

Abstract of the Philosophy

Part 2 of 14

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This is a continuation of the tape recorded on this reel, number 3—a continuation, therefore, of “The Abstract of My Philosophy.”

At the close of the preceding tape, I developed a feature which grew out of the fourth Realization that had been relatively neglected in previous presentations. I there stated that the impact carried this force: that the content of this Realization revealed a sense of *order*, a sense of *harmony*, a sense of *rationality*, with respect to which all of that which lay in the *Sangsara* or the *adhara* seemed to be, at least relatively, irrational.¹ It would lead to an aphoristic statement of this sort: that REASON is God, or that REASON is Yahweh, or that REASON is Allah, or REASON is Brahman, or REASON is Buddha; in other words, that it is identified with that word or sign which is used by different peoples to designate or point to the Ultimate. But in order to remain as universal and abstract as possible, I prefer to say REASON is THAT—the THAT being spelled with uppercase letters.

Now, there is an important reason for making the word ‘REASON’ the subject of the proposition. I do not therefore say that THAT is REASON, or that God is REASON, and so forth, but the reverse. Now, the logic of the position here is this: that the predicate of every proposition which is more than a simple identity is of greater extension than the subject. Therefore that sign or word which points to the Ultimate is always the predicate of every proposition and not the subject of any such proposition. This is the logic of the situation.

Now, this does not preclude the aphoristic statement that Love is THAT, or that Beauty is THAT, or that any highly valued quality whatsoever is THAT. None of this is precluded because the extension, using the word in the logical sense, of the predicate is greater than the extension of the subject. Therefore, the Ultimate, or THAT, may be approached in different ways. What I am saying in the emphasis of the principle of REASON is that as this Realization bore upon my consciousness, it carried the force of a vast order, a vast harmony, a vast reliability; it carried the force of a potential intelligibility—the implication that man can find intelligible or understandable answers to the questions which he puts to nature, and to that which transcends nature, from which nature comes. It implies that SCIENCE, spelt with uppercase letters, is in principle possible. And this played an enormous part in the vast satisfactoriness of the whole imperience. I, for one, could never feel happy in an ultimately irrational, alien, unfriendly universe or absolute. But, bear in mind, I am not making this aphoristic statement that

¹ 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.”

REASON is THAT in an ultimate sense, but as expressing a very important part of the meaning of the fourth Realization. But the fourth Realization proved not to be the ultimate Realization, although at the time, I thought it was ultimate; and that when I turned my back upon it, in the spirit of the course recommended by *The Voice of the Silence* and the vow of Kwan-Yin, I thought I was turning away from the best and most complete that was possible. After thirty-three days of a most wonderful experience of Consciousness, I found that this was not the case; that there was a most adequate, and more than adequate, compensation; that there was Realization transcending this which I had known. And this leads to the fifth and final Realization of the series upon which this philosophy is developed.

It is important to point out how, in this connection, I am using the concept REASON. It is not in the sense of a psychological function, but more in the sense of a universal principle abiding in THAT, which stands in contrast to this, which identifies this particular center of consciousness. In much of usage, especially that of Dr. Jung, reason is treated as a psychological function; and I fully recognize that it is a word meaning such a function. But in that case, I would spell the word with lowercase letters, the uppercase letters representing the metaphysical sense of the term. It's that which characterizes the *container*, rather than the *contained*. There is authority for the use of the word in the dictionary so that it is not merely my private extension of it. One will find this in the fourth definition given in *The Century Dictionary*, which is as follows:

“. . . intelligence considered as having universal validity or a catholic character, so that it is not something that belongs to any person, but is something partaken of, a sort of light in which every mind must perceive.”²

This, then, would be a more or less *ontological* use of the term rather than a *psychological* use of it. And note well, that I am not predicating that REASON comprehends the All, for the contradictory of this is true, or rather the complement of this is true, that REASON is comprehended by the All. The All, or THAT, includes the negation of reason, and the negation of every positive quality. The All includes not only the good, but the evil. So what I'm saying is not an exclusive predication to the effect that REASON is the All-in-All, but simply that it was a vastly important part of the total meaning of the fourth Realization.

