

Review of and Reflections on *Yoga and Psychotherapy*

Part 2 of 4

Franklin Merrell-Wolff

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In the text of the volume, specifically in either the fifth or sixth chapter, there is a discussion of the *image* as contrasted to a *conceptual verbalization*. The image is there viewed as more substantive, as more comprehensive than the representation in a verbal form. No doubt, this is true with respect to a certain kind of conceptuality, as for example, the conceptuality involved in the laying out of manuals for artistic procedure in painting, or for the processes involved in the composition of music and the execution of music, and also in the critical evaluation of artworks of any sort. This is manifestly a dependent type of conceptuality; it is evident that the substance to which reference is made is a sensuous existence, namely, the work of art or the musical composition. This conceptuality is something merely a detached and dependent, and, by itself, fails to carry value unless it leads to an actual aesthetic production or the experience of an aesthetic production. But this is not the only kind of conceptuality; there is a kind that is magisterial in its nature. This is the kind that is developed in mathematics and in metaphysical philosophy where the range and reach far transcends anything that is possible in the sensuous field. In this case, the conceptual order appears as by far the richest of the two, sensuality being a dependent and incidental factor. Evidently Plato was well aware of this and when he spoke of the *universals*, he was referring to a magisterial form of conceptual presentation, and this he called the *divine knowledge*, contrasting to the inferior sensational type of cognition.

This illustrates the fact that there are two different approaches to the status of the verbal, conceptual order. And right here I might say that verbalization is inadequate to comprehend the whole of conceptualization, for in mathematics, by the use of symbols, it is possible to transcend far the range of purely verbal formulation. The concept is not the same as the word; but on the contrary, if one observes the processes in his mind closely, he can find a time when a concept arises in his mind for which he has to discover a representing word, phrase, clause, or discourse; and this subtle concept may be likened unto the nucleus of an atom where the verbalization would correspond to the orbiting electrons. This is thought on the level of *meaning* itself apart from verbalization, but still yet conceptual.

The *image* in its broadest connotation is not merely the immediate sensuous impression, but it is also its record in memory and its existence in imagination. This word, then, we will use in this broader connotation as including all of these three aspects of its nature. This contrasts with the *concept* as an instrument of representation and as a developing factor in its own right as concepts dealing only with other concepts, which is the domain of logic. If one is not subtle in his self-analysis, he may not discover that the concept exists in the mind apart from its verbalization just as truly as the image exists in the mind. If one studies closely the image, he finds it exists at a specific point in space

and a specific moment in time, and thus is, as the logical Buddhists say, a point-instant sensation—something very similar to the infinitesimal of infinitesimal calculus. It is concrete; it is particular. In contrast, the concept is a universal in most instances. Thus a percept would give a particular tree, as an example, existing at the moment of observation and at a particular point in space. It would be just itself; it would not give a universal. In other words, we do not have an image of tree-ness, but we do have a concept of tree-ness. Tree-ness is a container, as it were, which may contain a potentially infinite possibility of concrete, particular trees. Or in a more symbolic language, the image gives the individual tree; the concept gives the forest.

It thus appears that there are at least two ways in which an individual may move toward reality-value. In one case, the individual moves towards the image as the objective suggested by the concept. In the other case, the individual moves towards the concept as that which arises on the occasion of the image, and finds in the concept the most secure ground, which he would call reality. This indicates a psychological difference in human beings and carries us to the work of those who have developed the differences in human types such as Kretschmer, Sheldon, and Carl G. Jung. And I am convinced that these differences in human constitution and orientation are of prime importance in determining the possible direction of effective yoga for various individuals. In other words, there is no one path which satisfies the needs of all men. While the goal may indeed be a state of consciousness which would be common for all, the way to that goal varies. It is as though the path itself had more than one side, and was indeed many-sided.

