

# One Reel Statement of My Philosophy

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This morning I propose to review some of the central facts of the philosophy as part of my policy of iterating and reiterating certain fundamentals so that they shall not be forgotten. As I have said again and again, this philosophy is fundamentally founded upon a group of five Realizations, and that they stand as authoritative with respect to myself so far as their range is concerned. They are, however, not authoritative for anyone else unless they become so in his own direct imperience.<sup>1</sup> However, they may be helpful and suggestive for other individuals in seeking to come to an understanding of a philosophic orientation with respect to life, consciousness, and the Beyond.

I shall briefly abstract the five Realizations. The first three, I have called propaedeutic because they do not involve a fundamental shift in one's essential orientations as, for instance, the shift in the basic sense of "I." They do not involve anything like the radical self-giving, or surrender, or sacrifice, and the acceptance of the mystical death that is involved in those forms of Realization which I have called transcendental. The list of these three is, by the simplest statement possible: the Realization, first, that I am *Atman*; second, that I am *Nirvana*; third, that substantiality is inversely proportional to ponderability; and fourth—the first of the two transcendental Realizations—a reaffirmation of the first Realization, I am *Atman*, but in a profounder sense; and finally, the fifth Realization called the High Indifference, and involving the absorption, the witnessing of the absorption, of both the object of consciousness and the subject to consciousness within the consciousness itself, and thus forming the basis of the aphorisms on *Consciousness-without-an-object* and the subsequent philosophy on *consciousness-without-an-object*.

It is not asserted by me that these five Realizations give the whole of truth. The door is left open for further Realizations which I fully believe do exist. The very fact that the fourth Realization, which seen from representation of it in the authentic sources was ultimate, I found to be other than ultimate, and that there was a Realization following it which led to a transcendency of it; this, thus, suggesting that we are in no position to say that any Realization that man may attain is the final Realization capable of being attained at some time in the course of the development of our powers of consciousness. A similar point of view I have found formulated by Aurobindo and I, in this respect, quite agree with him. These five Realizations stand as authoritative for me insofar as the field they cover is concerned—and this means that they transcend, in that field, the authority of any scripture, *sutra*, or *shastra* that already exists—but they do not carry this force for other

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<sup>1</sup> 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."

individuals unless they have similar Realizations. So this philosophic statement is not dogmatically affirmed as something which other people must accept. It is put forth as a suggestion for others to consider, not as an authoritative presentation.

However, in my attitude toward all scriptures, *sutras*, and *shastras*, my mind is open for values which may come from them covering, potentially, zones other than the zones covered by the five Realizations. But also, any of them may, in whole or in part, be rejected in the light of the authority of the five Realizations. Also, the position is taken that the knowledge that comes from empiric science and from the normative science contributes a valid part to our knowledge—which I do use from time to time—but that the zones covered by these forms are subject to criticism and their limitations are to be taken into account. Nonetheless, they may be suggestive and helpful, and insofar are accepted. But neither empiric science nor normative science has the power to overrule or to lead to the rejection of any of the five Realizations. They have primacy over all other forms of knowledge—scriptural, scientific, or mathematical—which exist so far as I am concerned. But let me repeat, I do not expect anyone else to take this position unless he is freely convinced of its validity.

Since the Realizations are viewed as not subject to correction either by reference to any existent scripture, or by any empiric science, or even by the normative sciences, the question may arise: are they subject to correction by any means whatsoever? The answer is yes; a Realization of a relatively limited sort may be corrected or modified by a Realization taken from a basis that is more comprehensive, as I've already had this experience. The thesis, then, would be that Realization is correctable only by other Realization, not correctable by reference to any scripture, to any empiric science, or to any normative science. I repeat this so that the point may be indelibly pressed upon the mind of the hearer. This is a fundamental position.