After the fourth Realization, I dwelt in the state of consciousness very happily without doing much of anything about it for about ten days, when it was suggested to me by a Sage that it would be well to write up the experience. And this, as I have previously explained, I started to do, at first without a great deal of interest, but presently found the task fascinating and produced the volume known as *Pathways Through to Space* in a writing period of something like 101 days. But following the Realization there were thirty-three days of profound continuous introversion—the happiest time I have ever known; a dwelling in a state where the movement of consciousness from the *adhar* to the Transcendent took place repeatedly and at will, could be studied and analyzed, and

² William Dwight Whitney, ed., *The Century Dictionary and Cyclopedia*, vol. 6 (New York: Century Co., 1911), 4990.

brought into formulation, as I did do in writing the book *Pathways*. But in the writing of this book, I wrote down the material as it came into my consciousness before it departed from that consciousness, as much as I could; however, there was material that came and which did, in fact, depart before I could arrange to record it. This kind of movement in consciousness I call “imperience,” a word that is not in the dictionary, but which is given this meaning: as a way of consciousness analogous to that of sense experience, but whereas sense experience is related to the testimony of the senses, this imperience is related to a content that essentially does not originate in the intellect, but is impressed upon the intellect from something which I shall call the “Beyond.” The impresses are light; they do not leave a strong effect that persists. They are like images that tend to fade away if they are not embraced promptly in verbal formulation or, perhaps, in other forms of expression. They become solidly emplaced in the outer mind only by a formulation in objective text or by repeated reformulation in one’s own mind until the impress becomes firm. This was contrary to any experience I had had before the fourth Realization. Sometimes one feels the impact of profound insight lasting only long enough for its repetition in words and then vanishing out of the mind. This must be borne in mind. In the years since that day in 1936, much has come that has not been recorded.

In this kind of mentation, there is a sense of a great luminousness, and of a pronounced rejuvenation of the mind. In my perusal, in subsequent days, of Dr. Bucke’s book called *Cosmic Consciousness*, I noted the fact that in his study of various instances of the kind of consciousness that he so entitled, there were among the characteristic qualities or properties, the principle of illumination, or light, and the experience of a rejuvenation or exaltation of the mind and its processes. I had this experience in my own particular form of it; first in connection with the experience of illumination, or light quality. It was not *light* in the sense of a sensuous light that might be mistaken for something external. Dr. Bucke, in speaking of his own imperience, said his first impression was that there was a great fire, like the burning of a building in the vicinity, although in the next moment, he realized that the light was subjective. In the account with respect to Saint Paul, it is stated that those who were in the vicinity, and associated with Saint Paul, were aware of the light; and the same thing is indicated in the case of the Awakening of Saint John of the Cross. I had nothing of this kind, and yet I had a sense that the mind was filled with light, though not in a sensuous form. I would say that viewing the mind as it was before the breakthrough, there was within it corridors filled with information, like a great system of file cabinets, with only a dim illumination within it, and that much of the material in the filing cabinets was relatively inaccessible because the illumination was dim. After the breakthrough, it is as though a great light shown throughout all those corridors and everything within them became at once available, could be drawn upon to use in the formulation that followed.

The absence of the sense of light in the sensible form brought up a problem in my mind, and I asked the Sage, who was available at the time, how this could be. And he said if the mind is prepared to assimilate the illumination, there is no sense of a sensible light which could be mistaken for something external. Now, of course, there had been a preparation because I had studied material related to the mystic consciousness, towards that material which is drawn forth by either that which is called Realization or Enlightenment, and I had assimilated into my understanding a great deal, in so far as it could be drawn from reports and philosophies oriented to this imperience. I knew it at

once as something acceptable and as something that should be, something which I had sought and which I recognized as something highly familiar which had been, as it were, forgotten, temporarily, but now was found again and accepted as belonging to my true home or dwelling place. It was luminous in other than sensible terms.

And second, as to the elevation of the mind, a term introduced by Dr. Bucke, I'll note this fact: that prior to the breakthrough, for some years I had felt that my mental faculties had been deteriorating, that they had lost the acuity which had been present in my academic days. I felt that I could not now anymore handle the problems of difficulty which I then handled, although with the immense effort of maximum concentration. But with the breakthrough, there was a sense of mental power transcending that which had existed before. There was the sense of radical rejuvenation of the mind, and that mind was able to produce with essential ease in terms of material not easily accessible to the intellectual mind in the normal state without any great effort. Thought was easy and in many respects highly autonomous. Thought almost thought itself; though I applied the principle of selection, acceptance, and rejection. And never has there been in any of the productions related to this event any of the intense effort at concentration which had been required in certain phases of my previous academic experience. There was rather, instead of the sense of difficulty, a sense of a great obviousness and simplicity—a sense that it was so strange that all this had not been recognized before. The difficulty was not the difficulty of great complexity, but rather the difficulty of recognizing the ultimately simply and obvious.

