

Three Philosophic Perspectives

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I have decided to give an abstract of my philosophy in order to bring my position into clearer contrast with the implied philosophic position of Dr. Joy. There was already a brief statement given, but this will be more extensive and somewhat more elaborate.¹

When man has reached the point where his interest is no longer absorbed by the process of living and the protection of himself against the dangers of life, there comes a time when he begins to reflect and ask questions such as these: what is the ultimate nature of this universe; second, are the nature and processes of the universe intelligible, that is, rationally understandable; third, is life meaningful or is it only a senseless process; four, what is the process of life and to what end does it lead, if any? This is the beginning of the philosophic interest, and as answers to questions of this sort are found to be at least partially dependable, then there is born out of philosophy a scientific discipline. But in the broad sense, all science is a philosophical orientation. Part of it, no doubt, emerges as affording certain practical applications in connection with the living process, but the ultimate source is curiosity and interest in the All which surrounds us. There are many such questions, and the inquiring mind finds the concern with these questions the most important that life affords.

Now, in my own search along this line, I ultimately came upon *The Secret Doctrine* and *The Mahatma Letters*. Studying this material and contrasting it with other available material, it presented to me the best hope of finding questions of this sort. In no other literature that is available to the understanding of the Western mind have I found anything that compares with the promise and hope offered in the body of literature known as *The Secret Doctrine* and *The Mahatma Letters*. Whether this material is indeed true is a question I am unable to answer; but, as I have noted elsewhere, I took the position of assuming it *as* true and then observe what happens in the field of thought and life as a result of that assumption. As I have noted elsewhere, following this as a life course has brought to me the greatest values that I have known. It has led to a life work and a life that in the fundamental sense has been a happy and productive one. This is not a proof, by any means, but it is supporting evidence in the direction of what may be an ultimate proof. As one studies this literature, he finds evidence that there is an underlying intelligibility in all the processes that surround us.

Before developing my own position, I shall quote some fundamental material from *The Secret Doctrine* giving some commentary along the way so that the correlation between my own philosophy and the teachings here may be made clear.² I shall quote

¹ See the audio recordings "Philosophic Implications of Dialogue with Brugh Joy" and "Reflections upon the Dialogue with Brugh Joy," parts 1-7.

² See also the audio recordings "On Space," parts 1 and 2, and "Absolute Consciousness," parts 1 and 2.

from the “fundamentals”—these are to be found beginning on p. 42 of the first volume of *The Secret Doctrine*, third edition.³

The Secret Doctrine then, establishes three fundamental propositions:

1. An Omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless and Immutable PRINCIPLE, on which all speculation is impossible, since it transcends the power of human conception and can only be dwarfed by any human expression or similitude. It is beyond the range and reach of thought—in the words of the *Mandukya*, “unthinkable and unspeakable.”

Now, I’ll make a little commentary here:

It will be noted that it is not said that this principle is unknowable, otherwise nothing could be said, not even the pronouncement that it existed. But the implication here is that it is not known in the ways that are familiar to us, namely, through sense perception or conceptual cognition alone. I would suggest that this knowledge is of the type which I have called *knowledge through identity* and which Aurobindo called *knowledge by identity*. It is not our ordinary sense of knowing. It is rather intangible and cannot be communicated without interpretation, and so far as my experience goes, it is not completely communicable at all.

The end of the commentary.

Continuing with the quotation:

To render these ideas clearer to the general reader, let him set out with the postulate that there is One Absolute Reality which antecedes all manifested, conditioned Being. This Infinite and Eternal Cause—dimly formulated in the “Unconscious” and “Unknowable” of current European philosophy—is the Rootless Root of “all that was, is, or ever shall be.” It is of course devoid of all attributes and is essentially without any relation to manifested, finite Being. It is “Be-ness” rather than Being, Sat in Sanskrit, and is beyond all thought or speculation.

