

Abstract of the Philosophy

Part 13 of 14

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This tape is a continuation of the subject of “Communication” under the general title “Abstract of the Philosophy.” It is therefore a continuation of the subject matter developed in the last tape. To begin with we will produce a review of the material listed under “Communication” in the last tape.

The point was made that the immediate *quale* derived from or imperienced in the state of Fundamental Realization is incommunicable and therefore is called ineffable; but I made the point that there are values precipitated into the consciousness out of the state which are communicable, and all together there was something like ten items covered in the preceding tape. I will recall these to your attention.

First, there was the sense of a returning to the original Home, the place where the true entity finds his proper habitat, and the coordinate sense that the journey through relative consciousness in a sensuous world was a movement in a strange world in which essentially the pilgrim found himself a stranger.

Second, it was pointed out that one has the strong sense or recognition that the problems of man which badger him in this life here are not finally solvable with the resources of the *adhar*¹ alone, but that there is needed in addition, that knowledge, understanding, and attitude which belong to the domain of Fundamental Realization, that this insight and orientation is needed to be brought down into the relative consciousness to aid in the resolution of these problems.

Third, it was noted that one has the strong sense that in the ultimate sense there is no death, however much it may be true that that which becomes also of necessity becomes not, in other words that that which has a beginning also has an end. But the essential identity of the individual is with that which is birthless and therefore deathless, and in that sense there is no death.

Fourth, there is the overwhelming sense that the innermost which one realizes in the state of Fundamental Realization is a friend, that the relationship with the inmost core is one of supreme happiness.

Fifth, that one feature which stands out, often as the most compelling feature of the imperience, is a feeling of delight or that which is called *ananda*, that this may so impress the pilgrim that it may stand as the greatest of all of the values, and 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.”

indeed one may seek to abandon himself to it and thus forget other features which are of equal importance.

I spoke, sixth, of a force of *levity* that one may experience which is the opposite of the force of *gravity*, the latter being interpreted as an attraction to the object, attraction to the things that seem to surround us and thus hold us back from the ascension to the higher Consciousness; but I noted that in the ascension there comes a time when the attraction of the higher consciousness, symbolized by the sky, becomes more dominant than the force of gravity and may render the return to the mundane order difficult and possibly under some circumstances even impossible.

There is also the sense of Presence, a quality that is noted over and over again in religious mysticism. It is a sense of something that is like a companion, though not necessarily involving the notion of entity, though it can involve the notion of entity, and therefore could be interpreted as a companionship with the divine being; although, in more general terms it may be interpreted as a companionship of the Transcendent whether viewed as a supreme being or as a supreme principle.

I also noted in the ninth case, of the sense of being upon sacred or holy ground, that the nature of this imperience is profoundly religious in the deepest sense of the word, not in the sense of institutionalized religion or the orientation to particular dogmas, but of a felt sense of Presence.

There was also noted, in the ninth instance, that there was a quality of very great sweetness and a very moving loveliness. There is a quality of beauty in the imperience that comes from Fundamental Realization, but it is not the sense of an external beauty. It's rather the sense of the independent quality of beauty itself which can be projected and superimposed upon the objects which surround one. This is very different from our ordinary interpretation of the experience of beauty, for we attribute the beauty to the object. It is here realized that the beauty is an inner intangible fact or quality which can be superimposed upon the object and thereby render all things to become beautiful.