There is thus the possibility to draw a distinction between two radically opposed classes of yogic discipline: that which is oriented to the aesthetic component, to use the language of Northrop, on one side, and those who are oriented to the theoretical or conceptual component on the other side, as the distinction has also been made by Northrop. We could thus speak of a class of yoga disciplines that are *aesthetic* in their orientation and a class that is conceptualistic or *noetic* in its orientation, and these different yogas would fit different psychological types. There is no question here of which is the superior way or which is the inferior way, but which is fitting for the given individual. The way of the Far East, as Northrop pointed out, would be the way of the aesthetic component in things, and he interpreted yoga in the very suggestive contrast as the movement from the *determinate aesthetic continuum* to the *indeterminate aesthetic continuum*. And he contrasted that with the typical Western orientation, in the sense of the key factor in its orientation not as exclusively valid, in the form of viewing it as an orientation to the *theoretic component*. He did not indicate the step from a *determinate theoretic component* to an *indeterminate theoretic component*, thus outlining a possible yoga that more truly fits the psyche of Western man.

The ultimate end of the yogic path is not an image nor a concept, but another way of cognition altogether, and this has been called by the Buddhists Enlightenment and by others as Fundamental Realization. In one class of yogas, the orientation is to the immediately present, the phantasmagoria of immediate sensation, abandoning memory and the thought of the continuum of interconnection. The other class of contrasting yogas would be oriented to the rock of the absolutely permanent; remember, Shankara said seek the permanent in the impermanent. But the thought arises, is the goal attained colored by

the path traveled? There is an answer to this suggested by Sri Aurobindo. It is yes, and in order to complete the yoga, the path should be the synthetic path, in which the individual travels all paths. If he can travel them simultaneously, that is very good; but in any case, travel all whether simultaneously or successively. I merely suggest this as a possibility.

At least in the *jnana* yoga, the movement of consciousness is not towards the complex or elaborate, as is the direction taken in the development characteristic of *Sangsara*, but it is a movement in the opposite direction, towards the completely simple and obvious, namely, that which is so simple and obvious that it is hard to isolate it as a fact in consciousness. This movement achieves its ultimate Realization in the form of Absolute Consciousness, which is the simplest and most obvious of all things, of all realities, rather, since it is in no sense a thing. This Consciousness is indefinable in the most absolute sense of all, for it is the primary basis whereby all definition becomes possible. It is implied in the very act of definition itself. There has been an effort put forth by certain individuals to define consciousness; it is really the most foolish effort of all. Consciousness is the most absolute of all immediacies, and is the unconscious assumption, or premise, or base, which is implied in the act of definition itself.

To illustrate this point, I shall make a quotation from the forward to Dr. John Lilly's *The Center of the Cyclone* that was written by G. Spencer Brown. It is as follows:

To arrive at the simplest truth, as Newton knew and practiced, requires years of contemplation. [Not activity. Not reasoning.] Not calculating. Not busy behavior of any kind. Not reading. Not talking. Not making an effort. Not thinking. Simply bearing in mind what [it is] one needs to know.¹

This is basically the meaning of profound meditation. What we have here is the search for the ultimately simple. Now to illustrate something of the difficulty involved here, I will refer to a formulation by Bertrand Russell in his *Principles of Mathematics*, not the *Principia Mathematica*, but an earlier work. He lists there about a dozen logical principles upon which all logical structures, as he conceives it, are built. He is developing the logic of mathematics, and the first of these principles is in the form: "*p* implies *q*" implies "*p* implies *q*." When one firsts observes this statement, he may wonder if anything has really been said other than a simple tautology. Only after study and contemplation does one realize that this statement carries the force of giving existence or reality to the implication or the implicatory process. It is a kind of implanting it solidly in the ground of the real, as contrasted to a purely airy speculation. Here we are dealing with the utmost simplicity, which requires the most difficult effort of comprehension. The normal action of the mind, as it is ordinarily known in the world, is toward greater and greater elaboration, a movement towards complexity, but here we have a movement of the mind towards the absolutely simple. The former is the mind operating in its extravert phase; the latter is the mind operating in its introverted phase—the phase that is of prime importance in all yoga.

