

# Absolute Consciousness

## Part 2 of 2

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The present tape will be a continuation on the subject of “Absolute Consciousness” which was considered in the last tape. We found that there were a number of references to this subject in the first volume of *The Secret Doctrine*, and we noted, in certain references, that it seemed to be unavoidable that absolute Consciousness could be the consciousness of a being—for, in that case, it would be relative to that being and therefore not absolute; also that it could not be a consciousness of content, or phenomena, in as much as that would imply a conditioned consciousness. We covered a number of the references, but did not succeed in covering all, and shall proceed from where we left off.

Before taking up the next reference to absolute Consciousness, it may be helpful if we first consider that which we know as relative consciousness, or that which I have called subject-object consciousness, and the Tibetans have called *shes-rig*. This is consciousness in the familiar sense. It is generally viewed as a relationship between a knower and a known, and does seem to have a history of arising and disappearing—arising every time we awake from sleep and disappearing when we return to sleep. This characteristic is no doubt responsible for the fact that scientists have at times viewed consciousness as something irrelevant in the process of evolution, a something which arises at a certain stage in development, but which could just as well have never arisen.

In my own analysis of the subject, it became clear to me that when we predicate an existence entirely outside of consciousness, we are predicating that which can never be, in fact, verified because verification implies existence in consciousness. We assume a reality as somehow existing outside in the domain of complete non-consciousness, and that consciousness arises at a certain stage. But the difficulty here is that never at any time do we know anything concerning the environment, or the world about, except that it has existence within consciousness; and, therefore, any predication concerning that which is totally outside of consciousness is not so much false as meaningless because it is by its inherent nature unverifiable—verification being an event within consciousness.

Now in the *sadhana* which I practice and which was derived from Shankara, the first stage of the self-analysis consists in breaking the self-identification with the organism, both gross and subtle, ultimately reaching the point where one realizes that I, the Self that is the real entity, is not anything which can be an object before consciousness. I am, therefore, the eternal Subject. This is the analytic philosophic statement. To render this effective, it must be known as a Realization, a psychological process which is very different from our ordinary psychology and may very properly be called meta-psychology. In carrying the analysis through its earlier stages, there was no difficulty. But, in isolating the true Self, there was difficulty, since I found that I projected an idea which I called the Self—therefore something which was an object—and that that which I am was not out there as that

ideational object, but in behind, observing it; that the Subject is something which is never existent before our awareness. The critical step consisted in this mental Realization: I am already that which I seek, and therefore nothing is to be attained. And then gave up all the effort that had been put forth over a period of twenty-four years. That little formula proved to be the key that opened the Door, and then all that followed from that has been presented in the books which I have written and upon these tapes.

It seemed to me that this was an ultimate Realization. I had that impression from the writings of Sri Shankaracharya. But, as I have outlined more than once before,<sup>1</sup> thirty-three days after this event which took place on August 7, 1936, another state of consciousness walked into me and revealed the fact that this was not an ultimate state but rather a penultimate state—a state which could lead to the *nirvanic* withdrawal, but was not the most advanced possibility. The state that walked into my consciousness during the night between the 8th and 9th of September 1936, culminated in a position in which I saw the subject to consciousness and the object of consciousness dissolving in the Consciousness itself. I shall quote from the text that I wrote at that time. The portion to be quoted will be found on p. 123 of *Pathways Through to Space*, and is the last full paragraph of the section entitled “The High Indifference.”

I moved about in a kind of Space that was not other than Myself, and found Myself surrounded by pure Divinity, even on the physical level when I moved there. There is a sense in which God is physical Presence as well as metaphysical. But this Presence is everywhere and everything, and, at the same time, the negation of all this. Again, neither I nor God were There, only BEING remained. I vanished and the object of consciousness vanished, in the highest, as well as inferior, senses. I was no more and God was no more, but only the ETERNAL which sustains all Gods and all Selves.<sup>2</sup>

What is implied here is that the Consciousness at that level absorbed into Itself the object of consciousness—and by the object of consciousness I mean the whole domain that lies before our consciousness, the whole sensuous and conceptual domains, and that means literally the whole cosmos, as well as the region of our ordinary experience—and that which I call “I,” the *Atman*, also vanished into this all-enveloping Consciousness. Later I formulated this as Consciousness-without-an-object-and-without-a-subject. This, then, was a totally unexpected Realization and clearly was more ultimate than the one that had preceded, and even suggests that there may be still more ultimate Realizations; but it was impressed upon my mind that this was the highest point which could be reached at the present state of our mental evolution. Concerning that which may possibly lie beyond, we can say nothing. We cannot deny the greater possibility, nor can we affirm it, until such time as there may be some further, more comprehensive Realization.

