

Abstract of the Philosophy

Part 12 of 14

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The problem which has confronted me most forcibly ever since that supreme day in 1936 has been the problem of communication. I experienced a value of supreme comprehension and then faced the problem, how can this be rendered available to others? Two means have existed for my use. The first is the conceptual representation of this imperience, and second, the use of an unfolded capacity, not originally foreseen but which came forth, whereby some glimpses of this state of consciousness could be introduced into the consciousness of the *sadhaka*.¹ This has happened repeatedly throughout the last 39 years and we called it “induction,” following the analogue of electrical induction. The problem of a conceptual representation with respect to an ineffable subject matter, as is the case with Fundamental Realization, is one of well-known difficulty, in fact one of a well-nigh supreme difficulty, for the categories which properly apply to conceptual processes do not seem to have any relevance to the content of the realized state.

When one enters into this state, or at least as I found it, one seems to have recovered that which was well known, to have recovered that which really belongs to his true home or dwelling place; and in contrast his movement through the relative order has appeared as a period of long alienation from that to which he properly belonged. It appears as though he had been living as a stranger in a strange land. There is the strong inclination to cut off all relationship with that strange and alien land and to abide exclusively in this so well known and deeply loved dwelling place. As all of you know, there are reasons why this cutting off should not take place as has been formulated in *The Voice of the Silence* and the Kwan-Yin vow, and I for my part was convinced of the validity of the philosophy and directions put forth in these sources, and I did not cut off the experience and movement in the relative order. But then I faced the problem of how can the values of this Realization be rendered available to the experience and understanding of the dwellers in that relative order, for one of the insights which comes out of the Realization is that the problems which badger mankind can never be really solved without the assistance which comes from the breakthrough to transcendental Consciousness. The realization is that man working alone with his relative resources and nothing more in his efforts to solve the problems that arise ever produces along with certain apparent resolutions other difficulties which sometimes seem to mount to greater

¹ 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.”

and greater evils. Something is lacking, and one of the strong awarenesses that come from the Realization is that here is that which is lacking which can be added on to the limited resources of the *adhar*² and render true solutions possible. Therefore, the task before one who has known the liberating Consciousness is to render it available or more available to the dwellers in the relative order. For this end, historically different means have been employed; but in my case, the problem seemed to take the form first of communicating something of these values through the use of our conceptual means of cognition.

Now, the material of the realized state is truly called ineffable, which means incommunicable. If one studies the material, this is not wholly true. One can communicate something of the values, something of the assurances which grow out of the state. What cannot be communicated is the immediate quality or *quale* of the state. Our relative categories simply do not apply to it. And it so happens that this can be illustrated by a certain experience in the relationship between a sensuous deprivation and conceptual communication which is reasonably familiar. This is the case of the individuals born blind who therefore have no experience of the world of color and would not understand what is involved when associates who having sight do have experience of color. To be sure, the physicist's conception of colors as being certain rates of vibration in electromagnetic waves could be communicated to an educated individual who was born blind, but the immediate *quale* of the experience of color would be strange to him. He would not be able to grasp this unless and until he himself had aroused to activity the power of sight. But the very fact that such an individual could grasp the physicist's conception of color is relevant to our problem of communicating something of the transcendent order of cognition. The immediate value cannot be communicated, but the report of what it means to the individual who has known the Realization can be communicated, and also by *contagion* something of the imperience can be induced in the individual *sadhaka*.

Now, among these values certain things can be appreciated by him who sojourns exclusively in his consciousness in the relative order. One of the most important, a certain assurance that in the ultimate sense there is no death; although, in connection with all that becomes there is a becoming not, but the essential identity of that which *I* am is unborn and therefore dies not. This assurance thus is of supreme value. One may face problems in the transition; if we assume, for instance, that *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* is indeed fundamentally a true representation of the after-death states so far as the *bardo* is concerned—and there is reason to grant this as probably true, for we have indicated to us something of how the knowledge is achieved—then there are technical processes in the dying process that can be handled in a wiser or a less wise way, and to achieve therefore the highest possibility in the dying process may be a problem of great difficulty. Nonetheless, as to the essential continuation of consciousness, the Realization gives one undoubted assurance and undoubtable assurance as to that, so that one faces the

² 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.”

approaching transition commonly called death by men, in the light of a problem, of an opportunity where a supreme achievement may be accomplished, or, lacking that, an achievement of progressively lesser and lesser greatness; and that one need not pass through the autonomous process which is that experienced by the overwhelming mass of creatures, human and otherwise. Problems therefore do not cease, but assurance of the fundamental reality of eternity is established by the Realization.

