

Purpose, Method, and Policy of this Work

Part 7 of 15

Franklin Merrell-Wolff
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There is another event connected with on-beam composition whether vocal, written, or a dictation to the tape, and this is the event which we have called “induction.” There is another term employed by the Tibetans for an event of this kind—it is called “placing face-to-face.” It is, in fact, an arousal of a state of consciousness in the one who reads or hears that is a foretaste of the Mystic Awakening, not a complete achievement of that state, but rather simply a foretaste not yet earned and mastered by the *sadhaka*, but in the nature of a kind of bestowal. This event does not occur in connection with off-beam composition, but only in association with on-beam composition and is therefore related to the transcendental component. Now, there is a good deal to be said about this state of consciousness and we shall attempt to bring this material to the foreground here.

First of all, it involves a state of consciousness which is identified as a state of trance. In our experience it has always been a state which should be called light trance. But to introduce this subject, I shall first use certain remarks upon the subject of trance in general. Trance viewed from the outside, as in the case of one who is observing an individual who is in a state of trance, involves a psychological condition, and with our present evidence, involves also a physiological condition which can be identified by certain instruments which man has produced in recent years such as the encephalograph and the cardiograph. There is, thus, a certain subject matter here which is within the range of study by the physiologist and the psychologist. What do we mean by trance? That is not an easy question to answer. One in a state of trance has more or less departed from the ordinary state of consciousness, but his departure may not be so great that he is no longer aware of the objective world which surrounds us who live in animal bodies. I have heard there is a certain researcher in this field who has identified as many as fifty grades in the depth of trance, the lightest being that which exists when someone makes a suggestion to a group and the group follows the suggestion without any reflection whatsoever, just as an impulsive following of the suggestion of a leader; and at the deepest stage, it is a profound condition known as catatonic trance in which it is reported that the breath stops and the heart stops and that the body no longer has a metabolic process within it. It has been said that a body in such a condition may persist for an indefinite length of time without any decay and that even animals would not touch it if it were found in a forest. As to this, I can say nothing, only that it is so reported. Some of the states in which the yogis induce themselves, it is said, involves such a deep state of trance.

Accompanying the state of trance, there are various states of consciousness, and from the record it would appear that these states of consciousness reach from some of the most dark experiences imaginable, such as those which might belong to a hell world, and up to the most exalted states of a *nirvanic* type of consciousness. Therefore, the objective

fact of a state of trance as such determines in no way the affective or consciousness value of the consciousness which accompanies the state of trance. It may be an inferior consciousness or a highly exalted state of consciousness. Our concern is not with the physiological facts connected with trance or with the objective psychological interpretation of trance, but with certain states of consciousness which are connected with light trance; and by light trance, let me repeat, we mean a state of consciousness which is not completely severed from the objective world. The awareness of the objective world persists, but the orientation of the individual is to a quality of consciousness which is other than that given by the objective world.

There are forms of trance which have been an object of considerable study. In connection with hypnotism, a state of trance is produced which may reach to considerable depths, this has been studied to a considerable extent; also in connection with the phenomenon of mediumship, a state of trance is involved; and, finally, there are the pathological forms of trance such as those connected with epilepsy and certain pathological, cataleptic conditions. We are not here concerned with this particular part of the subject matter, but only with the forms of trance connected with yoga, or the breakthrough to transcendental states of consciousness, states which are unquestionably of the highest order known to man

What I know of the state of trance, I shall report from my own experience, and thus give the inside view. From August 7th, in the afternoon, 1936, when the breakthrough occurred until some time during the night between September 8th and September 9th of the same year, I was in a state of continuous light trance though I was not aware that this was so until certain experiences brought me out of this state and I was able to make the comparison between the normal state and the state of light trance. As to the value of the state, it was superlative. It was the great event of the whole life beside which I would regard all other events, all other achievements of the life preceding that date, as being of inferior importance—and that includes the whole of the academic experience and the experience of practical affairs. They are small beside the value of this period of thirty-three days. I made that valuation just subsequent to the coming out of the state and continue to persist in that valuation. Let no one have any doubt on this subject. I have been there, and I know.