What we have here is an imperience of qualities as being self-existent rather than as inhering in an underlying substance. The qualities exist in themselves, as it were, and can be projected upon the environment. In this respect, this imperience has a certain similarity to certain statements attributed to the Buddha in his analysis of fire in which he affirmed that there is not a substance called fire which had the qualities of heat and light, but rather that the qualities of heat and light were the whole of fire and that there was no substance in which they inhered. As I've noted elsewhere, this implies a position that is technically known as Positivism or Phenomenalism and has been a noted feature connected with the Far Eastern point of view in the work of Northrop called *The Meeting of East and West*. My own total position involves something of this positivistic element, but it is not the whole story or the whole interpretation of the imperience, for the imperience does include the notion of an underlying center or Self around which the qualities gather and thus has a certain agreement with the more substantialistic point of view of the Vedanta. Thus the philosophy that has grown out of this is not simply a continuation of the point of view developed in the Buddhistic *sutras*, but also has a certain commonality with the point of view presented in the Vedanta, as well as other

features which are more characteristic of Western mysticism as illustrated by the Greek mystics; but this I shall develop more fully later.

We have now to consider the knowledge values which grow out of the state of Fundamental Realization. Those that I have listed so far are strong in the quality of religious feeling, and the fact of these qualities has been well recognized by many students. But a good many of these students of the subject of mysticism have denied that it is a source of knowledge and have even affirmed that the knowledge which grows out of the state is the knowledge that has been taken into the state. If one makes a broad study of the subject, he will find that to a considerable degree this is in fact true; that if one has been conditioned in his religious life to a certain interpretation of mystical states of consciousness, he will tend to give an interpretation that fits that conditioning. But I know from my own imperiences that this is not by any means the whole of the truth; although, I must acknowledge that there is no one philosophic statement which seems to be the only statement which comes out of Fundamental Realization. One finds in the history of the subject different philosophies that have come forth. Thus there are differences between the points of view presented in many of the Buddhist *sutras* that contrast with the point of view presented by Shankaracharya. And then again, both of these contrast strongly with the point of view presented by Sri Aurobindo who lived in our own day; and these, too, these of Indian source, contrast with the points of view presented by the Sufi mystics and by the Greek mystics as well as the Christian mystics. A conclusion which is to be drawn from this is that there is no one statement, so far at any rate, within the limits of our powers of cognition, which states the whole of the truth. Nonetheless, there is knowledge value, and while we may be forced to conclude that the ultimate is many sided and that it can be reflected through a number of forms of philosophic statement, yet it does have philosophic value, and an orientation of our sense of knowledge or cognition is just as important as the feeling orientation. For myself, it has been the cognitive development that has demanded the most of my attention, and as time has passed, I have approached closer and closer to a more systematic statement, although an ultimately systematic statement seems to be inaccessible.

Now for terms, the word which best fits this type of knowledge is a term derived from Greek sources; it is the word 'noetic'. We'll proceed now to a consideration of the meaning of this term. The word noetic is derived from the substantive form *nous*—a highly important and perhaps the most important philosophic term in Greek usage. It is to be found employed by the pre-Socratic Greek thinkers as well as by Plato and Aristotle themselves, and by the post-Platonic thinkers such as Plotinus. It was the term used to designate the *universals* in Plato's philosophy, the divine kind of knowledge which contrasted with the secular form of knowledge which came through the senses, the latter being highly depreciated by Plato, and also by myself for that matter. It implies a knowledge not derived from experience.

Now, to render this clearer, consider what that kind of knowledge which science, in the modern sense, gives us. This science is properly called empiric science in that it is based upon an observation of phenomena. It primarily consists of a careful determination of fact, and then an invention of a connecting hypothesis which unites those facts into a logical whole and can lead by inference to a predicted future fact which then can be verified by future observation. There is in this a certain weakness in that any number of

facts can be integrated by more than one hypothesis, and there is no definitiveness with respect to which hypothesis is the ultimately correct one, if any are. The failure of the Newtonian integrations that developed and became important by the close of the last century was the outstanding example of how the integrating hypothesis based upon perception can fail in the light of growing knowledge. The only justification in the last analysis for any of these integrating hypotheses is therefore the pragmatic one that it works, and in time when it fails to work a modification must be made. Thus empiric science does not give us authentic, positive, or certain knowledge but only a tentative practical knowledge. However, our structure in life here on this plane—the organization of our societies and the economies with the use of advanced technology—is based primarily upon this kind of science. It gives practical truth, not theoretical truth because of the inherent error introduced by the fact that observation of fact alone by itself does not give a connecting principle of law, but rather hypotheses that are supposed to represent the connecting principle are inventions creatively produced and therefore not definitively known. This is a very important point.

