

On the Limits of Clear Definition

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A question has arisen as to how far it is possible to give clear definition to the concepts which are employed in the philosophic material with which we are dealing throughout these tapes. I am therefore presenting this morning a preliminary statement on the question of the limits of clear definition.

First, I shall recall to your memory the context in which this presentation, not only here but throughout on all of the tapes and in the books, is assumed. I view the present entity which we call man as essentially a triune being; that at his base he is an animal; that on the middle heights he is a man; and that on the superior heights he is a god, or perhaps preferably a Buddha, but, let us say, without involving any theological presuppositions, that he is on the heights a divine being. As we know him, the animalistic aspect of his nature is the most preeminently visible. As we see him in an organism of flesh and bone and sinew, he is an animal; and in terms of his functioning with respect to cognition, he is a sensuous being. I therefore equate animality with sensuality without implying any disparagement by this statement. I'm not using here the term 'sensuality' in the invidious sense in which it is often employed, but as a sensual being, man is an animal. That superimposed upon this animal nature we find a mental being, which I prefer to call conceptual entity. There is a reason for this because the word mind has also been employed in the sense of sense mind, employing the term *manas* or perhaps *kama-manas*, and therefore in order to avoid ambiguity I pick out the particular quality which is essential here, that is the quality of conceptuality, which contrasts with the quality of animality or sensuality. Man has both functions; the animal does not. And third, I view the total entity as, in a hidden sense, a divine being; but this latter aspect of the total entity is in the vast majority of the human whole a latent aspect, not a revealed aspect. I would say it is latent in more than 99 percent of the human whole, perhaps emerging at moments, but not the center of gravity, the central point of emphasis except in a very few at this stage in our evolution. I view the process of human evolution as involving a progressive emergence of the divine nature in man which shall reign ascendant over both the purely human nature and the animal nature; but it is not at present anywhere near being generally ascendant. Therefore, the labor before us is to facilitate as far as is possible the emergence of this superior aspect in man.

We have, thus, corresponding to the animal, the human, and the divine entity, another threefoldness representing his levels of conceptuality.¹ These are sense perception corresponding to the animal nature; conceptuality, or in other words intellectuality, corresponding to the human *qua* human nature; and introceptuality corresponding to the divine nature. These three are viewed as three organs, functions, or faculties of cognition, and it is affirmed that there are at least three such, and not only

¹ Perhaps Wolff meant to say, "... representing his levels of cognition."

two, namely, sense perception and conceptual cognition, as is usually assumed in the psychology and philosophy of mankind.

I thus view the total entity which we call a human being as a triune entity, and I believe that this is part of the reason why the Blessed One emphasized threeness. I reject the view that the development of the triune being is through a simple autonomous evolution. Evolution, to be sure, is the part of the process, but it is more complicated than is the ordinary view of this matter. Thus, the simple evolution of the animal being required something more when man became a conceptual entity, and I suggest as a very plausible statement that one which is found in *The Secret Doctrine*, namely, that at a certain stage of evolution there was a descent of the *Manasaputra*, or sons of mind, into the prepared animal vehicle, which in that volume is called the ape-like entity; that when these descended the entity became animal plus man, a sensual-conceptual entity; and, third, that there is also the descent of the divine nature, the introceptual being. In other words, the total entity is a result partly of autonomous evolution and partly by a double *tulku* descent in a massive sense.²

Now, we have to regard the relationship between the functions of this triune entity in its threefoldness. I view the conceptual entity, which occupies the middle place, as the mediator between the animal or sensuous nature below and the introceptual or divine nature above. In other words, mental man, intellectual man, or conceptual man is the bridge between the two extremes, and that the proper royal road from sensual man to divine man is through conceptual man and not around conceptual man by a direct approach from sensuality to introceptuality; although the evidence exists that this is a possible way, but I question whether it achieves the same result. I regard the center of effort with respect to the Awakening to ultimate Realization of the divinity in man as properly passing through conceptual man and that this is the royal road whatever other road there may be.