At this point, it may be of interest to us to turn to some of the conclusions arrived at by Dr. Bucke in his work on Cosmic Consciousness, as he calls this transformation in consciousness. First of all, I would like to make a certain criticism of his designation. As I know this consciousness or this transformation, it does not give any particular awareness of the method or process by which a cosmos is produced. It rather deals with that which underlies the cosmos, and I would say that the term 'ontological' consciousness would be more adequate than the term 'cosmic' consciousness. I have from principles that have come into my mind as a result of the transformation, endeavored to suggest how a cosmos might be produced from a basis of a universal, non-subject-object consciousness as the Root Source of it. But the content of the Awakening itself, did not give immediately this sort of material. It might very well be true that this sort of material is rendered available by the type of Realizations which Sri Aurobindo calls the "instrumental" Realizations. What I know is more of an *ontological* character rather than of a *cosmic* character; and by 'ontology' we mean that which *underlies* any production of any manifestation whatsoever, thus of any cosmos or world.

Now Dr. Bucke, in study of many cases, including his own, has isolated something like eleven characteristics, most of which are usually present in each of the cases, and in the greater cases, all of these elements tend to be present. I shall list them first and then proceed to a discussion of them. They are as follows as given in his book:

- a. The subjective light.
- b. The moral elevation.
- c. The intellectual illumination.
- d. The sense of immortality.

- e. The loss of the fear of death.
- f. The loss of the sense of sin.
- g. The suddenness, instantaneousness, of the awakening.
- h. The previous character of the man—intellectual, moral and physical.
- i. The age of illumination.
- j. The added charm to the personality so that men and women are always (?) strongly attracted to the person.
- k. The transfiguration of the subject of the change as seen by others when the cosmic sense is actually present.³

Now, it'll be noted that some of the features listed here could be noted only by the subject himself, as a matter of personal confession or introspective report; some could be noted only by observers of the personality; and certain items could be noted in both ways. Thus, the subjective light, the sense of immortality, the loss of the fear of death, the loss of the sense of sin, could be noted only by the subject himself. The question of moral elevation, of the previous character of the man—individual, moral and physical, as contrasted, I may add, to that which manifested after the event, and the added charm to the personality so that men and women are always (?) strongly attracted to the person, and finally the transfiguration of the subject of the change as seen by others when the cosmic sense is actually present—all of these could be only noted by other persons than the subject himself. The intellectual illumination, and the question of suddenness, instantaneousness, of the awakening, and the age, are items that could be noted in both ways. Now I shall add to what I have said already concerning the sense of illumination and the sense of the effect upon his mind, certain statements concerning the three items of sense of immortality, a loss of fear of death, and loss of sense of sin, what I actually experienced.

It is true that one knows that essentially he is indestructible, that consciousness is a continuum which does not cease; nonetheless, states or phases of consciousness are subject to beginning and to ending. That distinction is important; it is not, so far as I remember, dwelt upon by Dr. Bucke. The sense of this indestructibility, indestructibility, of consciousness inheres in the sense of rising above time, space, and law. That which is above time is not destroyed by time. However, there are forms or states of consciousness which are time conditioned and these do not persist indefinitely; there's no assurance of that persistence. The loss of the fear of death? Yes, that does happen. There may be a distaste for a painful transition, but the idea that death, as such, is terminal or that it leads to something obnoxious, that indeed does pass. And as to the loss of the sense of sin? I don't know that I ever had the feeling of a sense of sin. Certainly I'm without it now. I do have the sense of responsibility for errors in judgment or decision, but that does not involve a sense of sin. Now, as to the question of moral elevation, that is for others to answer.

It is true that the event in my case was sudden, and I have seen many reports indicating that it was sudden; but I have also found cases where there seemed to be a gradual development. J. William Lloyd, for example, who is a case mentioned in this

³ Richard Maurice Bucke, *Cosmic Consciousness* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1970), 79.

book, does seem to have been one who developed gradually. This takes me back to the distinction between two schools that are discussed in the *Buddhist Bible* put out by Dwight Goddard, in the case of the Sixth Patriarch, a Chinese sage. He was an advocate of the sudden school, but another advanced *chela* of the Fifth Patriarch founded what was known as the gradual school. All of which implies that there are two methods of unfoldment. I would be inclined to doubt that suddenness, as such, is always a necessary criterion. However, the event in my own case, and in the case of every Realization that I have reported, was in fact something suddenly seen and which then persisted.

As to age, Dr. Bucke makes the point, which I consider suggestive but not conclusive, that the Awakening takes place at the point of maximum development of the individual in terms of what he calls Self Conscious consciousness. At the peak of that development in the individual, he asserts, is the moment when the breakthrough takes place. And in his listing of some forty-two cases, he finds this occurring in the vast majority of instances during the age period of the thirties—one only earlier than that, and the balance, a three or four in number, at an age in the forties or the fifties. Swedenborg was the one instance in which he gave the age as the greatest of any, namely, fifty-four, and Dr. Bucke was impressed with the fact that he should have been developing for such a long time and reached his peak only at fifty-four. In my own case the age was forty-nine, in fact, only about three weeks after the forty-ninth birthday.