Now, there is another science which is highly honored in our society which is known as the normative science, not based upon sense experience, but based upon conceptual relationships. These are the sciences known as logic and mathematics. We may call this *normative* knowledge and the first form of empiric science gives us *empiric* knowledge.

Now, the knowledge which is derived from Fundamental Realization is of a different sort. On its own level, it is immediate. If uninterpreted, it is certain. But in its own immediate form it is incommunicable even to the rational intelligence of the person who has the Realization. To become communicable and usable, a transcription in conceptual forms is essential, but in that transcription a certain error is introduced, corresponding to the error in the form of a conceptual statement of empiric knowledge, that involves an element of unavoidable error, so that the certainty which applies to the introceptive knowledge is not carried along with the conceptual transcription.

Now, I must justify—or I must explain the use of the word ‘transcription’. *Transcriptive* knowledge is to be isolated or differentiated from *speculative* knowledge. Speculative knowledge is that knowledge which is based upon scientific determination in the empiric sense, and logical determination in the sense of the normative sciences, plus imagination to reach toward a conception that may serve to be illuminating in one’s understanding. But it is a groping from below towards a higher valuation or understanding, and while it has its usage, and while I do not reject it as a part of the total proper action of the mind, nonetheless, it does not and cannot give any certainty. In contrast, the introceptive Realization before transcription gives certain knowledge; and a transcription is not an imaginative determination of a transcendent truth, but is a representation which approximates an already known transcendental truth. This, thus, is a kind of thinking that is quite different from speculative thinking, and there are conditions where the *sadhaka* in his search should discourage speculative thought because it can stand in the way of a pure determination of authentic introceptive Realization. Speculation could be a prejudicial factor in this connection, in that it orients the mind in a form that is something like a prejudice. This I think is one of the criticisms that is to be made concerning all mystical Realization that is oriented to a group development such as

an institutionalized church with a certain dogma underlying its teachings. The speculative factor tends to distort the original purity of the mystical insight. The mind should be, ideally, freed from presupposition concerning a transcendental subject matter to let this transcendental material come into the consciousness in as undistorted a form as possible, and then when it has entered, it is possible to make a transcription that is at least in high degree freed by the distortion of conceptual presupposition.

Speculative thinking is a process in which one takes the material of common experience, such as that which is drawn from the senses and organized in empiric sciences, combined with the conceptual tool, as is organized by the normative sciences, and with these groping toward a transcendental Truth. In this it is inevitably doomed to failure because there is a qualitative difference in the form of cognition which belongs to the introceptual level which is totally different from the cognitions of a sensuous and conceptual sort. Speculative thinking is quite valid in the zone of reflection concerning possible future developments that can be confirmed by empiric observation and rational thinking. It is not a valid form of seeking to know the Transcendent because there is involved here a major qualitative difference. Transcendental cognition is not at all like sensuous cognition or conceptual cognition. It is another type of entity in terms of cognition which cannot possibly be imagined anymore than the man born blind could imagine the experience of color. Before one could imagine in terms of color he must have the capacity to cognize color; likewise, before one could imagine validly in the terms of the Transcendent he must have the transcendent Realization as a quality in consciousness which is definitively different from any of the other familiar forms of cognition. Transcription is a different matter, for one communicates from certainty in a medium which approximates something of that certainty, but also in some degree distorts it, but that which is being communicated is known by the communicator. It's not guessed at. It's not imagined. It is known. And that makes all the difference in the world. The trouble with theological speculation is that it is speculation. It is not grounded upon transcendental knowledge directly known. There is an enormous difference between these two forms of representation.

