

Abstract of the Philosophy

Part 1 of 14

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It has occurred to me that it might be well to produce a brief statement of the philosophy which has here been developed, along with the basis of that philosophy. This I shall attempt to do within the limits of one or two tapes. The statement has been made before more than once. The initial statement was in the volume *Pathways Through to Space*. It is more systematically developed in the volume *The Philosophy of Consciousness Without an Object*, and a recapitulation of the position here maintained was made a few months ago in a statement of about 50,000 words.¹ What I shall attempt here is a briefer abstract so that this material may be more immediately apprehended without the development of the arguments in favor of it and the negation of arguments adverse to it.

The word may be uttered as an auditory or visual fact. And here by 'word', I mean anything from a single word to a sentence, a paragraph, or a complete discourse. As something seen or heard, it is simply a sensible fact. It is simply something which exists. But the word has another aspect and that is its meaningfulness, a sense in which it conveys meaning. Now, there are two lines of criticism involved here, one is *psychological* and the other is *epistemological*. In so far as the word is regarded simply as an existence, the criticism of it is psychological. But in so far as it is viewed as a communication of meaning, the criticism of it is epistemological. A failure to bear in mind the difference between these two approaches in criticism can lead to a fundamental error. As for instance, certain modes of consciousness may be associated with atypical psycho-physiological conditions of the human organism in the case of the individual giving the formulation. An error can be made in viewing deviations from normal psycho-physiological conditions as bearing upon the meaningful content. As a matter of fact, meaningful content is very largely, if not entirely, independent of the psycho-physiological circumstances which brought it forth. There has been a tendency among our materialistically oriented scientists, particularly of the past, to view deviation from norm as bearing upon the validity of meaningfulness. William James, in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*, handled this problem very satisfactorily in his first lecture, and pointed out that profundity of meaning is not a function of the existential or psycho-physical background, but must be judged upon its own inherent basis. Criticism of meaningfulness is epistemological and not merely psychological.

Now, in the case of the present philosophy, the ground of the philosophy is found in the meaningful content of certain states of consciousness which are not typical in the experience of mankind as a whole. They are, however, known to exist in connection with the development of religious forms and of depth philosophies, and have played an

¹ See the audio recordings, "Three Fundamentals," parts 1-16.

important part in the history of humanity. These functions have been known in the literature as Realization or Enlightenment, a mode of conscious awareness which is not reducible to sense perception or conceptual cognition, but are of another order. In this philosophy the primary ground consists of a group of such Realizations—five in number. Three of them may be regarded as propaedeutic or as mental Realizations, and the last two as transcendental.

The distinction between these two types of Realization is not difficult to elucidate. A propaedeutic or mental Realization has this effect, and I will illustrate it by the first of the series which occurred more than 50 years ago. I had at that time been convinced of the validity of the statement: I am *Atman*. What that means is that I am not this visible organism. I am not the psychological functions which operate within my consciousness. I am in fact nothing that is an object whatsoever, but simply a pure subject. The philosophic reasoning supporting this position had convinced me of its validity. I believed in it. But on the occasion of a self-analysis made by someone else, I saw the truth of this in a deeper sense so that the *belief* in this truth was transformed into a mental *conviction*. The distinction might be made in this way: in the first case, I was convinced of a certain philosophic and psychological position as being true. It was something that I believed in. But the Realization made it into something which I saw to be true. In other words, there was added to the earlier cognition a second cognition. And this reminds one of a statement made by Sri Aurobindo in his chapter on “The Methods of the Vedanta” in his *Life Divine*, namely, that we require a double cognition to be fully convinced and convicted of a position in our knowledge.² To have an idea of a truth is part of the picture. To *see* the truth, in the sense of a kind of non-sensuous Vision, is another part of our apperception. The two are required to be wholly convincing. However, this first Realization did not have certain attributes or qualities characteristic of a later more profound Realization demonstrating again the same truth. It did not produce a radical shift in the self-identity as a concrete act. It produced simply a very strong mental conviction. It did not permanently shift the basis of self-identity. It did not involve, as it were, a death of one self with a rebirth of that self upon a profounder level. This did happen in the later Realization of August 7, 1936.