Now, it is characteristic of a Realization that the consciousness which emerges from it is not a consciousness in the form of I *believe* or I *think*, but in the form of I *know*. And the question may arise: how could a position which is designated by the form I *know* be corrected? I think the answer to this is rather simple. A Realization may be viewed as a viewpoint, or the result of insight from a viewpoint, or, as I have used the term before, a base of reference, and from that viewpoint it is definitively correct. But there may be, and in fact I have found that there are, other viewpoints, and that from the standpoint of these other viewpoints, they may be found as superseded by a deeper knowledge. In both cases one says he *knows* unequivocally; but he *knows* unequivocally relative to the viewpoint, or base of reference, not unequivocally if one disregards all perspective or viewpoint whatsoever. Viewpoint is essential to all of our knowledge. All our knowledge, whether in the ordinary sense or in the spiritual sense, is relative to the perspective from which it is seen or realized. This is a supremely important point. It is, thus, possible for statements to be made that are definitive in form and yet would be logically incompatible if they were regarded as taken from the same viewpoint. Actually, they can both be valid because they are taken from the perspective of different viewpoints. This point, I think, is clarifying so far as many of the religious statements of the past are concerned which seem to be incompatible with each other.

Let us look at some of the implications of these Realizations; first of all, the Realization, I am *Atman*. This, superficially viewed, might be thought of as simply the

statement, I am I. But there is a great deal more than that involved in it. In fact, the authentic Realization has a revolutionary effect upon the consciousness of the individual who has it. It means simply this: that I am the subject to consciousness; that I am not any organism, either subtle or gross; that I am not any object, whatsoever, which stands before consciousness; that I am the eternal subject to consciousness, something that can be known only through identity with it, and cannot be known by simply the consideration of ideas; that the cognition involved in this Realization introduces a different way of cognition from our ordinary forms of sense perception and conceptual cognition, and the new form is “knowledge through identity,” a form of knowledge which I have called “introception.”

I have suggested elsewhere that this Realization of the Self may be represented by a point which has position but has no mass or volume. In other words, mass and volume can suggest an objective existence, something that can be objectively known; that being a pure point symbolizes the fact that it can be known only through identity and not by being aware of an object in any sense before consciousness. It is a subtle *other way* of cognition. I am the pure subject; everything else that may be associated, no matter how intimately, with this person, is an object before this consciousness and therefore is not *I*.

Now, I have heard that *Atman* has had a different meaning with others who have thought about the subject. I want to make it perfectly clear that this is the meaning given by the first Realization and the fourth Realization. It is the pure subject to consciousness, which in its first appearance is like a point surrounded by the universe of objects, both subtle and gross. But there is a certain transformation that can take place in it, and which I have *imperienced*, and that is, that it can go through a transformation such that the Self, the Self-identity, becomes like an illimitable sphere which is the universal container of the whole universe. I have known, also, that it is possible by a movement in consciousness to shift from the position of the Self as a point to the Self as an illimitable sphere and back again, that one moves into totally different ways of cognition as he passes through this transformation. The world relationship we have in the mundane order is one in which the Self-identity is a purely subjective point surrounded by a universe of objects, and that that universe of objects is totally other; and that there then is an inner, or transcendental state of consciousness in which the universe is seen as contained by the Self so that there is an essential identity between the Self and that whole universe, so that one could say, I am That, also implying that every representation of the Self, or reflection of the Self, within the universe can equally well say, I am That. It is not a purely private statement with respect to one individual and not to others, but something that is potentially realizable by any individual whatsoever; it involves, therefore, no personal inflation.

Let us now consider some of the implications of the second Realization, namely, the one in the form, I am *Nirvana*. What this implies is that the *nirvanic* state of consciousness is one of pure subjectivity. In our ordinary conception of introversion there is only a limited movement towards the subject, but when you have that profound movement in which there is a disappearance of all content in consciousness, but at the same time maintaining a centered consciousness, a consciousness of *I-ness*, then you have the state that is called *nirvanic* or which is also called *Moksha*. I have no doubt that this differs from much that is said in Oriental literature and that it might involve rather

