

Western Contribution to Yogic Method

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This tape will not be easy to understand. He who would be able to appreciate its bearings would have to have these three qualifications: first, several years of dedicated study in the field of mathematics; second, an equally extensive penetration into that discipline which is known as epistemology, and this would imply an acquaintance with the whole story of philosophy in order to understand how the epistemological problem arises; and third, he would have to have at least a fairly substantial acquaintance with that form of consciousness which becomes available when the Mystical Awakening takes place or when one has had what has been called Fundamental Realization by Sri Aurobindo, or has known Enlightenment. The qualification for understanding of this problem is thus threefold. One without this qualification could have only a partial understanding of the problem with which we are attempting to deal in this tape.

We shall first have to introduce certain definitions and assumptions. It is assumed, first of all, that there are three organs, faculties, or functions of cognition, namely, sense perception, conceptual cognition, and introceptual cognition. Generally in the history of philosophy, both Western and Oriental, only two of these functions or organs are generally recognized, namely, sense perception and conceptual cognition. In fact, the Buddhist logicians Dignaga and Dharmakirti are very emphatic upon this point. But as one goes through the history of Western philosophy, one finds that here also only these two have been given recognition. What I add and postulate is a third organ of cognition which I have designated as introception, and the principle of cognition involved in this is called "knowledge through identity." It is a process of knowing through the knower being identical with the known; that is, not standing simply in a relationship between the knower and the known as is true in both sense perception and conceptual cognition, but rather being identical with the subject matter. This is a kind of cognition that is completely different from sense perception and certainly completely different from the cognizer who is aware of concepts which are different from himself as cognizer. Does such a form of cognition as knowledge through identity exist? I have affirmed it in my writings, particularly in *Pathways Through to Space*, and it has been affirmed by Sri Aurobindo in his *The Life Divine*. It is grounded upon an inner experience for which I have employed the word *imperience* to differentiate it from sensuous experience. I would, thus, restrict the word experience to that form of cognition that involves the intervention of the senses.

The question naturally arises, what is the basis for affirming that a form of cognition such as that which has been called introception exists? I have dealt with this question at length in my writings and in my tapes and it is discussed at length by Sri Aurobindo. For the purposes of the present discussion, we shall not attempt to justify the assertion that there is such an organ of cognition. We will simply postulate that it is, and the hearer or reader is asked to start with that postulate and not here take up the question of its factuality. That question has been handled elsewhere.

We shall next define some of our basic conceptions, namely, mathematics, epistemology, and Enlightenment, or Realization, and Mystical Awakening. By mathematics I understand this subject in its broadest possible sense, not defined by subject matter of a particular mathematical discipline, but as a form of conceptual cognition. I affirm that any conceptual cognition that has become definitive, pure, and clear is mathematical. This is in conformity with the definition given by Williamson, who said in the ninth edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, “Any conception which is completely determined by a finite number of specifications is a mathematical conception.”¹ Mathematics, thus, is equivalent to determinate, clear, and pure conceptuality regardless of what the specific subject matter of a particular form of mathematics may be.

Second, what is epistemology? Epistemology is that discipline which is concerned with knowledge as a subject matter itself. It is akin to and ultimately fuses with psychology, but it is sufficiently different from psychology to be a discipline of its own identity. The problem of epistemology arose in history, as I have pointed out before, in the situation philosophy had attained in the hands of David Hume. This man had taken the postulates of the great empiricist John Locke and carried them rigorously to their logical conclusions, and the result was an absolute skepticism with respect to all knowledge. In other words, that if we assume that all knowledge comes from experience, then we could never know any such thing as order in nature or law in nature. Kant was awakened to this problem by the work of David Hume, as I have pointed out repeatedly heretofore, and introduced the conception that the knowing subject introduces forms into our experience that give them determinateness and reliability. In other words, we are not studying the world as it is in itself, or the universe as it is in itself, or the All as it is in itself—that which he called the *ding an sich*, or thing-in-itself—but we are dealing with a manifold of experience conditioned by the forms that the subject imposes upon them. Prior to Kant, we took our conceptions naively, and even tried to prove the existence and reality of God from the conceptual idea of God—a proof which Kant effectively demolished. Kant laid down this basic principle, that conceptions without perceptions are empty and perceptions without conceptions are blind.² But in as much as he recognized at that time, as was characteristic of other philosophers, only two organs or functions of cognition, namely, sense perception and conceptual cognition, his ultimate conclusions were that a metaphysical knowledge was impossible. Since a metaphysical knowledge would have to be a non-sensuous knowledge, and if concepts without percepts are empty, the supposed conceptual development in the metaphysical domain where there were no perceptions would necessarily be an empty exercise carrying no real knowledge value. This is a very important point. And in all serious thinking since Immanuel Kant, this is something to be held in mind and to be given serious attention.