Commentary:

In the light of the statements made in these two paragraphs I would say that they demonstrate that it is not beyond all thought as stated in the last sentence, for here we have several important thoughts concerning it already made from which inferences can be drawn. Thus, for instance, it is said to be “Omnipresent.” That implies it is not present in one point or *loka* of space and not in another, and also not present in one portion of time and not in another. Also, it is asserted as being “Eternal” which gives it a character distinct from that which we commonly know in our experience in this world. Most that we experience in this world is time conditioned, but by the word “Eternal” we can infer it is not time conditioned. Also, it is “Boundless,” that is, is not restricted so that it is not

³ H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, Ill.: The Theosophical Press, 1893), 42-44.

present at one place and not at another, is not definable in a restricting sense, but only definable in the negative sense of not being restricted. And also, it is “Immutable,” that is, unchangeable, which definitely leads to the inference that it is not one thing at one time and different at another. This is a giving of characteristics which are thinkable even though in the negative sense. And then again, it is called, “the Rootless Root of ‘all that was, is, or ever shall be.’” It thus has, to us, the relation of being a Root. It therefore is not entirely without all relation to finite being, for, already, it is defined as being the Root of “all that is, was, or shall ever be.” Here is a question of language, of course, but we are getting an inkling of a certain character in what might be called negative terms, and that is a kind of thinking about it. Clearly this occupies a position in this system of philosophy that is analogous to that of the term ‘God’ in the anthropomorphic religions. It is a highly philosophical point of view rather than an essentially emotional orientation to a mother-father principle that is characteristic of mundane life. We are deriving an intimation of what it is by the stating of what it is not.

Continuing with the quotation:

This Be-ness is symbolized in the Secret Doctrine under two aspects. On the one hand, absolute Abstract Space, representing bare subjectivity, the one thing which no human mind can either exclude from any conception, or conceive of by itself. On the other, absolute Abstract Motion representing Unconditioned Consciousness. Even our Western thinkers have shown that consciousness is inconceivable to us apart from change, and motion best symbolizes change, its essential characteristic. This latter aspect of the One Reality, is also symbolized by the term “the Great Breath,” a symbol sufficiently graphic to need no further elucidation. Thus, then, the first fundamental axiom of the Secret Doctrine is this metaphysical One Absolute BE-NESS—symbolized by finite intelligence as the theological Trinity.

In this paragraph we find the ultimate Be-ness, which is the Rootless Root of all that is, is symbolized in two ways: first, as “absolute Abstract Space, representing bare subjectivity”; and second, as “absolute Abstract Motion representing Unconditioned Consciousness.” We’re dealing here with notions that are very difficult to understand. The notion of “Abstract Space” would have to be either a space of no dimensionality or of infinite dimensionality. The space conceived of as having a finite number of dimensions would not be an *abstract* space, but a *concrete* space—a space that defines certain limits, namely, limits of dimensionality. “Bare subjectivity” is not itself a possible conception; it is implied in the presence of any conception or awareness whatsoever. There is always *that* which is aware. Commonly we call it by the name I, in the form of the capital letter ‘I’. Now, one may faintly grasp the idea that this is like an “absolute Abstract Space”—abstract in the sense of no content whatsoever, but necessary if there is to be a content.

The difficulty in *jnana* yoga lies in this: how to realize the *Atman*, the true Self, without rendering it into an object, for it is purely subjective; and the Realization consists

in self-identification with this pure subjectivity and not with anything that is an object before consciousness. Actually, it seems to be that which is found by an implication in being aware rather than in being immediately conscious of it. You cannot be conscious of it because that would render it to be an object. It is a kind of slipping back behind the cognition; that may be the very heart of the difficulty in the yoga of knowledge.

Now, Consciousness as a whole, in its unconditioned form, is represented as “absolute Abstract Motion.” In an utterly static condition, there is no consciousness, but *abstract* motion is not *concrete* motion. It is like a Consciousness of Consciousness itself, away from or in isolation from any specific content whatsoever. One may, by subtle analysis, isolate this Consciousness of Consciousness, even in the presence of objects, by abstracting it out of the objects—ignoring them. “Unconditioned Consciousness” would be a Consciousness that has no specific character—the bare possibility of awareness without a specific content.

