

Abstract of the Philosophy

Part 4 of 14

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In the final portion of the last tape, there was a discussion of the problem and difficulties that are connected with a scientific approach to an essentially religious subject matter. I said at that time that I welcomed the scientific interest in this field, but there was a problem in that the scientific approach to this subject matter had a certain tendency to denigration of a material that is more than scientific in its nature, but, on the contrary, is religious in the profoundest sense of the word. Something more needs to be said in this connection.

The scientific mind uses the intellectual or conceptual function to deal with the materials that come before it; and in so far as the material is of an experiential character, in the rigorous sense of meaning in which experience is identified with sensuous consciousness, the intellect is perfectly competent and, in effect, from a higher level looks down upon its subject matter. But when it approaches the manifestation of a material which comes from the introceptual level, it is dealing with that which transcends its primary instrument of activity, namely, the conceptual function. It no longer is in the position of an overlord dealing with a subordinate subject matter, but, rather, looking up to that which transcends it; and the problem is very different from that of the ordinary scientific approach to problems. To deal with this material in an appropriate way, one must, as an intellectual being, attain a real humility. I think that in large degree Dr. Maurice Bucke did achieve this, but it must be remembered that Dr. Bucke was not a stranger to something of the Cosmic Consciousness which he discussed in his book. His interest was aroused by an experience which he had in England in which for one brief moment the Brahmic Light, as he called it, opened up for him, and he knew that there was something more than the scientific mind had mastered. The result is that he approached this general subject matter in a way that was not denigrating, although, as I had pointed out in that tape, it was, in my opinion, deficient in certain respects.

There is at this time further expression of interest by the scientific mind in this field and in a form that is basically sympathetic. Specifically, I would call your attention to an article that appears in the Spring issue of the journal *Fields Within Fields Within Fields*, and this article is entitled "Metapsychiatry: The Confluence of Psychiatry and Mysticism," written by Stanley R. Dean, who is a professor of psychiatry at the Florida and Miami Universities. I welcome, also, this interest, and I shall discuss to some extent the approach that is here presented. There is a introductory statement as follows:

A psychiatrist surveys the interface between psychiatry and mysticism, and concludes that the time is right to explore clinically whether the "ultraconscious experience" may not be a natural phenomenon latent in all of us.

In that quotation, I wish to note certain facts. It uses the word “clinically,” and if you bear in mind the meaning of clinical studies, it is usually associated with the subject of disease. It is, in fact, defined as the study of disease by dealing with actual cases of patients rather than by the laboratory approach to disease problems. That gives an overtone that is unavoidably denigrating when one associates a type of consciousness which transcends the normal consciousness as being related to disease. Disease is a descent below a normal state. What we are dealing with in the connection with the mystical or transcendental form of consciousness is something that ascends above the normal state. If by clinical we delete the meaning of association with disease and retain the idea of studying individual cases, that is acceptable; but, I wish very much to separate the states of consciousness that transcend from the notion of disease to eliminate that overtone which carries a degree of denigration.

There is a definition of the word ‘mysticism’ given at the beginning of the article from the *American Heritage Dictionary* of 1969, and this is very interesting:

Belief in the existence of realities beyond perceptual or intellectual apprehension, but central to being and accessible to consciousness.

Quite an understanding definition and rather surprising at that. Now, consider the first paragraph of the discussion, and I shall quote that:

Science and mysticism are fraternal twins which, though long separated, now stand on the verge of reunion. More and more scientists are coming to recognize that faith is not fantasy but, instead, a form of precognition that has divined for centuries what the methods of science are only just beginning to understand. As a psychiatrist who believes his specialty is the best qualified to investigate phenomena, assess validity and expose fallacy in matters of the mind, I am convinced we are at a point where psychic research has become a legitimate concern of psychiatry. Therefore it is my purpose in this article to survey where we stand in our efforts to cross the hitherto unclassified interface between psychiatry and mysticism, and then to lay out some of the questions I believe researchers need to be asking in the years ahead.

Now, here we have the problem presented as one in the field of psychiatry, even though it is termed metapsychiatry; and again we have a certain denigrating element since the definition of psychiatry is a discipline concerned with the diseases of the mind; again, the association with the notion of disease, which has, again, a denigrating effect. No doubt there is deviation from the norm of ordinary consciousness, but deviation from norm may be deviation to something which transcends the norm as well as something which descends below the norm, and that which transcends the norm, I submit, should not be viewed from the angle of disease; rather, it is becoming essentially well. And this reminds me of an episode in connection with Walt Whitman when Traubel, who was his *chela* and had just had an illuminating experience. After the experience, Traubel began to wonder about himself, to wonder as to whether he might have fallen into a subnormal state; and when he went to his guru, he started to speak of this fact, and his guru, Walt Whitman, said, no, “. . . at last you are sane.” In other words, our so-called normal state

here, which is one in which a mass of evils and unsatisfactory conditions exist, a state of suffering as defined by the Buddhists, or a state of ignorance as defined by Shankara, or a state of perverse will as defined by St. Paul, is itself not a true norm of health, but is a condition of a real disease. The norm itself is the norm of an asylum, and to measure things by that norm, is to give a false picture. I agree with Walt Whitman that when one awakens, then for the first time he has become truly sane.