Now as to naming, scientific knowledge in the empiric sense we may call sensuously based knowledge. We may call the normative sciences as giving truths of relationship as they exist in the conceptual order. The knowledge of the introceptual thought is a direct knowledge of transcendent Truth, which when represented in conceptual terms, which we call a transcription rather than a speculation, is the form of knowledge I suggest we should call *noetic* knowledge. Now, this is different from the use of the term as we find it in Baldwin's *Dictionary* where noetic knowledge is interpreted as the name for knowledge that is derived from conceptual sources. This I suggest should be called conceptual *qua* conceptual knowledge, but not noetic. The word noetic should be reserved, and I do reserve in my thought, this term for a transcription from an introceptual Realization. So much now for an explicit use of our terminology.

There is another consideration which reveals why a speculative approach towards a transcendental subject matter is inevitably grossly distorting, and this grows out of the fact that starting with a material that comes from empiric science and the normative sciences, we are dealing with an orientation to an objective element in our consciousness—that which is ordinarily called the objects before us or the things in the

world. These are the elements that make up the content of this kind of knowledge; whereas, the true introceptive knowledge is non-objective, is not oriented to the object in consciousness, but to the subjective element, and beyond this, to that which is neither objective or subjective. The awareness here is of a totally different sort and cannot be based upon, or cannot be represented by a speculation grounded in an orientation to the object of consciousness. Thus all speculation concerning a transcendental reality is inevitably a distortion, a falsification. Speculation should be confined to the range confirmable by sensuous observation and the logical process of the manipulation of the concepts as in logic and mathematics. That is its valid zone. It is a falsifying approach, essentially, when employed in an effort to reach transcendental Truth. Here is where the speculative mind must be capable of humility—the great reason why the academician so often is sealed off from the Transcendental. This is a point on which I shall have to speak further later.

So far in this discussion there now emerges three forms of conceptuality which we can identify and designate. The first one is a conceptuality based upon experience which is both the common usage of concepts employed by everybody and also the refined usage of concepts employed by the empiric scientist. Here the concept points to an experiential subject matter, something known immediately to us through the senses or perhaps by instrumentation which is an amplification and refinement of the resources of the senses. I suggest that we call this *empiric conceptuality*. Then we have the conceptuality that is employed in the field of logic and pure mathematics where the entities considered are conceptual, essentially, except in so far as there may be introduced intuitions of space and so forth as in the Euclidean geometry. For this kind of conceptuality where the subject matter itself is conceptual and is derived from the conceptual order, I suggest the name of *conceptual conceptuality* as contrasting to *empiric conceptuality*. Then in the case of a conceptual transcription of an introceptual Recognition, I suggest the designation *noetic conceptuality*. I have already in several places made the point that the concept which is not simply a conceptual form of conceptuality is a *pointer* towards a meaning beyond itself. In the case of a sensuous knowledge, the sensuously given element has been called the “referent,” following the terminology of Korzybski in his *Science and Sanity*. And the concept in this case does not imply a purely conceptual subject matter, but a subject matter that is outside the conceptual order, therefore we regard it as a *pointer concept*—contrasting with the logical and mathematical usage of concepts where concepts are dealing with a conceptual content simply; and I have suggested the use of the term *container concepts* in that case. Then I extended the notion of the pointer concept to the use of concepts that mean an introceptual content. I shall now have to refine this terminology and modify it to some degree from my earlier usage, as a greater clarification has developed in my own mind.