The second Realization of the propaedeutic type came some ten or twelve years later. The circumstances under which this was produced have been delineated elsewhere, and so I shall not repeat the statement of those circumstances here.³ The form of this Realization was: I am *Nirvana*. This was a totally unexpected conception and struck me with surprise, but it has become an important building block in the philosophy that followed. The difference between these two propaedeutic Realizations is notable. The first was a confirmation of a belief already established. The second was a surprising bit of new information. Something came out of these depths that was wholly unexpected.

The third propaedeutic Realization occurred shortly before the first of the transcendental Realizations. The circumstances, also, under which this came forth have

² Aurobindo Ghose, *The Life Divine*, vol. 18 of the *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centennial Library* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, 1970), 60-61. The chapter is actually titled, “The Methods of Vedantic Knowledge.”

³ See the audio recording “General Discourse on the Subject of My Philosophy,” part 4.

been delineated elsewhere.⁴ The content of the Realization, again, was unexpected, and it was simply this: that the objects which exist before our consciousness are a relative absence of substance, whereas the state of consciousness in which there is no content whatsoever, either sensuous or conceptual, is a state of fullness of substance. It implied that the manifestation of objects before consciousness is by a diminution of consciousness and not by an addition of real substantive material. This, too, was quite surprising, although later, as I have noted elsewhere, I found this position formulated in *The Voice of the Silence*.⁵ This has become a fundamental in the structure of my philosophic thought and involves the principle of inversion.

All of these three propaedeutic Realizations came spontaneously. I was not at any of these times seeking a Realization. They simply broke forth into my consciousness. On the contrary, the fourth Realization, and the first of the two which I call transcendental, was actively sought and required a particular act in consciousness for it to break through. This is the one that developed most fully, the one that was most thoroughgoing, and involved other than cognitive factors of premier importance. It involved the characteristic sense of unity or oneness, not merely as a conceptual idea, but as an actual fact of imperience—a oneness which was a blending, among other things, of the different functions of *cognition*, *affection*, and *conation*, or the activistic element in consciousness.⁶ The impact of the affective side was simply tremendous, but I shall not here go into it, as I have done that more than once elsewhere.⁷ I might say a word about the conative aspect. It involved a development in the power of the will so that it can act directly upon elements that belong to this more transcendent side of our consciousness. In fact it has been my experience that the action of the will here renders technical methodology such as that of posture and formal meditation unnecessary, so that, on the contrary, a functioning with respect to the transcendental element can be initiated by a simple act of the will no more difficult than that which is involved in the raising of the arm. This Realization confirmed the first one: that I am indeed *Atman*. But this does not imply an affirmation of separative egotism. The Self here is primarily an epistemological entity, a center of cognition defining a particular kind of way of knowing, which seems to fit the meaning of *shes-rig* in the Tibetan psychology.

When one says “I,” he may mean himself as distinct from other entities, and it may imply interests for himself which come into conflict with the interests of other entities; and it can be, thus, the basis of separateness and of all of the conflict that is involved as a result of that—the basis of, in fact, much of the inhumanity of man to man and of man to other creatures less than man. But this which I identify as egoism is not the

⁴ See the audio recordings, “Lectures to University Students,” part 6, and “General Discourse on the Subject of My Philosophy,” part 5.

⁵ H. P. Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence* (Los Angeles: The Theosophy Company, 1928), 61. The text actually reads “. . . study the voidness of the seeming full, the fullness of the seeming void.”

⁶ For the definition of ‘imperience’, see the audio recordings “General Discourse on the Subject of My Philosophy,” part 10, and “On My Philosophy: Extemporaneous Statement.” In speaking of introceptual 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.”