And it also can be communicated as a fact in the consciousness of the realizer that the innermost core of the All is a friend, that the basic relationship to that innermost core is one of an unimaginable happiness or delight. This feature of delight stands out so strongly that it may overwhelm one so that he focuses his interest upon maintaining the delight or reachieving it to the exclusion of everything else. And here part of the meaning of the Great Renunciation, I would suggest, is that one does not abandon himself to the sheer selfish enjoyment of this delight, but rather view it as something which is granted him as a trust to carry to others, or in the words of the *Bhagavad Gita*,³ to make of himself a channel so that the current which flows from *Sumeru* may pass through him by that channel to the starving creatures, both human and other, in this world, thereby sacrificing his own private full indulgence of this delight, but not therefore necessarily foregoing an inner happiness that is gentle and persistent. And concerning the quality of this delight something can be communicated as to its effects not as to its immediate *quale*. It has the effect, as it were, of a current which washes clean through and through, of a current that consumes every impurity in the nature so that one becomes more and more purified; and if this goes on far enough, as I imperienced it, it can lead to a purity so great that one could not longer abide in this world.

Here is something I have not found in the literature, and it is something, I think, of great importance. As one ascends the mountain which leads to Fundamental Realization or Enlightenment, at first he labors hard ascending over the cliffs and other difficulties against the law of *gravity*. The law of gravity here representing those forces of attraction which draw him back to the mundane order, and against all of these attractions at first he must labor, often with great difficulty. But as he ascends, the attraction of this gravity or this attachment to the world of relative objects grows weaker and another force begins to take

³ Wolff apparently meant to refer to H. P. Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence* (Los Angeles: The Theosophy Company, 1928), 70-79:

Would'st thou thus dam the waters born on Sumeru? Shalt thou divert the stream for thine own sake, or send it back to its prime source along the crests of cycles?

If thou would'st have that stream of hard-earn'd knowledge, of Wisdom heaven-born, remain sweet running waters, thou should'st not leave it to become a stagnant pond.

Know, if of Amitabha, the "Boundless Age", thou would'st become co-worker, then must thou shed the light acquired, like to the Bodhisattvas twain, upon the span of all three worlds.

Know that the stream of superhuman knowledge and the Deva-Wisdom thou hast won, must, from thyself, the channel of Alaya be poured forth into another bed.

Know, O Narjol, thou of the Secret Path, its pure fresh waters must be used to sweeter make the Ocean's bitter waves—that mighty sea of sorrow formed of the tears of men.

over, a force which draws in the opposite direction and thus may be called a force of *levity*. As this becomes stronger and stronger, the gravitational attraction to the object grows weaker and weaker and at the level of the mountaintop experience, it may so happen, as I found out, that the force of levity becomes so strong that it could become impossible to return no matter how strongly one might have resolved to return in his earlier discipline. I faced this problem and in one way it was the most difficult step of all. One returns against his inner inclination. He desires before all things the soaring into the illimitable Transcendental. He descends as an act of supreme renunciation and austerity. This is something to be borne in mind and it may well be a truth that an individual who has ascended to the mountaintop can live only in this world by accepting some minimal degree of impurity. Complete purity and there would be no life in a planetary order at all, but only that which ascends to its ultimate home symbolized by the sky. So, in the early practice of the *sadhana*, the *sadhaka* should have learned self-discipline, have learned renunciation, have learned to accept austerity as a preparation for meeting that supreme austerity of renouncing continuation of consciousness in the imperium symbolized by the sky.

With this delight in its more lofty forms, there is a profound sense of Presence. One feels that he's treading upon holy or sacred ground, and he feels as though he would like to kneel before something that is also himself. This is at the very heart of the religious experience—something utterly pure and wholly sacred; something which is an utter sweetness, an utter loveliness; something which finds the contact with these animal bodies of ours a matter of great dissonance and coarseness, something unpleasant and difficult to bear; and one faces the temptation to chuck off that body and soar on into the illimitable heights.