Think of the pointer from the concept to an empiric content as being a sort of straight line vector moving externally. By externally I mean external to the conceptual order itself. It moves to a sensational or perceptual order, which is the outermost order of our cognition. But in the case of a reference to an introceptual subject matter a subtler statement is required. In this case the movement is inward rather than outward. And here we will need to bring into consideration certain qualities connected with the original imperience that was reported in *Pathways*. In *Pathways*, on p. 114, there is Section LI entitled “Beyond Genius,” and out of this I shall quote the following:

I think Thoughts, the ‘sentences’ of which are volumes here, and the Volumes whole libraries of formation. Yet below This there is a Consciousness of more distinct, and yet far from distinct, delineation; and here, too, is the ineffable Communion, the Grand Love. Still, I descend and I grasp in half-forms values that are thinkable but not yet writable. And, below this, a level where I form slowly and painfully in the words of this outer consciousness a small fraction of a fraction of a fraction of a Grand Formless Thought. And that Grand Formless Thought: How may I suggest it? Pure Significance packed tight. Stripped protons and neutrons in close consolidation. (A thimble-full of neutrons is a million tons.)²

I got the final statement from some scientific paper that I had read at the time, and the figure here is very helpful and I shall go into it more fully. We are now taking certain conceptions developed by our subatomic physicists and using them as symbols or figures for suggesting a meaning falling outside of the physical discipline. This is a common practice in all of this type of formulation—the use of figures to suggest a meaning beyond them—only I have drawn rather heavily upon physics and mathematics rather than experiences in the sensuous world which seems to be the more common practice among mystics. But I find these conceptions useful, even more helpful than anything that is drawn from the sensuous world, as truly representing what I mean.

Now, consider what the physical statement is in this field. As it appears now, or has in the recent past, the so-called atom which formerly was regarded as an indivisible, uncomposed, uncompounded entity is seen to consist of several components which have been variously named as protons, electrons, neutrons, mesons, and so forth, and that the atom is anything but a simple entity. Now, the atom appears to have a nucleus consisting of a combination, so it is said, of protons and neutrons, some electrons, and mesons, which I have been told by a physicist is viewed as the glue which holds these elements together. Around this nucleus there is a zone in which various numbers of electrons seem to rotate in orbits analogous to the relationship between the planets and the sun in their orbits around the sun. And it has been said that the evidence suggests that the distances of the orbiting electrons from the nucleus is comparable to the distances of the planets from our sun, so that the completed atom with its mass of orbiting electrons is something like a replica of the solar system. The atom, thus, in its concrete totality occupies a space vastly greater than that of the nucleus, as much greater as, say, the orbit of the most distant planet is a greater distance than the diameter of the sun itself.

Now, if you consider only the components of the nucleus, primarily the proton and the neutron, and imagine them compressed so that there was no space between them, they carry an enormous weight for a little volume; and that is the meaning of the statement that a thimble-full of neutrons compressed tight was a million tons. Our actual matter, as we know it in this world, is a highly disseminated form of matter. The substantial part is very small in volume as compared to the spaces that are not filled with this kind of substance. Now, if you imagine that you have stripped atoms so that they are

² Franklin Merrell-Wolff, *Pathways Through to Space* (New York: Richard R. Smith, 1944), 114.

only nuclei left with no surrounding electrons, and then have those stripped nuclei compressed together, you have an enormous mass in a small volume. Recently there has been developed the notion of a nuclear sun which illustrates how great this concentration of mass is as compared to the volume of a normal sun. It is said that in a nuclear sun, which is viewed as the final stage in the development of stars, there is a stripped-off condition in which the orbiting electrons are thrown away and you have a compression of the nuclei alone. If we were to take an object as large as our sun and have it meet that condition, it would be of the size, it is said, of a sphere about twelve miles across, or even less, and yet have the same mass. This would represent an extremely, almost unimaginable, concentration of matter.

