

On the High Indifference

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It has come to my attention that there has been a misunderstanding of the use of the expression “High Indifference,” and therefore it would appear necessary to produce a clarification. When the manuscript the *Pathways Through to Space* was completed, the first individual outside of the immediate family who read it was J. William Lloyd, who is among those listed by Maurice Bucke in his book called *Cosmic Consciousness* as one of the cases of those who had attained to this kind of Realization. After finishing the manuscript he wrote me a very interesting and valuable letter of evaluation which on the whole was a very high evaluation. But he was critical of the statement concerning the High Indifference. He remarked in it this question: how could I be indifferent to the conditions in which man existed? Here there was a misunderstanding, and I think I can clarify the problem here.

The word ‘indifference’ does have different meanings in the dictionary and among these there are those which are pertinent to my usage. Thus for instance, “absence of prepossession or bias; impartiality.” Again, “absence of special interest.” And finally, most especially, under the heading “Liberty of indifference, freedom from necessity; the freedom of the will: so called because before the choice or election is made the action of the will is undetermined as to acting or not acting, a state called *indifference of action*.”¹ This gets at the meaning I had in mind. It was not indifference as apathy. It was not indifference in the sense of a personal non-interest in the suffering of creatures. This may help to clarify the use of the term.

Perhaps to clarify our understanding of the meaning of the term in this connection as I have used it, it would be well to review the series of inner events which led up to the fifth Realization, which was reported in *Pathways* under the heading “The High Indifference.” After the breakthrough on August 7, 1936, I entered into a consciousness which I have reported several times elsewhere. It was a consciousness of a very positive value bringing a state of high delight or *ananda*, a deep assurance that all was well essentially in this universe, that the wrongness that appears upon the surface is essentially an illusion or a misplacement of our understanding, that all was well within, and that one could trust fully the inner core of all that is—an enormously satisfactory state of Consciousness, one that was very positive in value. I dwelt in this without much of any activity outwardly for about ten days when it was suggested to me by a Sage that it might be well to write up the experience so that others might come to some appreciation of it. I accepted this suggestion and did proceed to write, starting a process that led to a writing activity covering 101 days, at first somewhat bored with the activity, but acquiring interest in it.

¹ William Dwight Whitney, ed., *The Century Dictionary and Cyclopedia*, vol. 3 (New York: Century Co., 1911), 390.

Now, the reason why I was at first bored with the activity was that the state I was in was one of such complete contentment that no activity was needed, everything was utterly satisfactory. Now, I had had a background of training in which *The Voice of the Silence* played an important part, and in the final part of *The Voice of the Silence* it is emphasized that when one has attained to the threshold of the Great Liberation, he should renounce that so that he could effect something of aid for the resolution of the problems of suffering or of ignorance that existed in the world. It is suggested there that this renunciation is a turning back upon the personal or private enjoyment of this supernal Consciousness in order to render something of it available to other creatures. The statement there follows something of this form, that the stream which flows from Sumeru should not be held by the pilgrim as a private pond, but rather that he should make of himself a channel so that that stream may flow through him to other creatures.² But it goes on to say that this is the Great Renunciation, and that it is a renunciation without compensation; and in those early days I felt I could not reject the moral obligation, but the idea of a renunciation of the most precious of all things far transcending all honors or perquisites in the gifts of man, that the foregoing of all this for unnumbered *kalpas* without compensation was a grievously painful step. About this time, I was warned by a Sage with whom I had contact to watch for an event involving the cycle of thirty-three. I seemed to know that the cycle involved time. I did not know what unit it was—thirty-three days, weeks, months, years, or centuries; but it actually proved to be thirty-three days. Then one evening on the night of the thirty-second day after retiring, a new consciousness walked into my personal awareness.

Now, there is an important difference between this event and the one of August 7, 1936, for in the latter case I had been for some years striving for this particular breakthrough, but in the case of the consciousness that walked into my awareness on the night of September 8, 1936, I had no reason to believe that there was this further possibility. I had found no reference to such a state of Consciousness in the literature with which I was then familiar. I thought that I had seen the height and reached the height of the mountaintop and that now I had descended for an indefinite period of time in isolation from that Consciousness of the mountaintop. I was therefore not at all seeking for this of which I had no inkling that it existed. It therefore may be called something in the nature of an initiation. Whereas the event on August 7 was a matter of attainment by self-induced effort and self-devised means, this on the 8th of September may be of the nature of an *induction* or of a placing face to face with a higher consciousness as is done by the guru. Since it was not a result of self-directed effort, it certainly was a spontaneous presentation so far as my consciousness was concerned. But I assume that there was a directing intelligence behind the whole imperience.³

² H. P. Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence* (Los Angeles: The Theosophy Company, 1928), 72:

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.