There are no doubt psychologists, physiologists, and medical men who would disparage this state. Never having known it, they are, in fact, no more than learned ignoramuses and fools. No one can judge the value that is possible in such a state, who has not entered into it. Only when he has entered into it and participated in it can he know. For anyone else to judge it is to demonstrate that he is no more than a learned fool. There are some, indeed, who have studied the results of the mystic trance upon the character of the individuals who had them and have come forth with friendly judgments from the outside. Certain ones that I can name are as follows: John Dewey, Bertrand Russell, James H. Leuba, and two men named by James H. Leuba, a Dr. Coe and a Delacroix.¹ These men have concluded that the effect of the mystic experience, which involves trance necessarily, has had effects upon the lives of the individuals who had the experience which were highly desirable, that individuals had become more keen and

¹ Wolff meant to say, “. . . Coe and Delacroix.”

sensitive morally and have lived worthy lives. However, all of these five drew one conclusion with which I cannot agree, and that is that this is not a source of knowledge. They have maintained that the knowledge brought forth from the state is no more than the knowledge taken into the state. I know that to a degree and in certain cases this may be so. The very fact that a mystic who was brought up in a given religious persuasion tends to confirm the point of view which was impressed upon him before he entered the state does tend to lead to this conclusion. But while I found that true in connection with certain Realizations, I also have had the Realizations that produced a revolution in my philosophic orientation. I came forth from the fifth Realization with a point of view and a knowledge that was totally alien to anything that I had suspected as being true before. So, it is not true that new knowledge cannot be derived from this state. On the contrary, the most valuable knowledge of all can be derived only from these states.

During the thirty-three days of continuous light trance, I performed all the normal operations of bodily existence of one living in this world. I was fully aware of the environment at all times. To be sure, I was most of the time in a kind of meditation or a kind of withdrawn consciousness, but I could perform the normal simple operations and could engage in conversations. And after it was suggested to me around the tenth day that it might be advisable to write up the experience for the record, I undertook the task and I could perform the writing operations in it; and, in fact, that portion of *Pathways* which precedes "The High Indifference" was all written during this period. It is, thus, a combined state, and one could even draw the conclusion he was not in trance. But there were two events that demonstrated it was not the ordinary state of consciousness. The first was a trip to the neighboring city. There were certain purchases which my wife desired to make and so a trip was undertaken. I was the driver. This was a mistake. That trip was one of severe difficulty. We did manage to get through traffic without any accident, but it was a matter of very great difficulty; and from that experience, I know that no individual, unless he is proficient, should ever attempt to handle a piece of machinery, such as an automobile in traffic, unless his consciousness is extroverted and objectively concentrated, and that is not the condition that one is in when he is in light trance and if he does not come out of it, he should not attempt to drive a car. The second event that demonstrated I had been in a state of light trance was the fifth Realization itself, which drew me out of a profoundly subjective state to one that was intermediate between an objective, extraverted state and the subjective, introverted state. I then became fully competent in the extraverted or objective sense. This gave me a chance to contrast the latter state with the earlier period of thirty-three days, and I realized then that I had been continuously in a state of light trance.

How can an observer detect whether a given subject is in a state of light trance? The detection involves the observation of qualities that are relatively subtle. In one case, in particular, after the delivery of a tape, I observed a male subject who I detected at once was in such a state. His eyes gave the effect of a staring, of a looking away, as it were, from the immediate environment into something else. It was quite obvious, and he acknowledged that he was in a condition that was highly delightful. As he had to drive a car, I tried to draw him out, knowing from my experience that it was dangerous to drive a car in that state. But he resisted the idea. He simply did not want to come out of the state. He said he wanted to go to his home and abide in the state and study it. But, as in driving, particularly in traffic, the consciousness should be objectively very alert in order to

handle the complex external problems. Thus, it could be a condition in which one would be accident prone, and we felt that it was necessary to pull this subject out. Now, it was impossible to get him to cooperate at first. He didn't want to come out. It was only after two of us had worked upon him, and finally persuaded him that he should do so, that we succeeded in drawing him out. That same sort of thing has happened in several other instances. There is a universality of resistance to being pulled out of a state that is of manifestly superior value. It's like being in a magnificent garden and deliberately turning from that garden to go into an experience of a sort of desert world. You have to be willing to pull yourself down into a consciousness which you find is repugnant; and yet, this is necessary. It is a kind of step towards mastery where one can forgo a delight at will because it is the proper thing and even the necessary thing to do and to accept the ordinary state of consciousness, which by contrast appears as a painful state. To be willing and able to step from delight to a painful state is a kind of self-mastery.

A fellow worker and observer has stated that if one observes closely a subject who is in a state of light trance, and observes the eye, he'll find that the pupil is enlarged as contrasted to its normal condition. I have not been able to detect this as yet, as the enlargement is not substantial.