⁷ See the audio recording “General Discourse on the Subject of My Philosophy,” part 7.

whole meaning of the sense of 'I'. The word 'I' can mean the subject to consciousness, and it is in that sense that I use this conception in most of what I have to say. It implies a form of consciousness which is centered in a subject, but as I've pointed out elsewhere,⁸ this sense of 'I' does not define necessarily simply a point center, but it can, and in my experience did, transform itself into an illimitable sphere, as it was, which contained all that is. It was, thus, a collective totality containing all things. It was, thus, unitative. It was, thus, harmonizing, not differentiating. And here there comes in an element that sounds very much like *solipsism*. You'll remember that in the solipsistic position that has developed in certain forms of philosophy, the position is maintained that I, this particular entity, is all that there is and that the other objects before consciousness which operate as this organism operates are simply my ideas. I alone exist. But ordinarily this is understood in the sense of an empiric point I surrounded by all the objects of the universe. In the deeper sense, the "I" can be the all inclusive subject of which the sense of I in the empiric individual is simply a reflection. It does not mean that this objective entity is all that is. What it does mean is that the Self of all that is, the ultimate Self, the *Paramatman*, is unitary and all-embracing. The "I" in me, in this particular empiric entity, is no more than the "I" in every other human being and, indeed, in every other creature. Each is, on the empiric level, simply a reflection of that I which has been called the *Paramatman*. The "I"s in the empiric entities are like unto the reflections of the sun in the dew drops.

The sense of value which descended out of this fourth Realization is so stupendous that it is impossible to make any comparison or any figure of a sensuous sort which can even faintly suggest it. I can suggest it by use of certain mathematical conceptions such as those drawn from the mathematics of the transfinite, but this wholly transcends the range of imagination. The sense of value is such that all the values of the sensible order, which means all the values of life as we know life in this world, and even those greater values which are to be found in the domain of thought, even of mathematical thought, are so far transcended that they become small and even insignificant. Nay more, they become something to be endured, something that involves even a degree of pain in having to experience them. It means, thus, for instance, that all the resources of unlimited material wealth can command, what from this higher standpoint appears as only dross, something cheap and insignificant. One knows here real wealth, for the only real wealth is something realized in consciousness. And material wealth, no doubt, can command all the resources of sensuous enjoyment, but these, being trivial and essentially insignificant, do not, from the standpoint of the fourth Realization, seem like wealth at all. And material wealth is incapable of commanding the enjoyments of the conceptual life. This must be earned by the appropriate means and could be achieved even under the condition of material poverty. So that, all of the values of the relative world, both sensual and conceptual, are reduced to the status of mere toys that entertain children and, at most, teenagers. This is only a faint suggestion of the sense of value.

⁸ See the audio recordings, "Yoga of Knowledge," part 3, "General Discourse on the Subject of My Philosophy," part 7, and "On My Philosophy: Extemporaneous Statement."

Now, there are certain philosophic consequences that grow out of our determinations so far and one of these is that *Nirvana* is the state of profound introversion; and it is in this state of profound introversion that the great values are tapped. Now, there are certain *sutras* that say that this is not the final stopping place; although, for myself, I could not possibly imagine any higher possibility, save one: that it was desirable that all creatures should participate in this. I once used the words, “I, Free, yet not wholly Free, while these, bound, remain, travailing.”⁹ That is the only thing that seemed unsatisfactory, namely, that there should be those who did not participate in this inexhaustible wealth. It therefore seemed advisable to follow the way indicated by *The Voice of the Silence* and the *Kwan-Yin* vow, though that required an act of supreme austerity, and there was no indication at this stage that there was any higher possibility.

Contrary to my earlier plan of not again elaborating the statement of the qualities that developed in this fourth Realization, I find that it becomes important to say some things that have in the past been neglected. One of the features that stood out at the time of the fourth Realization which I believe I have neglected is this: that I seemed to be in a state of supreme rationality with respect to which everything in the lower domain, the *adhar*,¹⁰ or the *Sangsara*, seemed irrational, and this applied even to a degree with respect to that most rational element in the *adhar*, namely, mathematics. It is not difficult to identify the respect in which even pure mathematics has a deficient or incomplete rationality. This lies in the fact that all mathematical systems start with a group of fundamental assumptions which are not proven and which are merely assumed as the basis for the subsequent reasoning. The purity of the reasoning, after this starting point, is pure enough, but there is an impurity in the fact that the fundamental assumptions typically are not certain knowledge. The Realization supplies this lack. There is the knowing in unequivocal terms of that which for the mathematician is only an assumption. This knowing is direct and immediate, but is more than simple intuition. It is an unequivocal certainty transcending intuition, the latter being essentially only a more or less deficient reflex of this higher certainty. Thus, the knowledge that “I am *Atman*” is unequivocal; the knowledge of my identity with the *nirvanic* state is unequivocal; the knowledge that pure Consciousness without content is utter fullness of substance is unequivocal—not known in any case by the mediation of sensation or the mediation of inference. Thus, this state of knowledge has a degree of certainty that is not to be found in any of the operations of the *adhar* or in the *sangsaric* field. Therefore, it is something essentially known.