Let us now focus our attention upon the mediator or conceptual entity and consider its functioning with respect to the sensuous being and the divine or introceptual being. First of all in relationship to the sensuous being; when the functioning of the conceptual entity is relatively weak, has not developed to its full capacity, we have the primitive man with his animistic orientation to nature and his giving preeminence to the sensual factors around him. He develops a religiosity which gives a divine value, as it were, to all forces which are stronger than he is—like the volcano, like the storm, like overpowering animals—and views these as divine things, even including the crocodile because they are formidable and something therefore to be propitiated. But as he develops to a stronger position in the conceptual being, he emerges ultimately as scientific man who deals with the materials that belong to the sensuous order from a conceptual base; and out of this has grown our present culture, but also many of the problems of our present culture as well as the advantages of our present culture. Now, there is in the use of this intermediate entity a threefold functioning: a functioning of conceptuality with respect to a given order of sensual existences; there is, then, in addition to this a conceptuality oriented to conceptual subject matter itself, conceptuality, we might say, operating upon conceptuality, and out

² See the audio recordings “On Tulku,” parts 1 and 2.

of this grows pure mathematics; and finally, third, the relationship of conceptuality to the cognitions that belong to the introceptual or divine being.

Now, when we deal with the question of clear definition in the use of concepts, this is possible in maximum degree when the conceptual being deals with a conceptual subject matter and when we thus have the development of a pure mathematics. In fact, it has been said that any conception which is completely determined by a finite number of specifications is a mathematical conception.³ But, what relationship does such a purely noetic structure without reference to a sensuous subject matter or an introceptual subject matter have to do with the latter? The question arises, to what extent does pure conceptuality relate to the sensual order or the introceptual order? It is the assumption of the scientist that the order of our conceptual thinking does fit reality, in this case conceived as a sensualistic reality. We cannot prove that this assumption or insight is essentially valid. All we know is that in our experience with this form of operation we do achieve a certain command of the sensuous order about us, but at the same time we have precipitated a number of problems which we do not know that we can resolve them. In this connection, I would draw your attention to an interview in the March 3 number of *U.S. News and World Report* given with respect to a Loren C. Eiseley, who is an authority on the history of science. And in answer to his last question, there is a very thought provoking statement that has a pertinence with respect to our present interests. The question that was put to him at this point was, “Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the ability of science to deal successfully with the problem of human survival?” Answer:

I am afraid of the intricacies. The broader and more complex our range of technology, the less our scientists may be able to foresee the possible disruptions or destructive vibrations that could overtake our many-faceted society.

The task of uniting power and wisdom is a difficult one. How do we handle this [the] race with time? Can science inform a world which is in several different stages of development in education and communications?

As an anthropologist used to dealing with vast ranges of time, I raise another question, looking to a distant future:

Does man build up his civilizations over and over again, in a great wave which collapses on the beach, recedes, but marshals its forces again for another wave? Is this his limit? All he can do?

Or, even if he does this a thousand times—if the United States of America disappears, and all that the West once spoke of as high civilization goes under—is there the potential that man may someday begin a new climb, this time in the right direction ascertained from his long series of

³ *The Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol. 15 (Chicago: The Werner Company, 1894), 629:

Any conception which is definitely and completely determined by means of a finite number of specifications, say by assigning a finite number of elements, is a mathematical conception.

adventures? May he finally climb on to some plateau of wisdom after exhausting so many sources of energy that he will have to remain there, getting along on less, but hopefully with greater nobility?

Is this the road he will take, some thousands of years into the future?

Science has no magic answer to these questions. Humanity itself will have to provide the answers. I believe, as I wrote some years ago, that man himself must become his own last [best] magician. He must realize that in the end he contains his own future within himself.⁴

Here is something to make us think. Now, without reviewing the problems which we face as the result of our scientific achievements, entirely apart from their positive contributions, as we face these problems there is the question: is it possible that what is lacking is this something more than the purely conceptual sensuous being which has not been introduced into the total structure of our cognition, that what we need is this something additional which belongs to the introceptual or divine being which will provide the wisdom so that science may be a blessing without also being a curse that might mount higher than the blessing? I think so, and that's why the emphasis of the introjection of the introceptual factor looms so large in my reflection.