³ 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

Now, this development took place on the 8th of September occupying a period of several hours after retiring, as I lay awake. The first stage was in a sense a recapitulation of the values of the previous Fundamental Realization. It involved enormous thoroughgoing satisfaction. It was the epitome of all the supernal values; and then it transformed itself into this state which I called indifference, with evidence of a perfect logic behind it. Now, the indifference expresses a condition which might be called that of aloofness, of complete balance or equilibrium, where one is not oriented either to the positive pull of the lofty values that had been presented in the original Fundamental Realization of August 7, nor to the negative values of the opposite side. Here we must have in mind the figure of the dualistic consciousness which is to be conceived as a compound of every element in consciousness—concept or value or whatnot—stands in contrast to its opposite; and that this state of indifference, balance, or equilibrium was the zero point between the two wings of the positive values on one side and the negative values upon the other; and that from that level of consciousness one looked upon both sets of values with an attitude of complete dispassion. In that state one is above all inclination, all preference, but in a neutral state of Consciousness which can look upon all things with equal-mindedness. It does not mean that in the individual personal consciousness there is no preference. Indeed, I much prefer the saint to the devil. I much prefer purity to corruption. But the High Indifference is a lofty state of Consciousness that can look upon these pairs of opposites unattached and aloof. If, for instance, one in that state had to perform the function of a judging, he would judge with dispassion. The saint would receive his *karmic* deserts, and the devil would receive likewise and equally his *karmic* deserts. And the judgment which would apportion these deserts would be completely dispassionate, completely uninfluenced by any consideration of preference. In the two cases, the deserts would be very different indeed, but the judging process would be wholly dispassionate and uncolored by any preference.

Recently it has come to my attention that there are those who seem to think that I developed the conception of the High Indifference as a speculative construct, as a recommended attitude to cultivate. This is far from the truth of the matter. On the contrary, it is a report of an imperience that was wholly unexpected, that I found as a result of something like a superposition of my consciousness upon another higher consciousness or vice-versa. I found that this is the nature of the organization of the All, in so far as we are able to know it. It was a surprise, but also it came like a self-evident truth, something extremely obvious. What I contributed was a report of this, a report that this is the nature of the All in its essential organization, that balance is the great law, equilibrium is the great law; *karma* is simply the law of equilibrium in action. All action whatsoever invokes a tension which is balanced by a counter tension so that the equilibrium is never broken.

The High Indifference is a Consciousness focused at this zero point of balance, but it implies something more. In many of the reports of deep imperiences the ultimate characteristic given is that of *ananda* or delight. What the imperience of the High Indifference says is that while this is a stage on the way, beyond the predominance of

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.”

delight and bliss is the neutral Consciousness that stands between bliss and suffering, and all other polarities. It is the equal sign in all mathematical equations. It is the copula in all logical propositions. Now, that entity which stands at the point of balance has the capability of moving either way, can enter into delight or into the suffering of creatures with equal felicity. There is no barrier of preference in this movement. Clearly this is not a simply human kind of consciousness, but a Consciousness of a higher order, for to be human is certainly to have preferences. It is thus not a construct of the speculative imagination, but a report of a discovered element in the structure of ultimate reality.

At the level of the High Indifference the key word is neither affection or knowledge, but power. Here again I am not speculating; I am simply reporting what I found. From the vantage point of equilibrium, one can turn toward delight or toward suffering with equal felicity, and so with all the other pairs of opposites. Thus this level is a place of great dispassion, hence indifference. But since one can so turn, he can invoke, he can bless, and he can curse. It is a place of power preeminently. None of the other Realizations which I have known contributed anything to the power sense, but here in this Realization it was strongly emphasized.