We have now three modes of cognition before us. In one we would say I *sense* thus and so, without interpretation. It is merely a sensation of a somewhat which is without meaning. Secondly, we might say I *think* thus and so, a proposition entertained, probably based upon either experiential or logical evidence. But, finally, in the ultraconscious domain one would say I *know*. But a point must here be made. One knows here with unequivocal certainty only so long as he does not transcribe the material of this

⁹ Franklin Merrell-Wolff, *Pathways Through to Space* (New York: Richard R. Smith, 1944), 252

¹⁰ Aurobindo Ghose, *Letters on Yoga*, vol. 23 of the *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centennial Library* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, 1970), 1128: “The Adhara is that in which the consciousness is now contained—mind-life-body.”

consciousness into conceptual forms. In the act of such transcription there is an inevitable distortion like that which is experienced when we strive to give a rational valuation of an irrational quantity such as the square root of 2 or the transcendental numbers e or π . Any rational statement is only an approximation and therefore a distortion. The unequivocal certainty is, therefore, incommunicable, but some suggestion of it can be communicated.

Because of this imperience connected with the fourth Realization concerning the nature of its rationality, I have tended to sublimate the word 'REASON' to one of the names of the divinity spelt entirely with upper case letters. But this reason is much more than the psychological process of drawing inferences. It is rather a statement of a principle inherent in the very nature of being itself. It is the knowing that all that is, is governed by the principle of law, that all is orderly, that all is a manifestation of harmony. And this leads to a further consequence in connection with the word 'compassion'. The word compassion as used in typical Western thought is viewed as simply an altruistic human motivation—a concern for other creatures which is almost wholly, if not completely, a felt concern. But if we take the word compassion as used in *The Voice of the Silence*, we'll find that it has another meaning which, while it embraces this felt concern, is much more than that. To introduce this meaning, I shall quote from a footnote in *The Voice of the Silence* on the subject. This is footnote number 31 under the "Seven Portals." Quoting:

This "compassion" must not be regarded in the same light as "God, the divine love" of the Theists. Compassion stands here as an abstract, impersonal law, whose nature, being absolute Harmony, is thrown into confusion by discord, suffering and sin.¹¹

In other words, compassion is an expression of the principle of harmony in nature, in all that is, in fact; and reason, in the sense in which I use the term, embraces all the meaning of harmony. And taking that harmony in the sense of this footnote it becomes the base for the compassion that works to eliminate the distortion of that harmony. This is another approach towards the dedication to the redemption of all creatures, not grounded exclusively in the quality of feeling, but as much, or perhaps even more, in the quality of a divine REASON.

To render the position maintained here perfectly clear, I shall say a word concerning that which is well-nigh the perfect negation of this standpoint. It is found in the dicta of the church father known as Tertullian, which in abstract form run this way: first, it is incredible, therefore believable; and second, it is impossible and therefore certain.¹² This, I would think, is probably the most perfect formulation of absolute irrationality in the invidious sense of the word. It thus represents the diametric opposite of the position enunciated here. It would stand, therefore, as my conception of the satanic principle or the principle of *Mara*, the tempter of Buddha. And this is not an abstract

¹¹ H. P. Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence* (Pasadena, Calif.: Theosophical University Press, 1946), 94. This is a verbatim reproduction of the original edition of 1889.

¹² Tertullian, *De Carne Christi*: "And the Son of God died; it is by all means to be believed, because it is absurd. And he was buried and rose again; the fact is certain because it is impossible."

thing of only historical importance, because this very irrationality is part and parcel of church council Christianity. I became aware of this influence in church council Christianity long ago before I even knew the name Tertullian, and it was the prime cause for my complete break with that form of Christianity. This is the Christianity that grew out of the church councils about 500 A.D., and is simply the work of unilluminated men. I accept Christ, but in a very different sense from that which has been established by church council Christianity, which I fully reject.