¹ *The Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol. 15 (Chicago: Werner Company, 1894), 629:

Any conception which is definitely and completely determined by means of a finite number of specifications, say by assigning a finite number of elements, is a mathematical conception.

² Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), 93. The text actually reads: “Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind.”

Our third item requiring definition is that which is variously known as Mystical Awakening, Fundamental Realization, or Enlightenment. This is a way or state of consciousness which is characterized by being integral. I've already noted the fact that it involves an integration of the knower and the known so that an alternative designation is knowledge through identity. But it is integral in another sense as well. We may say that the different possibilities in our various modes of experience are divided into three fundamental aspects. These are cognition, affection, and volition. The state attained by this Awakening is marked by a complex which is a sense of supernal knowledge and at the same time an inconceivable delight, an affection which may be called by the Christian mystic, for example, as an overwhelming love of the Divine extending ultimately to an affection for all creatures, who are realized as simply aspects of that divinity; and in the more advanced stage of this Realization, it is also a state of a commanding kind of volition. It is possible at this latter stage to enter into the affective states of suffering and delight at will. It is possible to participate in the suffering of creatures, or of all creatures, and at the same time, or at an alternative time, to participate in the divine *ananda*.

This state is not a part of the actual imperience of all creatures. We posit that it is in principle potential for all creatures. But so far in the history of this humanity, it is the actual Realization of a very small portion of the human whole. The 99+ percent of humanity has not yet participated in this imperience, consequently, for him who stands outside the circle of this Realization, the question naturally arises, is it a fact? The building of the evidence for its factuality exists in a substantial literature, and I have attempted to make my own contribution to the confirmation that this is so. But in as much as it is not the knowledge of most human beings, it is therefore not our purpose here simply to develop again the evidence for its factuality, but to ask the hearer or reader to accept as a postulate that such a type of consciousness is and that it is in principle available to man when he has taken the appropriate steps for Awakening this door of consciousness.

I introduce, now, two further conceptions which will be defined. These are the conceptions of the mundane and the supermundane. The mundane is that zone of consciousness which covers our common experience as our normal, unrealized consciousness here in this world. The domain includes the whole field of popular experience and scientific experience. It ranges through, not only the ordinary experiences connected with life in this world, but the experience of the whole physical cosmos. It is coextensive with our sensuous comprehension. It is the domain available to us through sensuous cognition. It is that domain known to man while he is a living creature in this world, and unless he has had some degree of the imperience of Enlightenment, this is all that he truly knows. Beyond that gateway known as death, he has little or no knowledge. The mundane is this side of death. It is our common world. By the supermundane I mean that state or states of consciousness that extend beyond the cognition of a sensible cosmos. For most people this is not a domain of familiar knowledge and the question of its existence may very well arise, and as before, in a case of this kind, I ask the reader or hearer to accept as a postulate that such a domain exists for the purposes of this discussion. The evidence for its factuality has been handled elsewhere; it is simply, then, assumed for this discussion.

Now, a point may be made here more or less parenthetically, that by introducing the conception of introceptual cognition, we have a way of reaching beyond the limitations that Kant found imposed by a cognition which is limited to sense perception and conceptual cognition. I accept his determination that if we are limited to these two organs of cognition, a knowledge of a supermundane, or of the metaphysical, or of that which is truly transcendent is impossible; but if the third organ which I have called introception is awakened, we overcome this difficulty which is imposed by Kant's compelling analysis. Sense perception and cognition together are incapable of determining that there is a supermundane. Its factuality can be determined only by the awakening of another cognitive power. Now, the basis of all religion in the world lies in the belief, at least, if not the actual Realization, that another domain exists and that it is possible by the effort which we commonly regard as religious to enter into an authentic Realization of this domain. The fact of religion is not enough to prove its factuality, but the enormous strength of appeal upon the human being that is produced by the religious orientation is evidence that there may be something beyond. I affirm that by Enlightenment or Fundamental Realization proof of the factuality of this supermundane zone can be achieved, but that to the hearer is only an affirmation or testimony. For purposes of this discussion, therefore, I ask the hearer or reader to postulate that such a domain exists and that by the appropriate means Realization of it may be attained.

As a parenthetical remark, I wish to note here that I fully recognize that man is a great deal more than a cognitive entity, although, the emphasis of my work is upon the cognitive aspect of his total nature. This emphasis is for the reason that I am dealing with that form of yoga which is known as the yoga of knowledge. But man is in addition an affective being, a being that has affections such as the state of delight and such as the state of love, or more completely, as the states of delight and suffering, of love and hate, of anger and peace. And he is also a volitional being, a being who acts, who effectuates, who performs. These we may say constitute the great trinity of his three primary aspects, as we know him. I do not make a judgment that any one of these aspects is inherently superior to the other two, but recognize that all three are essential to his total being. He is a knower, a feeler, and a doer. But I develop the process of yoga here in connection with his cognitive side, as that is appropriate in the case of the yoga of knowledge. In the yoga of action, or *Karma* yoga, man as a doer is emphasized. In the yoga of *Bhakti*, or devotion, man as an entity of affections is emphasized. All these yogas are recognized and accepted by me. I merely emphasize the side of his nature that of this whole which is important for the yoga of knowledge.