severe objections from the traditional Buddhists because of their emphasis of the idea that *Nirvana* is attained by the rejection of the *Atman*. Now, I cannot help this. My development, as I have insisted, must follow the pattern of the Realizations and carry out the consequences that follow from it. This would mean, then, that a *nirvanic* state of consciousness is a state of radical subjectivity, a centered consciousness that is centered in a Self or *Atman*, but aware of no content. This, in turn, must not be identified with the later discussion of *consciousness-without-an-object-and-without-a-subject*. It is an intermediate stage that we are dealing with at the present time. It is a consciousness with a subject but without content. Now, certain consequences follow from this immediately. First of all, it is bound to be a timeless consciousness, for time awareness is dependent upon content, is dependent upon process. In this state of consciousness of no content, there is no difference between an instant and *kalpa*—where *kalpa* is given as 4,320,000,000 solar years. One who entered fully into such a *nirvanic* consciousness might come out of it soon thereafter, so far as objective time is concerned, or might abide in it for an enormous period of time, and in either case it would have the same value to him in his subjective consciousness. But the consciousness has a coloring; it is a state of inconceivable bliss, or *ananda*—the state of overwhelming delight. It is, thus, to us who have known the path of suffering, a matter of extreme attractiveness. But we're not here considering attractiveness; we're considering structure. We're dealing with a philosophic or metapsychological question. The state of no content is a state which will be more clearly elucidated when we consider the third Realization, which we will now take up.

The third Realization, you will remember, was in the form that *substantiality is inversely proportional to ponderability*; or an alternative statement to the effect that *reality is inversely proportional to appearance*. The implication of this Realization that followed immediately, and has been elucidated in my writings,<sup>2</sup> is that the production of the universe is by an abstraction from wholeness. It's not by a process of addition, but by a process of abstraction, or a kind of subtraction. We know objects by achieving *lessness*, not *more-ness*. We have a delimitation of consciousness when we have awareness of any object whatsoever. The absence of objects, therefore, is the state of infinite consciousness. Content, therefore, is to be viewed not as the *addition* of value but as the *subtraction* of value—a very different point of view. It involves a very different perspective from that of the man in the world. The man in the world feels that he gains by acquisition of contents. The *Nirvani* has gained by the elimination of contents, so that he is pure Consciousness in a state of inconceivable delight, and that he is in a state of oneness with the All—not a state of perceiving externalities or objects of consciousness, whether the small objects of our everyday life or the whole cosmos itself. This is a radical departure from the scheme of values that hold in this world. It probably would be impossible to project this idea into the consciousness of people in a way that would be attractive to them unless they had a disillusionment with the world around them, until they began to see that the passage of contents before their consciousness and the control of those contents, which we call wealth, is, after all, a kind of bondage. What is passing before us and what we seem to control are emptinesses; they are ghosts, as it were. The

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<sup>2</sup> See the audio recordings “Further Thoughts on the Relation of Buddhism and the Vedanta with Special Reference to the Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo,” part 3, “General Discourse on the Subject of My Philosophy,” part 5, and “Three Fundamentals,” part 7.

things, because they are external, do not ever really belong to us, in the true sense of the word. Only in the state in which there is no content, is there real fullness.

A point which needs to be remembered clearly is this: that the Self as here referred to is not identical with a sense of personal ego, which can be pleased or offended, which may acquire or may suffer losses. It is rather a reference to an epistemological entity, an entity that has centered consciousness, that operates from a center. We shall later deal with the fact that there is another mode of consciousness which is not centered and which, therefore, is non-Self oriented. A center in the epistemological sense is not, therefore, a basis of egoism or of conceit in any sense. This belongs to the trivial point of view that is connected with the popular notion of egoism.