The point made here by Bucke is suggestive but not conclusive, and he overlooks the youngest case known, namely, that of Sri Shankaracharya, who had finished with all that the pundits could teach him at the age of seven, felt the call to the guru, and during a period of four years with the guru, had four Realizations, and was on his own at the age of eleven. This would imply an extremely young case and would indicate that Dr. Bucke has not all of the relevant material on this particular subject. I do not think it is a point of major importance. There are some further features which he has considered, namely, the sex of the individual who made the breakthrough, and in forty-three cases listed there are four women and thirty-nine men. On that subject we may sometime speak later.

In the paragraph just following Dr. Bucke's listing of the features characteristic of the cosmic conscious cases, there is a statement of a principle which is of very considerable importance and one which may be overlooked by the student. To introduce this I shall read the paragraph in question. This is on p. 79:

It must not be supposed that because a man has cosmic consciousness he is therefore omniscient or infallible. The greatest of these men are in a sense in the position, though on a higher plane, of children who have just become self conscious. These men have just reached a new phase of consciousness—have not yet had time or opportunity to exploit or master this. True, they have reached a higher mental level; but on that level there can and will be comparative wisdom and comparative foolishness, just as there is on the level of simple or of self consciousness. As a man with self consciousness may sink in morals and intelligence below the higher animal with simple consciousness merely, so we may suppose a man with cosmic consciousness may (in certain circumstances) be little if at all above another who spends his life on the plane of self consciousness. And

it must be still more evident that, however godlike the faculty may be, those who first acquire it, living in diverse ages and countries, passing the years of their self-conscious life in different surroundings, brought up to view life and the interests of life from totally different points of view, must necessarily interpret somewhat differently those things which they see in the new world which they enter. The marvel is that they all see the new world for what it is as clearly as they do. The main point is that these men and this new consciousness must not be condemned because neither the men nor the new consciousness are absolute. That could not be. For should man (passing upward from plane to plane) reach an intellectual and moral position as far above that of our best men to-day as are those above the average mollusk, he would be as far from infallibility and as far from absolute goodness or absolute knowledge as he is at present. He would have the same aspiration to achieve a higher mental position that he has to-day and there would be as much room over his head for growth and amelioration as ever there was before.⁴

The point is well taken that we have here a breakthrough into another way of consciousness, or what we might call the operation of a new function which is not generally active with the whole of mankind, but which we may reasonably suppose is a potentiality possessed by all human beings. The *sadhaka* or the general member of the public who has contact with the teachings of men of this sort, very often tends to expect something like infallibility and the manifestation of all powers or *siddhis*. This is not fair and is not true to our knowledge of this subject matter. There may be entities who have broken into this higher consciousness who have attained all powers or resources that are within the reach of that new function or faculty, but, in general, this is not the case. And we are unable to say that any of those known to history have had such a possession, in active form, of all the potentialities of this zone of consciousness. The important thing is that we have a birth to another kind of functioning, another kind of awareness that is important not only to the individual that has been born into the new way of consciousness, but for his brothers who may be influenced by him. It is unfair to expect infallibility. I cannot emphasize that too much. It is far too much to expect. But on the other hand, the probability of validity of insight may very well be greatly enhanced and improved as compared to the individuals who are still simply within the range of what Dr. Bucke calls the self-conscious consciousness.

Actually the presence of individuals who have made this breakthrough, even though they are silent, is of importance to those who aspire to become born into this zone. In silence they carry a force of induction which helps to facilitate the breakthrough. And here is a point where I would rather differ from Dr. Bucke when he maintains that the development is only evolutionary in the autonomous sense. I regard it as evolutionary, as a stage in evolution, but not only autonomous, that is a development, as it were, from below. Rather, as evolution advances there comes a time when the developing consciousness of the Monad or entity begins to act upon the process itself to facilitate its action. Aurobindo has emphasized this point and I agree with Aurobindo on this point

⁴ Ibid., 79-80.

wholeheartedly. Therefore it makes a difference as to whether the individual puts forth effort or not; and it is possible to render assistance to the individual that is at the edge of the new birth. Evolution it is, but it is evolution now becoming partly consciously directed by the evolving individual, rather than a force that is more or less blind and autonomous acting only through the forces that are autonomous and essentially below. There is a pull from above that aids, as well as a push from below.