Now, this delight is not at all like the pleasure of the senses. The pleasure from food, drink, sex, and all the rest seems relatively a kind of pain to have to endure them. Even the mental satisfactions that are experienced by those who have gone far in thought, while more in harmony with the higher experience, are still inadequate. And again, the experience of what we call pleasure in the sensuous order, the hedonic side of life, leads to satiation and often to later disgust. But the transcendent delight is of a different sort. It is a state in which one would choose to abide eternally. Enjoyment of the sensuous order all too often involves a sense of guilt. Imperience of the transcendent delight leads to an inconceivable feeling of purity, of rightness, of beatitude. The difference is extremely fundamental.

At the close of the main text of the volume called *Pathways Through to Space*, I wrote up the story of the journey in a symbolic poetic form, and it is called "The Supreme Adventure." It consists of two parts: the first part is the journey to the attainment of Realization; and the second part deals with the descent thereafter. I propose to read this text into the tape so that it may be presented here at this time.

The Supreme Adventure

I

At long last the forest lay behind,
Before stretched a desert, bleak and empty,

Beyond, a mountain, dim in the dancing haze,
Reaching upward, defeating all measure.
I sat resting in the [forest shade] shade of the forest-rim,
The last cool stream at my feet.
Deeply I drank refreshment and pondered:
Long had the journey been and weary
In the maze and the dark of the forest,
Oft had I drifted down false lanes,
Oft had courage been shaken,
Yet I never quite failed to try again
And at last the dim trails were finished.
Behind lay desires, vain and incomplete,
Ambitions inadequate, yearnings now stilled;
Before, reaching all but endlessly,
A dreary waste, trailless and void of sign.
It seemed I beheld the Goal, dim in the distance,
But, again, It seemed not there.
Was uncertain possibility worth the effort?
Could anything be worth the cost
Paid, and yet remaining to be paid?
Oh! for the rest without ending,
If not the rest of Victory,
Then the surcease of defeat,
But in any case rest.
Thus I pondered while a new strength grew
And resolution again was born
Of the ashes of burned desires and yearnings.
Methought: "Better onward continue,
Else all this effort uncompleted
Useless would lie in the void of vain endeavor.
If thought of achievement thrills no longer,
Yet 'twere better to complete the half-finished.
Behind lie [lay] values exhausted and lost,
No longer potent to 'rouse the soul
That, in vision, a Beyond hath glimpsed.
Onward alone lieth hope
To fill the void."
At last I arose, resolution firm,
Gathered my staff and compass—
Sole possessions of the final hour—
And strode me forth beyond visible trail.
Ere long the forest behind me vanished,
Consumed in refracting desert haze;
Then all about the emptiness of burning waste.
On I journeyed in time-expanding void,

Unafraid, but weary with the seeming endlessness;
On I journeyed o'er rock and sand and thorn,
Alone in the stillness that is not Peace;
On I journeyed, thirsting ever more and more
For refreshing waters of the forest past recall;
Yet on I journeyed as thirst grew numb,
The mountain, haze consumed, as the forest.
And time, my tread less resolute became;
The void without become likewise a void within,
All endeavor unavailing.
I sank me down upon a rock,
Caring nought, accepting what might be.
Then spoke the VOICE,
In accents strong, cheering, comforting,
Calling from out the Beyond,
Telling of the Glory There,
Recalling the need of forest wanderers.
Within me a new courage grew, a new determination.
Once more I 'rose, onward moving,
Feeling more clear, though not yet seeing
The ancient Mount of untellable Majesty.
The desert journey, all but finished,
Now lay behind.
Already the slopes, mounting in steeper gradient[s],
Promise of final fulfillment offered.
Steeper grew the Way, but easier,
Strange paradox of a World, inverting former values.
Quickly I ascended, filled with strength
Born downward from Beyond.
The haze grew thin [dim] and vanished.
Then, before me, immeasurable Largeness,
Buttresses of the ancient Mountain;
Height rising on height, beyond all vision.
Filled anew with cheer and rich assurance,
Fast I climbed, until at last
Above me stretched the awful cliff,
Transcending the final reach of thought.
Here I lingered but briefest hour,
Extracting from thought its inmost core,
Seeking the Power above all powers.
Success crowned effort beyond all hope
And, as it were, in Time's briefest instant,
Outreaching time and space and cause, I rose
To unthinkable heights beyond unthinkable heights,
Finding at last the ancient Home,

Long forgotten, yet Known so well.
Gone was the forest-world, a new World mine;
Joy untellable, Knowledge all-consuming,
Eternity stretching everywhere;
Not anywhere aught but I
Sustaining all universes,
Their origin and consummation.
Darkness of ineffable LIGHT
Enveloping all.