There are some further thoughts relative to the subject of the personal ego that may be helpful here. Objectively, we speak of persons, of which, apparently, there are billions in the world. If we view these persons from the subjective point of view, each may think of himself as an ego standing in contradistinction to the other persons around him, and who, therefore, can have interests that are at variance and even in conflict with the interests of the other persons. It is egoism in this sense that leads to competition, conflict, and so on, and in the positive sense, into the formation of groupings, and so on, that is to be distinguished from the sense of *I* as *Atman*, or as the subject to consciousness. The subject to consciousness in its purity does not have preferences or aversions, does not have acquisitiveness or repulsions, but acts as a witness simply of that which may be pleasant or that which may be quite unpleasant, with an equal attitude. It is a cognitive principle in centered consciousness. This is the sense in which I say, "I am *Atman*." The isolation of this is the critical step in the yoga of Self-Realization. Bear in mind here, this is identical with the pure subject, a center, a point of perspective from which the individuated entity views his world. It is impersonal in its attitude. It is not an assertion of my interest versus the other fellow's interest but that which cognizes all that is, whether pleasant or unpleasant or indifferent.

The difference between the fourth Realization and the first does not lie so much in difference of cognitive content, but rather in the difference of affective value. It involved a breakthrough to a well-nigh inconceivable delight; a sense of an inner sweetness; a quality of beauty that could be projected upon the objective world and render all things to become beautiful; a sense of inner assurance of the transcendence of the transition known as death. The value was supernal, but the judgment, I am *Atman*, was conceptually the same; but in a subtle sense there was a difference, in that it involved the breakthrough to a different way of cognition that was non-conceptual. And this Realization did involve the qualities of self-surrender, the sacrifice, the acceptance of the mystic death; and there was here the experience of, or rather *imperiance* of, the mystic death which was not present in the first Realization which might be viewed as a mental insight rather than a real transformation. The sense of the Self or *Atman* embracing all that is, so that essentially there was no difference between the Self in me and the Self in other creatures, to an extent where one hardly meant his own person when he said *I*, that was characteristic of the fourth Realization. But the conceptual adjustment was not radically changed as from the first Realization. When we come to the fifth Realization, we have something that was very unexpected and something that was quite radical.

The fifth Realization has been specifically discussed in the tape entitled “The High Indifference,”<sup>3</sup> I shall, therefore, sketch it very briefly now. It involved, first of all, a sudden experience of a state of very great *satisfaction*, a sort of recapitulation of the values of the fourth Realization; then this was transformed into a state of *indifference* which was neither blissful nor painful. It was essentially neutral and could be viewed as a sort of zero state lying between both the positive and the negative values—the positive values being identified with the *nirvanic* state and the negative values with the *sangsaric* state, or the universe of objects, or the evolution—but it looked with equal eye upon both. Then from that it developed into a form in which I saw the object of consciousness and the subject to consciousness disappear or become dissolved into the pure Consciousness itself.

Now, what is involved here is a series of steps. We may say that the result of the fourth Realization was a view of the world in which the secular universe was transformed into Divinity. Although the sensuous objects in their delineation or definition remained the same—one would describe a tree as he described it before, or a mountain as he described it before, or any other object as he described it before, in the purely formal terms—nonetheless, all this objective order had changed its meaning so that it was the presence of the Divinity itself and no longer a secular universe. It was precious, whereas the secular universe was a burden, a pain in the neck as it were. Then from that transformation, the transformation of the High Indifference involved the disappearance of the object, which now appeared as the Divinity, and the disappearance of the subject, which now is the *Atman*, and therefore the other pole of the Divinity—the disappearance of both of these in a higher principle which was Consciousness itself. In other words, the Consciousness, which is now *Consciousness-without-an-object-and-without-a-subject*, transcends the gods and transcends all subjects to consciousness and involves an awareness that is non-centered, essentially, but may be called Field Consciousness, within which the play of relative consciousness takes place; but is itself always present even though there is the play of self-consciousness, in the relative sense, or whether it is absent. The whole drama of manifestation and withdrawal may be conceived of as taking place in this Field Consciousness, or Consciousness-without-an-object-and-without-a-subject.

We have here something that follows the pattern of the Hegelian dialectic in which we start with orientation to a secular universe which we may call the *Sangsara*, and with which we identify ourselves, then the transformation into its polar opposite, which we may call *Nirvana*, or also the state of pure subjectivity, characterized by the quality of an inconceivable delight. But here we have a dualism—a dualism as between the manyness of the *Sangsara*, on one side, and the unity of the *nirvanic* or subjective state, on the other side. The High Indifference represents the integration of these two—between manyness, on one side, and unity, upon the other. Hence, this Realization cannot be represented by the concept of the *one*, as this concept is used by Plotinus; it would, rather, have to be represented either by the concept of *zero*, or its reciprocal, *infinity*; or perhaps by the mathematical conception of the *continuum* which embraces both the notion of unity and the notion of illimitable manyness.