There is a point introduced by the volume which I should like to discuss at some length. It is introduced in a paragraph on p. 285, and I shall quote that paragraph into the

¹ John Lilly, *The Center of the Cyclone* (New York: Julian Press, 1972).

tape to lead the discussion. It is related to the relationship of scientific method and yogic research. The paragraph is as follows:

Science is difficult to define. But perhaps the most essential feature of it is that it involves the study of something which is external to the observer. The techniques of meditation offer an approach which allows one to be “external to” internal states. This apparent paradox becomes clear in the context of our discussion of levels of consciousness. Once one accepts, at least as an operating hypothesis, that there are distinct and discernible levels of consciousness, he has firmly within his grasp a powerful tool, for it becomes quickly apparent that each of these levels offers a vantage point from which the one below can be observed. From each level one is “external to” the one beneath. He can observe it and study it. In this sense he has become a scientist whose field of study is the inner world. As long as this study is as meticulous, careful and conscientious as that carried out in a laboratory, it will continue to merit the title “science.” The techniques of meditation, if properly applied, create for one an “internal laboratory.”²

In this quotation the words “external to” could be understood in a way that is reasonably valid, but they also could be misleading, and therefore I shall elaborate somewhat the process with which I am familiar.

The process, at least in *jnana* yoga, is a radical movement inward in consciousness, a movement toward the Self—radical introversion. But when one moves inward effectively, there is a sudden breakthrough into a consciousness that may be likened to a transcendence of the whole finite order of awareness. There is both the sense of moving *in* and of moving *high*, so that the consciousness is often symbolized by the mountain top from which perspective there is a vision of the consciousness below. The essence of the relationship is not that of being external like in our ordinary sense of the word, but as being above and looking down upon it. It’s not external as would be the case of putting a small container in a large container in the ordinary *sangsaric* or extravert sense. The distinction here is subtle, but this may happen in one’s experience when in a lucid state. He has reduced by analysis the self-identity until there is nothing objective about it anymore. He has stripped off everything whatsoever that can be an object before consciousness and finally arrives at a state of identity with the absolute subject. This is known only by identity with it, not as seen or conceived objectively. This is the essential and most critical point of all. He finds himself identical with that which is never an object before consciousness, though a representation or symbol of it may be an object before consciousness; but the representation or symbol must not be confused with the reality which is eternally subjective. We may represent this as a bare point having no mass or volume, in other words, no qualities, but simply a center of awareness.

Then, there may happen this process, in the first place, quite autonomously: that there is a sense of ascension in consciousness up to a point where there is a momentary

² Swami Rama, Rudolph Ballentine, and Swami Ajaya, *Yoga and Psychotherapy: The Evolution of Consciousness* (Glenview, Ill.: Himalayan Institute, 1976), 285-286.

blackout of awareness, and then a continuation with the Self transformed into an illimitable sphere which contains all contents in the universe and more. In other words, it is a universal container and may be called Cosmic Consciousness, but in fact is more than that because it embraces more than the cosmos. This Consciousness, or center—or not center anymore, but illimitable sphere, may be regarded as the root meaning of the Self, but is strictly one, not many. It is solipsistic in the most rigorous sense of the word. It is one Self reflected as the centers of consciousness in creatures. One in this state has no special orientation to his limited human personality and manifestation in a physical body. He finds himself in a state of Consciousness where he is equally close to all other entities and may even wonder whether he will ever return to the same personal self-identity again. In this state, he is identical with the center of Consciousness of all creatures. If the parallel of this Realization that is most likely to occur in the case of the yoga of devotion were realized, he would be inclined to say, “I am God. I am the ultimate Divine,” and yet this would not be a monstrous inflation. The reality would be that the differentiated Self of the personality realized itself as one with the root source of all Selves whatsoever. From this standpoint, the study of the world, of the cosmos, of all objects whatsoever, is not a matter of observation; it’s more akin to a process of introspection, though not identical with what we ordinarily mean by introspection. And one knows here in a different way from either sensational cognition or conceptual cognition, but in a form which is unlimitedly comprehensive and can be only in part transcribed into a conceptual representation. And again, there is no one conceptual representation which would be exclusively valid. It is more as though there were here an infinite richness which could never be exhausted by any conceptual representation however extended.