This tells of the ascent. The meaning of the forest symbol is the wandering in the domain of the senses, in outer life, in that which is called the universe of objects, the *Sangsara*, or the evolution—the forest carrying the quality of limitation of vision, a moving in semi-darkness, and the confusion of many objects about one. The desert represents the stage on the path in which one has lost the values of the sensuous or mundane life, and has not yet attained the values of the mountaintop. This is the place where great discouragement may come to the pilgrim. The mountain represents the ascension to the Transcendent Consciousness, to the Goal where all of the problems that bothered one in the life of the outer world are at last resolved. There is represented here one experience of the stages of the path: in the beginning, a stage of aspiration, of reaching out beyond, then the stage of the dreariness of the way, and the ultimate ascension to successful attainment.

The second part deals with the problems of the descent or the return. We start with the Consciousness of the mountaintop in the first words. The text follows:

II

Darkness, Silence, Voidness, utter,
At once, Fullness in every sense;
Deeps beyond seeing, beyond feeling, beyond thought;
At the inmost Core of all I AM,
Sustaining all, not different from all.
Untellable ages, a moment of time,
All time, but one moment there.
From the inmost Core, descending—downward, outward—
Distances immeasurable I came,
'Till finding the Thought unutterable,
Here, lingering, I dwelt for a season,
Thinking what I could not say,
Understanding transcending human conceiving,
Pure Meaning close-packed and o'erflowing,
Containing of libraries the substance all
And more, ne'er yet told.
Filled to the brim, I descended, down through the haze,
Which, ever inclosing the world below,

Holds apart the Mountain Top
From the nether world of outer life.
Gone was the desert and forest-maze,
Scenes of age-old wanderings.
The Way to Heights ineffable a mystery no more,
A new mystery spread below.
Seething multitudes rushing to and fro
O'er far-reaching plane;
Bent over, searching the earth,
Grubbing here and there, ne'er still,
Driven as slaves, joyless and dull,
Seeking the Gold, finding dross.
One here, one there, standing in pause
Looking upward, eyes dim with pain,
Yearning, questioning, searching,
Not Knowing, yet hungering.
These, aliens all in a foreign land;
Their Home forgotten, yet dimly recalled
As the memory of distant dream.
I stood upon a lofty Field
At the edge of thought articulate,
Pondering the scene below,
Recalling the days I, too, was there
Seeking blindly for I knew not what;
Remembering effort—misdirected, barren of harvest.
All these my brothers are,
All these, not different from Me;
I, Free, yet not wholly Free,
While these, bound, remain, travailing.
Questioning, I pondered their sad estate,
Wondering how might release
For all be won.
Then gazing about me, on that lofty Field,
Beheld I a Glorious Company
Of Men, rare, Divinely Noble,
All striving ceaselessly in deep Compassion
With multitudes far below.
From These, methought I saw
Rays of Light, out-reaching and down,
Search-lights seeking quickened hearts and minds.
Then peering close, beheld I those who,
Pausing, raised their eyes in questing, hungering search,
Each enveloped in Search-Light Ray.
Along these Beams a Call forth-send[t]
Arousing to fuller wakefulness

Ancient Memory.
Some, responding, gropingly to seek began,
Hunting the dim-felt but unseen Light,
Greatly tripping, meandering hither and yon,
Yet falteringly drawing nearer and nearer.
Then spoke the Voice, well loved,
From out an ancient Day, another Life,
Uttering words of counsel sage.
“Thou would’st of this harvest share,
Of souls drawn Home to Peace and Joy?
Then seek again the way
In yon fields below.
None knows the final secret of human soul,
So ever We try and try again,
In every way, old memory to ’rouse.
Go forth and try thy way.”
So again I pondered the trials I knew,
The effort wasted, endeavor fruitless,
The final Success, the Key thereto.
Methought:
“’Tis needless, the journey so hard should be.
A little turn here, another there,
And many a barrier and morass deep,
Easily surmounted will be.
I shall tell of the Way
Which at last I found,
That others in a clearer Light may See.”
So I drew a chart, the best I knew,
And here it is for all
Who, wandering in forest and desert drear,
Wish that a clearer Way might revealed be.⁴

⁴ Franklin Merrell-Wolff, *Pathways Through to Space* (New York: Richard R. Smith, 1944), 248-253.