I direct your attention again to another quotation from Dr. Dean which has an element which I am inclined to dispute. This quotation is as follows:

“Metapsychiatry” is a term born of necessity to designate the important but hitherto unclassified interface between psychiatry and mysticism. Metapsychiatry encompasses not only parapsychology, but also all other “supernatural” manifestations of consciousness that are in any way relevant to the theory and practice of psychiatry. Thus, metapsychiatry may be conceptualized as the base of a pyramid whose other sides are psychiatry, parapsychology, philosophy, and mysticism.

Here is something to which I, as a philosopher and one who has some acquaintance with the mystical state of consciousness, must demur. Philosophy is not the child of science. The truth is that it the other way around, as William James pointed out long ago. James said in effect that philosophy is a tree from which sciences were born as the philosopher began to achieve determinate answers, thus the sciences are branches of the tree of philosophy that have developed in their own direction; and when the scientist turns back and tends to look down upon philosophy, he’s looking down upon his own father, his own source. It is probably to be expected because of the natural egotism of man—my particular discipline is the supreme discipline. But historically, the philosopher came first and the scientist is the child of the philosopher. And mysticism is the other wing—that which belongs to the opening of another door of cognition which transcends the conceptual powers as it very definitely transcends the perceptual capacity of man. To view these as subordinate to a discipline which is oriented to the pathological involves something of an insult. Nonetheless, it is an advance upon the old psychiatry that measured everything by the norm of what now exists when we once view that the norm of humanity today is the norm of a kind of insane asylum.

On the positive side, the author of this article on metapsychiatry attains an impressive and even an astonishing degree of insight as revealed in a group of statements which he has called “Psychic Aphorisms.” They run as follows:

1. Faith is not fantasy; it is a form of precognition that has divined for countless years what science is just beginning to understand.
2. Science and mysticism are fraternal twins, long separated, but now on the verge of reunion.
3. Psychogeny recapitulates cosmogeny—i.e., the developing mind includes an innate awareness of the origin and meaning of the universe.

This is a particularly impressive statement, and it ties in with certain implications in the study of synchronicity, namely, the principle that development is synchronous in the different directions or forms of the development in nature, and in man, in apparent things, and in the states of consciousness.

4. [Evolution is not homogeneous, but proceeds in two divergent streams; mental and physical. Mental evolution is far ahead of the physical.]
5. The ultraconscious state bridges the evolutionary gap and produces cosmic awareness.

Right here we have introduced a very excellent term for the higher consciousness, namely, ultraconsciousness.

6. Psi power is latent in all, and an experiential reality to many.

I'm not familiar with the term 'psi' and have not found a definition of it, but it evidently is a reference to the transcendental function judging by the way the term is used.

7. Thought is a form of energy; it has universal "field" properties which, like gravitational and magnetic fields, are amenable to scientific research.

A very important statement. It implies that thought is a power, a power that can penetrate directly into the heart of things and that we are not restricted to the methods of scientific research which is oriented primarily to sensuous experience.

8. Thought fields, like the theoretical "tachyon," can interact, traverse space, and penetrate matter more or less instantaneously.

Hooray.

9. Thought fields survive death and are analogous to soul and spirit.
10. Thought fields are eternal; hence, past existence (reincarnation) is as valid a concept as future immortality.
11. Psychic research is on a par with other important courses of study; it should be included in academic curricula and lead to degrees and doctorates.
12. A new age is dawning—the Psychic Age—on the heels of the Atomic Age and [the] Space Age.

The end of the set of "Psychic Aphorisms." These are impressive, particularly as they come from the mind of a man who does not claim to have broken into what he calls the psi power.

Dr. Dean has culled from his study of ancient and modern sources ten characteristics of that which he calls ultraconsciousness, but which we would prefer to call Enlightenment or Fundamental Realization. However, these points are of a particular interest, and I shall read them into the tape so that you may have an appreciation of what he has gleaned.