At this point there are two possible major reactions to the problem presented by our science: one is the rejection of conceptuality, a return to our animal nature as suggested by John White in his dictum, by recovering our animal nature, we become God.⁵ There is a force in the world that tends to go this way. This I say is the solution dictated by radical pessimism, and indeed is not the one which I accept; but it is a possible way, but what is involved here, as I have noted in other tapes, is sheer escape by regression to the root—one possible interpretation of yoga. The other way is the advance through conceptuality to that which transcends it, namely, that which I have called the introceptual, and thus apply a yoga which aims at progression to the fruit instead of regression to the root. But what is involved here is a mastery of the potential resources of the conceptual being in its relationship both to the sensuous order and the introceptual order, and not alone concerned with the conceptual handling of a conceptual subject matter. In the latter case, clear definition is possible, but in the former case I am forced to admit that clear, rigorous definition ceases to be possible. We can see this in the relationship of conceptual thinking with respect to a sensual subject matter. We deal with the sensual subject matter by introducing the principle of tolerance, namely, allowed error; and allowed error, I submit, is a rejection of complete definition.

Now, with respect to the introceptual subject matter we have a corresponding problem. We cannot define rigorously for conceptual use an introceptual subject matter. Here we come into zones of cognition in which there is in part a definition, a clear demarcation combined with an indeterminateness that reaches beyond that definition. Therefore, there is here no complete determination by a finite number of specifications, but only a partial determination. Thus we have to use concepts that are not rigorous, as in

⁴ Loren C. Eiseley, *U.S. News and World Report* (March 3, 1975).

⁵ John White, "The Highest State of Consciousness," *Fields Within Fields* 5, no. 1 (1972), 70: "As man recovers his animal nature, he becomes God."

the case of pure mathematics, but concepts that operate like pointers rather than like containers. Now, the pointer conception deals with meanings that are fluid. This I am saying out of direct *imperience* of the subject matter, not in terms of a theoretical speculative construct. I know immediately that the substance of introceptual subject matter, in its purity, is like a sheer flowage in consciousness without any concepts or sensuous determinations whatsoever and that this subject matter only with difficulty is related to a conceptual instrumentation. Now, if we were to take from this introceptual content a suggested concept and define it rigorously we would define something that might at best have been true for one moment but ceased to be true thereafter. Here, then, we have to introduce a flexibility in our conceptuality so that it does not always be in a rigid form. It is the problem of representation of the fluidic in the rigid.

We have here the analogue of the earlier problem related to the conceptual handling of a sensuously given manifold, or rather a sensuous given continuum in a curvilinear form or in variable process in time. For the analysis of this, the differential and integral calculus were developed where we introduce the notion of the infinitesimal. But here we have a much more difficult problem than this earlier one. What we have to choose is, shall we be faithful to our fundamental subject matter which is in terms of the introceptual, or shall we be faithful to the forms that are normal to conceptual process. If we choose the latter, we will be at ease, no doubt, in so far as we are conceptual thinkers. But what we shall do is to build a fixed construction in a closed cell of our conceptual consciousness which is not authentically representing an introceptual content; and, no doubt, we could easily play with this fixed construction, but it would be a sort of sophisticated Alice in Wonderland construction. It would not be true to the introceptual material. This forces upon the thinker a choice: shall he sacrifice the criteria that are normal to his conceptual tools; shall he sacrifice the principle of form that is characteristic of this instrument; or shall he sacrifice the introceptual reality so that it may be distorted into the forms that are normal to the conceptual being? Here is an application of the obligation of the seeker to sacrifice, to self-giving, to surrender. The introceptual⁶ ego must give way to the superior authority of the introceptual being and renounce his false royalty to accept, in turn, a vice-regal position, and then grant to the introceptual order that royalty which is normal to it—and he himself becomes in his essential identity not the thinker, but the realizer. He accepts a new self-center—a center that is now one that exercises true royal prerogatives. As thinker, he must humble himself before this royalty; otherwise, if he insists rigidly upon the forms that are normal to the conceptual nature, he builds for himself only a kind of Alice in Wonderland, and, no doubt, he will find it confirmed by much of his experience because he will project it unconsciously and thus hide from himself the real reality. This is the problem. Is the *sadhaka* able and willing to sacrifice himself, to surrender himself to a true royalty which in reality is his ultimate identity? That is the question.

⁶ Perhaps Wolff meant to say, “The conceptual ego must give way . . . “