In dealing with the pairs of opposites it is a mistake to assume that they are always in terms of a light contrasting with a shadow or a darkness. Good and evil, for instance, is only one example of the pairs of opposites—the one that gives us the greatest amount of trouble. But the vast majority of these pairs are of a neutral nature and not ethical in their implication, such as up and down, north and south, east and west, right and left, cold and hot, and so on. But among these there is one supreme master instance of the pairs of opposites, and in the development of the imperience during the night of September 8th, a culminating point was one in which the supreme pair of opposites was presented. This was the contrast represented by the *subject to consciousness* and the *object of consciousness*. At that supreme point in the imperience, I saw with the eye of the mind the disappearance of the object and the subject into the Consciousness itself, and this is the basis of the philosophy of *Consciousness-without-an-object-and-without-a-subject*. It is the foundation stone, a transcendental base from which all problems that concern human kind, or any others, is approached.

Beyond this, in the very final stage, I descended into darkness, a darkness of non-cognition. How far I descended there was no way to measure. Only there were stages of darkness which became deeper and deeper, and then I ascended out of this. And the message that came from this was that the highest conception that could be integrated into our consciousness was not the final truth, that all that could be integrated was so much as this relative consciousness, this relative human consciousness, could at its present stage of evolution assimilate; and beyond this lay the unexhausted and presumptively inexhaustible Beyond—that Other which we do not yet know, but in time as we evolve in our relative faculties may presumptively be able to know. And this has made clear to me the fact that no stage of evolution of insight so far possible is the final possibility in the unfolding of ultimate potential. And so when I hear from time to time certain individuals say that they have attained to the ultimate knowledge, I raise a great question mark. My imperience concludes with the conclusion that the point reached was the highest possible to me at this time, and possibly the highest possible for our present development of the mind, but it is not the highest possible that lies before the future of this human whole.

There is a question which keeps arising, is it possible in principle for an entity to return into the All by the way of the shadow side of the pairs of opposites. Logically I cannot exclude this possibility. It would be what we might call the *asuric* path, or the left-hand path, or the path of the shadow. No doubt, it would be a very difficult path and there's every reason to believe that it would not lead to the same results as the return by the path of the light and of the right. It would be the path of unrighteousness contrasting with the path of righteousness. And what I suspect is that it could lead to a return in what in the relative sense would have to be called unconsciousness, and that the only way that it is possible to return to the Source in full relative consciousness would be the right-hand path or the path of righteousness, the path of the Buddhas of Compassion. At any rate, this is the path which I choose and this is the path which I recommend—the path of exacting moral discipline, the path of the positive values.

There is a problem in connection with this total experience which has given me considerable concern. *The Voice of the Silence* is said to be certain excerpts derived from the Buddhist work called *The Book of Golden Precepts* which had been memorized by H. P. Blavatsky and which she wrote down. Its source is thus Buddhistic. Now, it would appear that in stating in this book that the renunciation is without compensation and for unnumbered *kalpas*, it gave an effect that it was a final act of high austerity. Now, I found that in reality there was a most ample compensation, and I also found that during the years since 1936 the life has not been one of great austerity. There has been an inner contentment and an inner peace, a real happiness. It is as though the Current which flows through leaves some touch of its blessing upon the channel. So the experience has not had the effect of great austerity, and there has been very real and most adequate compensation. This problem I took up with the Sage to which I have referred before, and he said the reason for that extreme statement was to render completely disinterested the decision so that it would be fully honest, that there would be no element of a self-fulfillment in the decision, but that it should be an act of complete renunciation and self-giving. But he went on to say it is true that the law of compensation is never suspended.

While the outcome was happy, it left a problem. The Buddhists, so I have always supposed, emphasize the principle of maximum possible truthfulness, and yet here is a statement made for psychological effect which in the rational sense proved not to be true. Now, it is perfectly true in fact that the material of a totally different way of Consciousness cannot be transformed into conceptual terms without an element of distortion, and thus nothing that one can say concerning the Transcendent can be wholly correct, but is a very different thing to strive to give a maximum possible correctness of statement from that of deliberately introducing a statement for psychological effect which is ultimately not true. We're used to this use of the word in many zones. The language of the politician employs the word in this way, where it is, as it were, a sort of psychological poker chip which may influence the decision of the hearer but which is not true in the logical or realistic sense. And the same is true of the employment of the word by the salesman, the advertiser, and the evangelist. On this I have very strong feelings. Orientation to truth implies, in my opinion, before all things the maximum possible correctness in the use of the word with respect to its truth value and the avoidance of using the word as an instrument of influence which is only psychological. This has made me wonder about other Buddhistic *sutras*. Have they done this and thus abandoned in

their statements the effort to be as rationally true as possible? I am unhappy to feel that that may be so.