1. The onset is ushered in by an awareness of dazzling light that floods the brain and fills the mind. In the East it is called the “Brahmic Splendor.” Walt Whitman speaks of it as ineffable light—“light rare, untellable, lighting the very light—beyond all signs, descriptions, languages.” Dante writes that it is capable of “transhumanizing a man into a god” and gives a moving description . . .
2. The individual is bathed in emotions of supercharged joy, rapture, triumph, grandeur, reverential awe and wonder—an ecstasy so overwhelming that it seems little less than a sort of super-psychoic orgasm.
3. An intellectual illumination occurs that is quite impossible to describe. In an intuitive flash, one has an awareness of the meaning and drift of the universe, an identification and merging with Creation, infinity and immortality, a depth beyond depth of revealed meaning—in short, a conception of an Over-Self, so omnipotent that religion has interpreted it as God. The individual attains a conception of “the whole” that dwarfs all learning, speculation, and imagination, and makes the old attempts to understand the universe elementary and petty.
4. There is a feeling of transcendental love and compassion for all living things.
5. Fear of death falls off like an old cloak; physical and mental suffering vanish. There is an enhancement of mental and physical vigor and activity, a rejuvenation and prolongation of life. This property, especially, should command the interest of the physician and psychiatrist.
6. There is a reappraisal of the material things in life, an enhanced appreciation of beauty, a realization of the relative unimportance of riches and abundance compared to the treasures of the ultraconscious.
7. There is an extraordinary quickening of the intellect, an uncovering of latent genius. Far from being a passive dream-like state, however, it can endow an individual with powers so far-reaching as to influence the course of history.
8. There is a sense of mission. The revelation is so moving and profound that the individual cannot contain it within himself, but is moved to share it with all fellow-men.
9. A charismatic change occurs in personality—an inner and outer radiance, as though charged with some divinely inspired power, a magnetic force that attracts and inspires others with unshakable loyalty and faith.

10. There is a sudden or gradual development of extraordinary psychic gifts such as clairvoyance, extrasensory perception, telepathy, precognition, psychic healing, etc. Though generally regarded as occult, such phenomena may have a more rational explanation. They may be due to an awakening of latent transhuman powers of perception plus the interplay of bioenergetic emanations and forces previously mentioned.

I may add as a footnote here, that not all of these qualities are to be found in every case where there has been a breakthrough of the ultraconsciousness or what Dr. Bucke calls Cosmic Consciousness. Many Awakenings include part of these but not all. And as I have pointed out before, the sense of illumination does not always have the meaning of a sensuous light. It can be a sense of an illumination of consciousness in some other dimension than that of sensuous light. But one does find these qualities present in one or another of the various cases which come before our understanding.

I am impressed with this sympathetic attitude of a scientist, but there is something that does not satisfy me entirely, and that I'll bring out by a further quotation of material that lies under the heading of six questions about the ultraconsciousness. This quotation is as follows:

The ultraconsciousness summit is a genuine metamorphosis of consciousness which has been experienced by certain sages, prophets, leaders and men of genius through the ages. The factors producing it are as yet unknown—but the remarkable uniformity of distinguishing characteristics, regardless of origin, should leave no doubt that a common denominator underlies all of them. It is only a matter of time before science will dissociate it from religious dogma and explain it to the satisfaction of the intellect in terms of natural law.

I feel it should be separated from religious dogma as something arbitrarily affirmed, but not from religiously oriented philosophy, which is in the nature of a rational discourse, not in the form of dogmatic assertion. And then reference to it as an expression of natural law brings up a question, the same question that was brought up in connection with the treatment of Dr. Maurice Bucke.¹ I call your attention to the story of Buddha who, when he went forth to find a solution of the problem of suffering, put forth a heroic effort, first, of a period of six years in extreme sensory deprivation. It is even said that he had reduced his food intake to one grain of rice per meal, but almost destroyed himself, attained a great weakness and realized that this experiment was not leading him anywhere. He broke, then, from this heavy fast and took an adequate meal, then sat under the Bodhi tree saying, so it is said, that he would not eat again until he had achieved the breakthrough. The breakthrough came in the form of the Great Enlightenment and from that the history of Buddhism, as known in the modern world, developed. Now, if it were just natural law, one would expect it to develop autonomously, but here it was the result of a heroic and voluntary effort by the individual who was known as Gautama. No doubt,

¹ See the audio recording “Abstract of the Philosophy,” part 2.

it is a possibility in the sum total of all consciousness, a possibility which we may regard as potential for all men, but it involves more than what is implied in our notion of natural law. Natural law would seem to be something that operates autonomously, whereas, this Realization came as the result of supreme, voluntary effort. That is the point which I think is of most importance. The spontaneous breakthroughs which we find in history may easily be explained as the result of effort in previous incarnations, and not simply something that results as the action of nature itself. It rather is a transcendence of nature, a reaching into possibilities that are more than simply natural, although possible.