We shall now apply a technique which is typical of processes in symbolic logic. This consists of taking a two-dimensional field and making configurations upon it which represent zones or delimited fields of our cognition. Thus, I shall use a square, or a rectangle perhaps more appropriately, to represent that domain which I have called the mundane. We will represent this in an ascending form as vertical, or if placed upon a piece of paper as reaching up towards the upper portion of the sheet of paper. One rectangle at the bottom will represent the mundane, or the zone of sensuous consciousness. We will then leave a space above this and introduce another rectangle which represents the zone of the supermundane, or, in other words, the metaphysical or transcendent; then a third rectangle overlapping these two, coming part way down into the lower rectangle and part way into the upper rectangle and enclosing a space between

those two rectangles. This will represent the zone of conceptual cognition. We shall designate these three rectangles as follows: the lower one representing the mundane order we will call rectangle "*P*," the initial letter of perception; the conceptual rectangle overlapping this, we shall call rectangle "*C*," '*C*' being the initial letter of conception; and the highest rectangle, representing the higher form of cognition called introception, we'll call rectangle "*I*." Now, the lower line where rectangle *C* intersects rectangle *P*, we will make a broken line; also, the line where rectangle *C* intersects rectangle *I* will also be a broken line, the broken line meaning this: that the degree to which conception can overlap perception remains indeterminate, and the same is emphatically true with respect to the degree that conception can overlap introception.

Now, I have left a zone between the rectangle *P* and rectangle *I*, and rectangle *C* overlaps this. This is the interpretation: the portion of rectangle *C*, or conception, which overlaps perception or sense perception, represents that form of cognitive thought and expression which deals with perceptual content, that is, sensational content. It covers the zone of our ordinary communication and our ordinary formulation and, as well, all the formulations of empiric science, since empiric science is a compound of sensuous perception, however technically developed by instrumental aid, combined with conceptuality. How deep this goes into the perceptual zone I leave indeterminate, it being assumed that there are aspects of perceptual consciousness not yet embraced by conceptual consciousness. The same applies in the interrelationship or overlapping portion of zone *C* and zone *I*. This means that portion of the supermundane that has been capable of representation conceptually. The portion of rectangle *C* which lies between the lowest rectangle and the highest represents pure conceptuality, the zone where conceptuality is restricted to the use of conceptions and is unconcerned with perceptions or introceptions. This is the zone in which is developed pure mathematics. And in conformity with Kant's determination that concepts without percepts are empty, this domain of formal, pure mathematics is form without substance, but carries the potentiality of being filled with substance. It's the zone of purely formal thinking, which in my opinion has a very proper place not only with respect to the zone of perception, but also with respect to the zone of introception in a potential way.

And here as another parenthetical remark, I will point out the applicability of this point. Riemann developed a form of non-Euclidean geometry purely as a formal exercise substituting for the Euclidean parallel axiom the assumption that no line could be drawn through a point parallel to a given line but assumed that all lines would intersect in a finite distance. It was a purely formal exercise and led to the development of a geometrical system that had no contradictions and, therefore, in the mathematical sense, exists. However, when Einstein faced the problem of a generalization of his theory of relativity, he found that this particular geometrical conception fitted his needs. It was not developed by Riemann with an eye to any practical or scientific usage; nonetheless, it existed when Einstein sought a generalization, mathematical generalization, and fitted his needs. That is why I regard this formal exercise in this zone as perfectly valid.

We, here, are not concerned with the zone *P* or the compound zone *PC*, the latter is the zone of all ordinary conceptual discourse, the exercise of language in all of its uses in the economic world, the social world, and also, in the scientific world. This zone includes all of empiric science, for empiric science is a combination of perceptual

cognition, however technically developed, and of conceptual cognition. Nor are we here concerned with the zone of pure conceptual cognition, the zone where pure mathematics is developed. Our concern is with the zone *I* and specifically with the subzone *CI*, the combination of conceptuality and introceptuality. To what extent is this possible? Not to an ultimate extent. Not everything in the introceptual zone can be formulated and communicated; only with difficulty can any of it be formulated and communicated.