Now, we face the question of what is the state of consciousness that accompanies these induced trance conditions. For that purpose, I shall quote two or three examples of reports of such states. The first time that this occurred in an impressive way was in 1937 when I was giving a lecture in Chicago to a group of students. I had been at the blackboard demonstrating the process of self-analysis suggested by Sri Shankaracharya. I had intended this simply as a formal statement of the analysis to which the student should submit himself, but to my surprise I found that through the discussion of the analysis I had induced a very remarkable state of consciousness in myself. I found the body suddenly stiffening. With care and effort, I walked from the blackboard to the podium. I seemed to be standing in a pillar of force shaped like a cylinder which reached above my head and below my feet and which seemed to extend out from the body about as far as one could reach with the hands. The axis of the cylinder seemed to coincide with the spinal column. In that cylinder, there were forces ascending and descending at the same time. As I looked upon the audience, I could tell by their faces that they were not in a normal state of consciousness, and I asked them to report what experience they might have. I permitted this state of consciousness or dynamic orientation to last for such period as seemed reasonable, then I shut it off by a simple act of will, not any more effort being required than that of shifting a butterfly switch. The state slowly declined, somewhat like the flywheel that slows down slowly after the power has been removed. I shall attempt to read into the tape some of the reports that were made by those present that evening. Here is one that runs as follows:

We felt a mystic something as if all life stood still, when suddenly that moment of ecstasy broke through. A glorious yellow light, far too lovely to describe, crept about his head and shoulders, then down on either side. Soon the rosy hue above, our heaven for that night, turned to a radiant yellow, a beauteous heavenly sight. Electrified, alive for some moments it remained, as open handed I welcomed the freedom that I have gained.

Another example is as follows:

Friday evening I felt, first of all, very much uplifted. I felt as if the earth was receding. I also felt as if the air was charged with a great force. I had the feeling that ponderability had less power over me. I felt that I had a small degree of the Realization of the real meaning of what the real I is.

The following is a third example:

There was a sense of awe, and peace, and satisfaction, and stillness, and nearness like the hush of a new dawn. It seemed as if there was a soft covering, a blessing, a love and forgiveness of the Divine that included all as one.

Altogether, there were about two dozen reports from the group that was present that evening. No two of the reports gave exactly the same result, and this is important. If we were dealing only with suggestion, there would be a tendency for reports to all agree, but in this case each individual seemed to develop in his own direction; and this is an important point. An induction is not a trespass upon the individual's autonomy. It is simply a force that tends to arouse the form of consciousness which is indigenous to the individual himself. There is a good deal implied here. It does imply that there is a sort of psychic continuum in which we all live, so that we unconsciously influence others just by what we are and by what we think without formal communication. But while this affords a line of influence for all sorts of qualities whatsoever, those which are dark as well as those which are bright, it does give an opportunity for a glimpse of higher consciousness in which no manual means or chemical substance is employed to affect the consciousness of the individual. This point is of first importance. All use of manual aids and of chemical substances for affecting changes in consciousness are suspect. I have seen reports from such sources and the question very quickly arises, are these authentic glimpses of the authentic Light? There is something a bit of a shadowy nature in such reports as I have seen, suggesting that they are more in the nature of reflexes rather than the original insights themselves. What we have in these inductions is the effect of the action of the transcendental component. Ordinary mentation in our usual states of consciousness does not produce this effect.

Now, since that time in 1937 there have been many instances of experiences of this sort. I found that, however, they happen spontaneously; and once in recent years, I attempted to produce an induction deliberately. In other words, announced a meeting in which the attempt would be made, and there was present a roomful of individuals. I gave a lecture, not a taped lecture, but a direct lecture which was taped at the same time and is in our list of tapes.² Then we had a series of reports given afterwards, and among those reports there were those that revealed that there had been an authentic induction. In other words, it is possible to decide out here, here and now, to produce a lecture or a taped production intended to produce inductions, whereas, in most cases this happens spontaneously. It is in every case due to the action of the transcendental component that

² See the audio recording, "Induction Talk."

this takes place. It is a form of yogic practice, and it is one which has been the principle method that I have employed in this work. In general, in my experience in the field of yoga, the technical and formal processes that one finds in the texts have not been employed by me. I have experimented with them, but my experiments generally have not led to successful outcomes. On the other hand, inductions can be produced by very simple means, by the force of the voice or the force of the written concept, provided it is under the direction of the transcendental component. It is as though the concept becomes a cup which carries the quality of consciousness which tends to Awaken the individual who reads or hears. We have had reports from purely written material indicating that the same thing can happen without my being present personally. We have also had reports from the hearing of tapes when I was not present, and thereby proving that my personal presence was not necessary to the induction. We are here dealing with the central purpose of all religion, namely, the Awakening of man.