interpretive hypothesis or theory as some curve which will be determined by those five positions. Actually, if you use the whole gamut of possible curves of *n* degree, there would be an infinity of curves which would pass through these five points. But let us impose the condition that the curve should be of second degree. Now, it so happens that a curve of the second degree—which means that the *x* and *y*'s maximum degree is the square—it so happens that five conditions uniquely determine an equation of the second degree. There are only certain limited number of curves that belong to the second degree. They are the circle, the ellipse, the parabola, the hyperbola, and two right lines. Five conditions determine a curse of the second degree uniquely. Let us say that it proves to be an ellipse. Then we could say that we have determined that the object which we have observed in those five positions follows the path of an ellipse. Now, there is no certainty of this, for actually if we remove the restriction that the curve shall be of the second degree and let it be of any degree

whatsoever, namely, third, fourth, fifth, and so on to infinity, there is an infinity of curves that will pass through those five points.

Now, in this figure we are using the curve as representing the interpretive hypothesis tying together the observations. It is that which in tape 11 I spoke of as a hypothesis becoming later with more observation, if confirmed, a theory, and finally, if well confirmed, is generally viewed as a law of nature. But there is an inherent error here. And this is the important point—this is a point to be noted very well—only if the restriction is imposed arbitrarily that the curve shall be of the second degree do we derive a unique determination. Otherwise, an infinity of curves may satisfy the condition of the five determinations. This simply means that as a matter of shear logic empiric determination never can derive a uniquely valid interpretation. There is an infinite possibility of interpretation. Only by imposing a further condition which is extra-observational and extra-logical can we confine ourselves to a unique interpretation. In this case it was the imposed condition that the interpretive curve should be of the second degree.

Now, if one studies what is done in the practical methodology of empiric science, he will find that professional prejudice or preference, or approved ways of thinking that are purely academically conventional, delimits the theories that are introduced to interpret the observed facts. The point I'm making is that this which belongs to custom, style, prejudice, or preference is extra-logical and extra-observational. It is not necessary that nature should follow the pattern indicated by the observations because of the preferred interpretation. Other interpretations would account for these facts just as well. There has been in our science that which is called a materialistic prejudice, a tendency to think of reality as being an external, non-conscious thing and to interpret our consciousness—the most immediate fact we have—in terms of that assumed non-conscious thingness. This is not logically required nor a necessity governing the observations. Other theories could interpret the facts just as well. Now, all we have to respect in empiric science is the competency in observation and the logical needs of the situation. The preferential orientation to a certain class or kind of interpretive theory is wholly irrelevant and reflects only the prejudices of the scientist as a human being This has no logical authority whatsoever.

In my illustration I took a figure that might very well apply to simple astronomical observation and the determination of the path of a planet. But the same principle applies to the whole field of empiric science, and what will concern us as most important of all is the attitude of the psychotherapist or the psychiatrist in his use of prejudice, or predilection for his particular interpretations of states of consciousness. The same principle applies here, the principle that starting from empirically determined fact, interpretation that can satisfy such facts are infinite in number, and the facts do not force, logically, interpretations that may be current. I think of the case reported by G. Spencer Brown when he mentioned a well-known psychiatrist who said that if he had had the opportunity, he would have given Sir Isaac Newton shock treatment—crass egotism of the crassest sort. Because there was deviation in the consciousness mode of this supreme genius from the norm of mediocre human beings, therefore the psychiatrist regarded him as a pathological case. If that is pathology, then what this world needs is more and more pathology.

The simple truth is that the method of empiric science is such that it cannot uniquely determine any universal. It starts from concrete particulars and attempts to ascend to truth from below. It can only determine a possible interpretation, but not a necessary interpretation. This point is very important indeed. Because of this fact, empiric science is totally incapable of closing the door to other possibility than that which the prejudice and preferences of the scientists themselves tend to follow. They have never been able to close the door of possibility.

Now let us consider the method of that other form of science, the normative science known as mathematics. It starts not from empirically determined fact, but from universal principle, and deduces downward specific application of principle. As normally followed, it starts, as I said, with a group of assumptions which may be arbitrary, may be intuitively determination, may be the result of insight or vision, and these assumptions are not examined by the science, but only the consequences that follow from them. Now, let us assume that these fundamental assumptions are in fact conceptual transcriptions from introceptual Realizations; we are given a basis of initial knowledge, universal in character from which we can proceed in a descending deductive manner to the facts of life and of consciousness in the world. This is the appropriate and much more powerful science for our use.