In the history of Mystical Awakening or of yoga, many of those who have made attainments in this realm have not been competent in the field of conceptual representation, and the result is that they report an experience of great value, but are unable to say much of anything concerning it. They may report delight of such intense value that it transcends anything that may be known in the field of sensual experience or of pure conceptuality. They would value it above everything else; yet, concerning it they may be able to say very little as to its nature, if anything at all. If, however, conceptual skill is sufficiently developed, something can be said. One does not become absolutely inarticulate if the conceptual power is sufficiently developed. No doubt, the ultimate secret cannot be spoken. The ultimate, pure non-dual as it is in itself is beyond communication. That is admitted. But this I submit, that there is no hard fast line which one may reach in the ascension where suddenly all communication becomes impossible; rather, that border is to be defined this way: as akin to the summation of an infinite converging series.

Now, an infinite converging series is a series of an infinite number of steps which attains a finite limit. I will recall to your mind a very simple example of such a series which I have employed several times heretofore. It is a series of $1 + \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{8} + \frac{1}{16}$ and so on, the denominators of these fractions being the ascending series of powers of 2. We know that the sum of this series can never be greater than 2. We also know that it can be made to differ from 2 by less than any assigned quantity however small. So we speak of 2 as a limit which can never be attained by any finite number of steps however large. Now, in the purely numerical sense, the quantitative size of these steps become smaller and smaller until from the quantitative point of view, they become relatively insignificant. But I suggest this, that the meaning of these steps in terms of formulation, in the sense in which we are speaking, namely, the conceptual representation of an introceptual content, can be highly significant. This would mean that the ultimate secret can never be manifested, but there, at the same time, is no final step beyond which man cannot go into the approach of its formulation or manifestation. This means there is no end to the process of evolving in outward form, in cognizable form, of the involved; that there is no final word which cannot be transcended; that the journey of manifesting the unmanifest is unending; that the adventure of knowledge will never come to an end. There will be no final word ever spoken. This means that lying before us is the unending adventure of knowledge.

As an afterthought consider this: Shankara said *Brahman* is the sole reality and that the *Atman* is the status of the *Brahman* in creatures; and, all the world, all the universe of objects however vast, is but *maya*, an illusion. And to this I can testify that when the veil is lifted, all this vast domain, all that which has been called the mundane, appears as but a meaningless phantasmagoria, and that it, too, begins to vanish; even the memory of it begins to vanish.

Now, let us consider a certain symbolism for representing these relationships. I will introduce now certain conceptions that belong to the field of the transfinite. These were originally introduced by a Jewish mathematician by the name of Cantor and are known sometimes as the Cantorian numbers. These are numbers that have been called by the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, namely, *aleph*. That among the *alephs* we have first an \aleph_0 , generally called *Aleph-Null*; that is called also a denumerable infinite, by which is meant that there are enough integers to count all the elements of this transfinite, provided one took infinite time to do the counting. No matter how fast one counted, so long as the rate was finite, it would take infinite time. Still there are enough integers to count this transfinite. It is said that the sum total of all the algebraic numbers constitute this denumerable transfinite. Now, \aleph_0 if added to \aleph_0 equals \aleph_0 . \aleph_0 multiplied by \aleph_0 equals \aleph_0 . But if we raise \aleph_0 to the \aleph_0 power, we achieve a higher order of the transfinite, and that is called \aleph_1 . And beyond \aleph_1 , by the same process, we arrive at \aleph_2 and so on to \aleph_n or ultimately \aleph_∞ . It is believed by some mathematicians that if we add to the algebraic numbers the transfinite numbers it would require an *aleph*, or transfinite, of higher order than \aleph_0 to comprehend all of them. But this is not accepted by, it must be admitted, by all mathematicians. Kronecker, another Jewish mathematician, fought Cantor bitterly upon this subject.

Now we come to a possible application. Let us use *aleph* without a subscript to represent the whole hierarchy of the *alephs* with subscripts and substitute this *aleph* as a paradigm of *Brahman*; and for the *Atman* we will take the reciprocal of *aleph* which would be the reflex of the transfinite, or the very large, in the hierarchy of the very small—not nothing at all, but the order of the infinitesimal, the reflex infinitudes. And we would say then that the relationship between the *Atman* and the *Brahman* is the relationship of reciprocalness, that, however, they are essentially of one sameness. They are differentiated from all finite manifolds; that is the important point. Now for *maya*, which here is the same as the mundane order, the whole universe of objects, we will identify this with the mathematics of the finite manifolds. And here, in this symbolism the function or process whereby the individual attains Enlightenment is represented by the transition from the mathematic of finite manifolds to the mathematic of transfinite continua, and that in reality only the infinite is real and the finite is unreal. For this reason the conception that the yogic process is a process of growth is inadequate, for growth by finite steps could never attain a transfinite condition in finite time. Yoga, thus, is not growth, but to be viewed as an unveiling, that the domain of finitude is a *maya* and the domain of the transfinite is reality.