This state of Realization involves two large steps beyond the ordinary secular consciousness of the world. In that secular consciousness the subject seems to be a purely

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<sup>1</sup> See the audio recordings, “General Discourse on the Subject of My Philosophy,” part 8, and “General Discourse on the Subject of My Philosophy,” part 11.

<sup>2</sup> Franklin Merrell-Wolff, *Pathways Through to Space* (New York: Richard R. Smith, 1944), 123.

personal ego, such that I am definitely different in my self-identity from that of all other creatures, and the world about seems entirely secular, in other words, undivine. But the first Realization involved a step in which the personal ego became the true *Atman*—a non-egoistic center, as it was, which was not oriented to personal interests versus the interests of others, but rather was an epistemological center that could judge towards one's personal self as truly as towards the entities that surrounded one. And the whole world about, the whole environment, all that I represent by the word 'object', had become sacred, as it were, and therefore could be called the Divinity. It is from this latter position that the final Realization took place; and in that, the Self, in this ultimate sense of the *Atman*, and the Divinity, which was all of that which constituted environment, in both a gross and subtle sense, vanished into something more ultimate, which in *Pathways* I called the ETERNAL, but in *The Philosophy of Consciousness Without an Object*, I called Consciousness-without-an-object-and-without-a-subject. This implied that there was a principle more ultimate than that represented by the notion of Being; that, in fact, it implied that that which we view as a quality, namely, consciousness, which is viewed as a function of a Being, is itself the ultimate, substantial Reality, and that entityhood, and objective existence, became derivative with respect to that.

This involves a revolution in our conceptual systems. It could be called a Copernican change beyond that Copernican change which Immanuel Kant effected, for the Copernican change of Immanuel Kant was a shift of orientation from the objective order to the subjective order, a recognition that the subjective order brings in forms which determine our possibilities of consciousness, and thus opening the door for a philosophic development that followed upon that determination. In that case, the Copernican change was from the discussion of the objective content to the subjective factor as a determining factor. In this case, the shift was from the latter position to the pure Consciousness itself. Therefore, the philosophic position was not identical with that of Idealism, which is an orientation to that which is conscious, but another step that involved orientation to Consciousness itself. And to differentiate it from Idealism, I invented the term 'Introceptualism', and have developed that as a philosophic point of view which I have not found exactly reproduced elsewhere.

In addition, this transformation in consciousness led to a reconciliation between the two positions of the *Atma-Vidya* of the Vedanta, specifically as developed by Shankara, and the *anatmic* position formulated by the Buddhists. The position was this: that a penultimate orientation could lead to the *Atma-Vidya*, where the *Atman* served as a relative, persistent component, but that beyond this, at a higher stage of Realization, it, too, became relative to something else and stood as derivative with respect to a feature that was more ultimate, namely, the pure Consciousness itself. Thus, if we accept the position that is presented in "The Mystery of [the] Buddha" to be found in the so-called third volume of *The Secret Doctrine* where it is stated that the Buddha was reincarnated in a *tulku* form in the person of Sri Shankaracharya, and that therefore the statement of this philosophy was essentially that given by the Buddha, but through the equipment of a Brahmin child, it would lead to the conclusion that here the Buddha had given a stepped-down version of his own philosophy, something that was certainly more acceptable to the Brahmin community. This thesis I find very helpful; and for myself it has this effect, that I can accept both the position of the *Atma-Vidya* of the Vedanta and the *anatmic* and

*Nastikata* position of the Buddhist as valid at different stages in the progression—the Buddhist position being the more advanced stage.

It has been a matter of concern with me that I have found it very difficult to find in the literature any verification of the position presented by the Realization called the High Indifference. The Buddhist sutras that orient to the *Alaya Vijnana* constitutes a partial verification, for *Alaya Vijnana* can be translated as Root Consciousness—the Root Consciousness being very easily a synonym for Consciousness-without-an-object-and-without-a-subject. But only in the last few days, in producing this search concerning the use of the term ‘Absolute Consciousness’ as it appears in *The Secret Doctrine*, have I found a further verification which has been a substantial gratification. No doubt I have read this in the past, but in reading the mass of material in *The Secret Doctrine*, one can fail to derive the bearing that various statements have until one is stimulated to bring out some particular meaning. However, on p. 86 there is a quotation, which I shall read into the tape that has a strong confirming effect. I shall read the whole paragraph that includes the relative sentence. This is part of the commentary on stanza 2, sloka 2:

To know itself, or oneself, necessitates consciousness and perception to be cognized—both limited faculties in relation to any subject except Parabrahman. Hence the “Eternal Breath which knows itself not.” Infinity cannot comprehend Finiteness. The Boundless can have no relation to the Bounded and the Conditioned. In the Occult teachings, the Unknown and [the] Unknowable MOVER, or the Self-Existing, is the Absolute Divine Essence. And thus being Absolute Consciousness, and *Absolute Motion*—to the limited senses of those who describe this indescribable—it is unconsciousness and immovableness. Concrete consciousness cannot be predicated of abstract consciousness, any more than the quality wet can be predicated of water—wetness being its own attribute and the cause of the wet quality in other things. Consciousness implies limitations and qualifications; something to be conscious of, and someone to be conscious of it.

And now we come to the important sentence:

But Absolute Consciousness contains the cognizer, the thing cognized and the cognition, all three in itself and all three *one*. No man is conscious of more than that portion of his knowledge which happens to be recalled to his mind at any particular time, yet such is the poverty of language that we have no term to distinguish the knowledge not actively thought of, from knowledge we are unable to recall to memory. To forget is synonymous with not to remember. How much greater must be the difficulty of finding terms to describe, and to distinguish between, abstract metaphysical facts or differences! It must not be forgotten, also, that we give names to things according to the appearances they assume for ourselves. We call Absolute Consciousness “unconsciousness,” because it seems to us that it must necessarily be so, just as we call the Absolute, “Darkness,” because to our finite understanding it appears quite impenetrable; yet we recognize fully

that our perception of such things does not do them justice. We involuntarily distinguish in our minds, for instance, between unconscious Absolute Consciousness, and Unconsciousness, by secretly endowing the former with some indefinite quality that corresponds, on a higher plane than our thoughts can reach, with what we know as consciousness in ourselves. But this is not any kind of consciousness that we can manage to distinguish from what appears to us as unconsciousness.<sup>3</sup>

The relevant part of this quotation lies in the sentence, “But Absolute Consciousness contains the cognizer, the thing cognized and the cognition, all three in itself and all three *one*.” Now compare this to two sentences in the quotation from *Pathways Through to Space*, namely, as follows:

Again, neither I nor God were There, only BEING remained. I vanished and the object of consciousness vanished, in the highest, as well as inferior, senses. I was no more and God was no more, but only the ETERNAL which sustains all Gods and all Selves.

The meaning appears as essentially identical. One might raise the question, if the Self and the object—which at this stage of unfoldment is the surrounding Divinity—if these disappear within Consciousness, then in a certain sense Consciousness-without-an-object-and-without-a-subject does contain these two. The ‘without’, in this case, meant without an object that was determinant outside, in some sense, and a subject that was distinct. There is in *The Secret Doctrine* a discussion of the difference between existence and being, that something can *be* and yet not *exist*, and that is pertinent here. In our ordinary state, the subject to consciousness and the object of consciousness stand as crystallized, if we may so say, as existences—one subjective and the other objective. Whereas, in the state of Absolute Consciousness considered as the same as Consciousness-without-an-object-and-without-a-subject, they are withdrawn. They still have *being*, in a *laya* form, but not *existence* in a projected or crystallized form.

In the quotation just made from *The Secret Doctrine*, there is a combination of words which may be rather startling, but is nonetheless worthy of serious consideration. This combination is as follows: “unconscious Absolute Consciousness, and Unconsciousness.” We’re not so much interested in the context of this, but the analysis of the meaning here implied. ‘Absolute Consciousness’, in this discussion is given always with initial uppercase letters and commonly contrasted with ‘consciousness’ given with an initial lowercase ‘c’. This is a key. It no doubt would have simplified things to refer to the lowercase ‘c’ consciousness as relative consciousness, or, say, *shes-rig*; but the contrast, I find, clearly implied. Now, when we speak of an “unconscious Absolute Consciousness,” I think we find a clarification in this way: that that state which is called Absolute Consciousness is a monistic or unitary state which is the integration of the pairs of opposites known as lowercase consciousness and unconsciousness. Its character is not determined by what we ordinarily call “consciousness” anymore than it is determined by what we ordinarily call “unconsciousness.” It is a state beyond our imagining, but there

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<sup>3</sup> H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine* (Adyar: The Theosophy Company, Adyar, 1888), 86.