Now, I am using the conception of the nuclear body as corresponding to introceptive knowledge. If, then, we view the concept that is used to represent an introceptive content, think of the concept as being like the full atom with all of its orbiting electrons, that the orbiting electrons represent, as it were, a shell in which the nuclear content is contained. Let this shell represent the concept and the nucleus the indefinable meaning of the content. That indefinable meaning, a meaning that cannot itself be really contained in words, represents therefore the introceptive value. Then, in this case, the concept is used not as a pointer in the external sense by using a straight line vector symbol, as in the case of a concept representing an empiric subject matter, but think of a curled vector with the point of the vector at the center of the curl, not at the outside of the curl. The pointing now is inward, not outward, not external. The concept, then, is used as a symbol or container of a meaning within, a meaning that is not the dictionary meaning of the concept, but an inner meaning or significance which may be immediately apprehended in a transcendental state of consciousness. One uses the concept then as an agent for expressing an inner meaning; whereas, in the empiric use of the concept, you use the concept as an agent for expressing an external meaning. I might use the figure of a walnut to illustrate the difference. Think of the outer husk of the walnut as representing the sensuous or empiric content, the shell as representing the conceptual content, and the meat of the walnut as representing the introceptual content. The direction to the sensual order from the shell is outward towards the husk. The movement from the shell towards the meat is inward towards the kernel. Saving value lies in the kernel, not in the husk nor even in the shell, but only in the kernel.

Let me repeat what has been said before, that the introceptual meaning of a concept is not the meaning derived from the dictionary or any other form of conceptual definition. It is a meaning that is realized through the function of Realization, which is not generally active with human beings as yet. It is something which in its purity is quite inexpressible, but if a concept has been impregnated so that it has this form of content, then that content can make of the concept a vital impregnating agent so that it affects the consciousness of the one who hears it in ways that are outside the zone—or rather inside the zone of the conceptual field itself. It is, thus, the *inductive* value that is carried by the concept.

Now, there's a further point I would make and that is that we are forced to say that not every concept has an empiric meaning or points to an empiric meaning, nor does every concept point to an introceptual meaning—only some have this value. Some concepts like certain of the words that are used in our language like the articles,

prepositions, and so forth, have only a conceptual value. Some have a conceptual value plus a pointing value towards an empiric meaning, as for instance the concept 'tree' or the concept 'table' points to an actual sensuous existence which can be experienced sensuously. On the other hand, some concepts, and only some, would be carriers of an introceptual value. Preeminent among these would be the concept *Atman*, which may be used simply as a piece or man, as it were, in the conceptual game of a speculative thinker; but, if used in the sense of pointing to the reality which is in fact the Self, then it has an introceptive meaning. In yoga, the important thing is to realize that introceptive meaning. It is not sufficient to juggle the concept of *Atman* in purely speculative terms. That is apt to be even a barrier. One must go beyond the concept, or rather *within* the concept, in our present designations, to find the reality.

This suggests, then, a form of meditative technique with respect to the use of concepts. This is a technique different from other forms of meditation where the primary activity is a visualization of a sensuous object, such as a lotus at the top of the head. In this meditation, which we might call a *noetic meditation*, one seeks to penetrate into the nuclear core of the concept—something that is wordless and imageless in its essentiality, something which would require the discouragement of the mind to elaborate in forms of conceptual thought at the time of such meditation; but a penetration into the core itself—a something that would at first, no doubt, seem like a void of nothing at all, but in time may break through. It may be a more difficult kind of meditation than that of visualization, but it is appropriate to some temperaments.

Thus, let me review, we have the concept oriented as a pointer to a sensuous, or aesthetic, or empiric content, something experienced through the senses, and we will call this the *empiric conception*. We have conceptions that are oriented to purely conceptual relationships, in which case we have the development of the sciences of logic and mathematics. And the meaning of concepts here is the meaning given in the dictionary—which is simply using other concepts to give an understanding of the concept which is being investigated—but does not itself lead away from the concept either to the percept or to the introcept. And we may call this kind of concept the *definitive concept* or the concept by definition. And then we have the concept oriented to the introceptive content, and this we call the truly *noetic concept*. Some concepts may have all three aspects; some may have only a conceptual-conceptual relationship, some only a conceptual-perceptual relationship, and a few, probably very, very few indeed, that have only an introceptual orientation, as in the case of the word '*Atman*'.