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<sup>3</sup> See the audio recording “On the High Indifference.”

There is a final question to which some attention should be given and that is this: what is the relation of this orientation to Oriental representations or philosophies, either Buddhistic or Vedantist? Perhaps a bit of the history of the course that led me to this search may be pertinent. First of all, I was introduced to Theosophical literature and oriented myself to it intensively for several years. But this led me to the name of Sri Shankaracharya, and I turned to him and found myself in instant rapport with his thought; and through him, I found the way to the breakthrough which happened on the 7th of August, 1936. Yet the position that was then achieved, later was transformed by the fifth Realization which, as I have said, walked into my consciousness entirely unexpected and I was not prepared for it by any of the literature with which I was then familiar. But it produced a powerful integration such that all elements began to fall into an integrated whole.

Now the final statement, as should be evident from what has gone before, is this: that there is the objective side of our consciousness which I have identified with *Sangsara*; there is the subjective pole which is the diametric opposite, which I have identified with *Nirvana*; and then the position represented by *Consciousness-without-an-object-and-without-a-subject* seems to be the integration of these two—the ultimate position so far as my present awareness has developed.

There are points of apparent agreement with the standpoint of Vedantic philosophy and with Buddhistic philosophy revealed here, but there are certain important differences. The fourth Realization, as well as the first, reaffirms the position of the *Atma-Vidya* formulated by Shankara, and naturally led to the position that the *Atman* is an ultimate entity, which, however, was modified in the fifth Realization in which the *Atman* vanished into something more ultimate, which I there called *Consciousness-without-an-object-and-without-a-subject*. This relative transitoriness of the *Atman* is thus in conformity with the *anatmic* doctrine of the Buddhists. It thus seems to me that there is a certain agreement with the *Atma-Vidya* of the Vedantists in a certain stage of the progress, and a more ultimate agreement with the *anatmic* position of the Buddhists; but the *anatmic* position is also *Nastikata*, in other words, non-theistic, non-pantheistic, and non-panentheistic. There is, however, a differentiation from the position of many Buddhistic *sutras* in which it would appear that the Self, or *Atman*, is given a subordinate position as contrasted to the objective order. With that, my position is at variance. The objective order has a subordinate reality as compared to the *Atman*, but the *Atman* does not have an ultimate reality value, as should be evident from what is said before in this tape. There seems to be a correspondence between the three concepts of Buddhism known as *Sangsara*, *Nirvana*, and *Paranirvana*, which would correspond to the object of consciousness, representing the *Sangsara*, the subject to consciousness, representing *Nirvana*, and the pure Consciousness itself, as representing *Paranirvana*. What the Buddhistic scholars or Illuminati may say concerning this treatment, I do not know; and I do not know what the Vedantist scholars would say. I hope that they are in agreement with my position, but I have reason to suspect they would be critical of this position, in which case I would have to say, that is too bad; but nonetheless, I shall have to stand by this position because it seems to be the reflection of these five Realizations for which I am responsible. I stand upon this statement until and unless such time as there may be a further Realization leading to a transformation of the statement.

As a final point, I wish to state that I am not simply making a transformation of Oriental philosophy into Western language. Even less am I producing a statement based upon the ben-Israel religiosity, nor even of Greek philosophical mysticism. What I am doing is to produce a statement in terms that are indigenous to the West that will reflect the meaning and the way of Realization. I use the language which the West has developed from the Greek period to the modern period—and by the modern period I mean the period from Descartes to the present. I use, thus, the language of Western philosophy, science, and mathematics. I am indebted to the East for an insemination of this line of thought. The language is primarily, though not exclusively, derived from the Western philosophy, science, and mathematics.