There are six questions which have been raised in the minds of various students of this subject which are discussed by Dr. Dean, and he finally achieves his own particular orientation in this respect. These are, and I shall quote from his text:

1. Is the ultraconsciousness a gift of God, beyond human understanding?
If so, it should be accepted as a matter of pure faith, and without further question.

I would not say that in the ordinary understanding of the term, it should be regarded as only a gift of God. And yet that which we tend to identify as the Divine is involved in it. Partly it is a descent from something *above*, but also partly it is an ascent by human effort from *below* and is a meeting of these two. Whether or not that which stands above should be called God, or by any of the other names of a supposed divine being, is a question we have discussed elsewhere.² I certainly view the *above* as unquestionably real. But in my imperience, it is, as it were, a principle transcending the notion of entity from which all entities are derived.

2. Is it a pathological mental disorder? If so, how could it elicit genius in religion, literature, and the arts?
3. Is it hypnosis or suggestion?

And the author says then:

How, then, explain its permanence, charisma and intellectual powers even in the nonschooled and irreligious?

4. Does self-mortification and sensory deprivation, as practiced by [the] ascetics, produce metabolic by-products with hallucinogenic properties similar to those of psychedelic drugs?

And the author asks:

Why then is it not encountered more often in connection with disease, surgery and battle wounds?

² See the audio recordings "Further Thoughts on the Relation of Buddhism and the Vedanta with Special Reference to the Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo," parts 6 and 7.

5. Is it all a matter of charlatanism?

Obviously none of these produce a satisfactory answer. Where else can we turn? Lawrence LeShan reminds us that “it is part of the faith of science that if serious people work diligently on a problem for a long period of time and cannot arrive at a satisfactory answer, they are asking the wrong question, and a new one is needed.” In this case, it should be one that appeals both to science and to common sense. It may be framed as follows:

6. *Is the ultraconscious experience a natural biological phenomenon latent in all of us?*

Indeed, I should say it is latent in all of us, but as I said before, not of such a nature as to be called “natural.” It is something that transcends nature and belongs to what we might call super-nature perhaps, or that which descends from on high into the consciousness.

The spirit here of this writer I commend wholeheartedly, in spite of a few criticisms of the tendency to view science as a too adequate judge of the subject matter and a tendency to tie the whole material into the field of disease. It is true that many who have spoken in the name of this new consciousness have been persecuted. They have faced imprisonment and they have faced death, as in the case of the Christ. Martyrdom has sometimes been their lot, and yet, painful as martyrdom may be, I would prefer imprisonment and even execution to the association of the most precious thing that can come to mankind with the notion of disease. I wish to underscore this as powerfully as I can. It is not disease. It is becoming at last truly well.

At the close of his article, Dr. Dean deals with a problem of really serious importance, and that is with those who have designed groups for the purpose of affecting mind control who are not really competent, and not really responsible, and who, in addition, charge a price, even making themselves wealthy, and effecting, often, disastrous results in the cases of individuals who are totally unprepared. There are those who have advocated the use of drugs to change states of consciousness. This I have discussed elsewhere, and regard all such practice as highly dangerous. The greatest gift of all, the supreme treasure, is not attained by a limited amount of casual effort or the taking of a chemical substance into the body. The Door can be entered only by giving all, as I said before, by the sacrifice, the surrender, and the acceptance of the mystic death. And the Buddhistic Masters have pointed out that the usual period of effort required for this transformation is seven incarnations.³ Obviously, the shortcut suggested by the taking of chemical substances and in the engaging of certain limited practices cannot short-circuit such a supreme effort. The breakthrough involves more than merely curious states of consciousness. It is actually the death of the old man and the bursting forth of a new

³ H. P. Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence* (Pasadena, Calif.: Theosophical University Press, 1946), 69:

Calm and unmoved the Pilgrim glideth up the stream that to Nirvana leads. He knoweth that the more his feet will bleed, the whiter will himself be washed. He knoweth well that after seven short and fleeting births Nirvana will be his....

being which is more than human—the supreme achievement of all the cycle of incarnations of entities that have become human and have developed over millions of years. This is no small matter. Yet, on the other hand, I see real dangers in a suggestion given by the author that there should be governmental supervision. The government is totally incompetent in this field, totally incapable of judging it. It is like considering Caesar competent in the evaluation of the Christ, and that is utter nonsense. Bad as it may be that there are irresponsible individuals who seek to make a fortune out of man's interest in other experiences in consciousness; still, it would be worse if we institute what is in effect a governmental supervision of all religious development. Religion, if real, transcends immensely, all the power and understanding of that which is symbolized by Caesar.