are ways by which we might achieve some intimation. In the quotation of the combination of words, “unconscious Absolute Consciousness” is contrasted with “unconsciousness”; this is lowercase ‘u’. And this is quite clearly a reference to the state in which relative consciousness lapses, as when we enter into dreamless sleep or may have fainted and returned from those states to a recovery of consciousness. A study of these may be of help here. One may faint and later come to and be awake again. He’s aware of a break in the continuum of objects that flow before his consciousness, but he may have the experience of an inner peace or contentment that has been present in that lapse. In other words, it was not a state of complete *non esse*, of a sort of complete blank of nothing-at-all-ness. But as we typically know the fact of our consciousness by the stream of events that flow through our consciousness, where there is no stream of events we would not know that we were conscious, ordinarily. The presumption being that with a sufficient development, we could know that consciousness even though it had no content. In fact, the suggestion comes to me that the journey of necessity is for the purpose of awakening the capacity whereby Absolute Consciousness could know itself. But this would be an unending process; it would be a progressive one without any terminus. We would be forever becoming more and more completely aware of the hidden reality within Absolute Consciousness.

We’re dealing with a field where it is very difficult to make any advance with the mind, for we’re using the mind to turn it upon itself, as it were, to reach towards its own source. We come into a zone where we seem inevitably to face a paradoxical situation; a thing is thus and so, and yet the opposite of that thus and so, at the same time—in other words, the view which we have from the base of dualistic consciousness with respect to the non-dualistic consciousness—and have a very considerable difficulty in formulating it.

In fact, this problem has arisen in logic, even with the Greeks as well with modern logicians, and it seems that whenever the logical process is turned upon itself, as it were, we come into a series of paradoxes. Just as an example, I may recall to your mind the case of the Cretan paradox—one of the problems raised by the Greeks. It runs this way: a Cretan said, “All Cretans are liars,”—meaning that everything they said was a lie, not simply that they lied sometimes. What about this statement of the Cretan, “All Cretans are liars.” If it is true, it is obviously false. Or take the case presented by Bertrand Russell: consider the class of all classes that are not members of themselves; is that class a member of itself? And you find that if you say yes, then it inevitably is true that it is not so. We face situations like that when we’re dealing with this kind of subject matter, and have to be content with reaching answers that are not sharp and clearly determinate.

In the last phase of my imperience of the High Indifference, I have reported a descent into Darkness, and the only noticeable distinction in this descent was at least two phases of moving into a deeper and deeper Darkness, then a re-ascent out of it.<sup>4</sup> I interpreted it as meaning that here lies the unexplored, that which was not yet integrated

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<sup>4</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.”

into our conscious understanding, that this indicated a future possibility of attainment in that which is unknown. But it comes back to me now with a somewhat deeper meaning: that here was a view of the Absolute Consciousness in its impact upon the relative consciousness, and that impact was in the form of a Darkness; incidentally, not a sensuous darkness, but rather the Darkness of non-cognition in any sense. And yet, in a sense I witnessed this. And to explain this I must go back to a process which I employed in the lucid transformation. Normally these states are attained in a state of trance, but because I knew of the fact that trance could become a locked-in state—and I stood alone—I was hesitant about accepting or entering into such a state. But I found that there was another method possible which somehow I knew how to employ, namely, a producing of a division in the consciousness so that one part, namely, the relative consciousness, stood upon the sidelines, as it were, and another part of the consciousness went through the transformation. And because of this witnessing consciousness, I was able to produce a report and to store the events in the memory.

When I descended into Darkness, the witnessing consciousness was there and experienced it as though looking upon it, and recording it, and studying it. There were two functions of consciousness here; the relative consciousness, or the *shes-rig*, was active, viewing a higher consciousness whose only impact was that of a Darkness of non-cognition with deepening stages in that non-cognition. It was, as it were, the paradoxical position of cognizing non-cognition. There was nothing in this state that was fearsome at all, nothing hostile, nothing that one would fail to trust; it was simply enormously interesting. Now, what we are dealing with here is the impact of two types of consciousness—the relative consciousness turning upon itself toward the Root Consciousness, and the cognition was of the Darkness of non-cognition. Nonetheless, out of it there emerged a feeling of an inchoate value of a great immensity, but nothing more determinate than that. Out of this imperience has grown the thought that mayhap the whole purpose of an evolution of worlds and men is the effort of Absolute Consciousness to become progressively conscious of itself. But as the Absolute Consciousness is inexhaustible, there is no end to this process of an ever-growing of consciousness of Absolute Consciousness, or of Absolute Consciousness becoming self-conscious. But because it is Absolute, there is no end to the process; it is an endless development without beginning and without end, but ultimately developing into greater and ever greater fulfillment and increase of riches.