We can now see what the Indians mean when they say, “I am That.” But this is not the whole truth of the matter. Those words must be followed with the following assertion, “So art Thou.” “I am That; so art Thou.” If one had only the first part of this aphoristic statement as his Realization, he could easily have a monstrous inflation. There is an Indian story that illustrates this point. There was a certain teacher, in the spiritual sense, who had a *chela*. The latter had just attained the Realization “I am Brahman” and he felt immense. The two were walking along a trail in the forest, so the story goes, when an elephant bearing a *mahout* on his back caught up with them. The guru stepped aside, but the *chela* continued in the path. The *mahout* called to him to get off of the trail so that the elephant could pass. But the *chela* who was so conscious of his identity with Brahman felt that he would step out of the way of no creature. So, when the elephant caught up with him, the elephant lifted him with his trunk and set him on the side of the path. And then the *chela* was downhearted, for how could he who was Brahman be lifted by a mere elephant and set off of the path? And he asked his guru for help. And the guru said, “You did not pay attention to the Brahman who spoke through the *mahout* and so the Brahman who manifested as the elephant lifted you off of the path.” It is this further Realization, “So art Thou,” which saves one from monstrous inflation.

The meaning of this is that he who has achieved the Awakened state realizes that all is none other than Brahman. Therefore there is not a relativity in which the individual who has attained Brahman stands out as distinct from all the rest, but all are Brahman, all move in Brahman. This unawakened state is thus a condition that may be likened unto a vast illusion, where one falsely conceives of his own essential nature and the nature of all that is about him, the nature of all creatures. He who has awakened has taken an

enormous step away from the state of delusion, but he has ascended to a condition that might be called a kind of universal democracy—ascendant over the unawakened state, but not ascendant over the creatures in the Awakened state. He knows an underlying reality of all things and all creatures which, in most cases, is not realized by those who dwell in this domain of *Sangsara*. As a matter of fact, this is not difficult to understand, but is really a very simple truth, and it's its simplicity which makes it so difficult to find.

There is a question here which concerns me very deeply. If we start with the absolute perfection of Brahman, how could the process of manifestation produce a fundamental error which we have called the universal *maya* of our *sangsaric* environment and all of the suffering that goes with it? How could perfection, in other words, produce imperfection on the way? This question is metaphysical essentially. In the case of the Buddhists, at least in the earlier Hinayana form, there was no attempt to ask this question, and the Buddha is pictured as avoiding giving any answer to it. He took the position that here is a state of illness and all that is necessary is to become well; and he laid down a line of development which was oriented to the solution of that problem. Live by these rules and you will get out of the sick bed, as it were, and be freed from suffering. This early Buddhism is notorious for its positivism, its phenomenalism, and its pragmatic attitude, and even anti-metaphysical orientation. It is less so with the Mahayana form of Buddhism, where some of these problems are dealt with. In fact, the phenomenalistic position of Buddha in his own proper person does not seem to be present in Shankara.

Now, there is a certain line of literature, whose sources were Tibetan, which would indicate that Shankara was a *tulku* incarnation of the Buddha—by which is meant that though the body which he occupied was not his own proper body, the intelligence of the Buddha functioned through it—and here there is a positive attitude towards the metaphysical problems. So it would indicate that Buddha's avoidance of any public metaphysical discourses during his lifetime was due to the presence of a serious pathological condition concerning which the pragmatic solution of getting well was the all sufficient one. The implication being this: that he who was sick in bed was not in a position to consider the problems which might be the proper province of the physician himself. It is maintained that the *sutras* of the Mahayana Buddhism constituted a sort of esoteric doctrine which the Buddha taught to his disciples, or at least to his more advanced disciples. But for me this problem is of particular importance. I have never seen any answer to the problem, how could imperfection be produced from that which is predicated as being absolute perfection, which was to me a satisfactory answer. It remains a problem for him who is no longer concerned with how to get out of the sick bed, but rather with the problem of how do you attain mastery.