Now, it may make matters clearer by considering what kind of content would be present in a *concrete*, as opposed to an *abstract*, space. Our sensuous objects that lie before our sensuous consciousness seem to lie in a specific *concrete* space of three, four, or more finite dimensions. But if I take a more abstract conception such as the affective qualities *love* and *hate*, *anger* and *peace*, they do not lie in a *concrete* space of a finite number of dimensions. They are of another character. They would lie in what we might call this *abstract* space—a domain of awareness, if you please.

End of the commentary.

Continuing with the text:

It may, however, assist the student if a few further explanations are here given.

Herbert Spencer has of late so far modified his Agnosticism, as to assert that the nature of the “First Cause,” which the Occultist more logically derives from the Causeless Cause, the “Eternal,” and the “Unknowable,” may be essentially the same as that of the consciousness which wells up within us: in short, that the impersonal Reality pervading the Kosmos is the pure noumenon of thought. This advance on his part brings him very near to the Esoteric and Vedantin tenet.

Commentary:

The important point here lies in the phrase that the “First Cause, . . . may be essentially the same as that of the consciousness which wells up within us.” Now, here is where the thought in *The Secret Doctrine* ties in closely to my own presentation. The first fundamental of my system is: Consciousness is original, self-existent, and constitutive of all things. This means that the Root from which all comes is Consciousness itself in its primary sense, which is not to be confused with the relative subject-object consciousness which we operate with in our ordinary activities.

Continuing from the text:

Parabrahman, the One Reality, the Absolute, is the field of Absolute Consciousness, *i.e.*, that Essence which is out of all relation to conditioned existence, and of which conscious existence is a conditioned symbol. But once that we pass in thought from this (to us) Absolute Negation, duality supervenes in the contrast of Spirit (or Consciousness) and Matter, Subject and Object.

Commentary:

“Absolute Consciousness” as presented here appears to be identical with my own conception of *Consciousness-without-an-object-and-without-a-subject*, which is not to be viewed as the consciousness of any entity but a Consciousness which preexists all entities. Now, the point is made that our ordinary consciousness is a “conditioned symbol” of this Absolute Consciousness. Our ordinary consciousness is not the same as Absolute Consciousness, for it is a subject-object consciousness, a something which appears as a relationship between a knower and a known, whereas Absolute Consciousness is not a relationship, but, we might say, a matrix within which relational consciousness is possible. This Absolute Consciousness is just as much the psychological unconscious as it is our relative waking consciousness. In other words, the psychological unconscious is not a negation of consciousness as such, but a negation of a *kind* of consciousness, for from this psychologic unconscious contents can well up into the field of the relative consciousness in dreams and in waking fantasy thinking. Therefore, Absolute Consciousness is that which is both the psychologic unconscious and our relative consciousness. The unconscious in the psychological sense is not to be viewed as an absolute non-consciousness; but it is simply a consciousness which our waking relative consciousness ordinarily cannot contact. So from the perspective of that waking consciousness, it seems to be unconscious, but is not so from its own perspective. This is a kind of duality in the manifested state where we have the contrast of a relative consciousness and the psychologic unconscious because in all manifestation duality is present and necessary.

The text says that when we pass “from this (to us) Absolute Negation, duality supervenes in the contrast of Spirit (or Consciousness) and Matter, Subject and Object.” Here we have the point which I have made in my own philosophy that in the process of manifestation, the Consciousness that is the Root Consciousness, becomes divided so that there is a Subject and an Object. The Subject in this text is identified with Spirit, the Object with Matter, and that is entirely in conformity with the philosophy that I have produced. All Matter is merely the Object of Consciousness. It is not a self-existent, non-conscious existence.

Continuing with the text:

Spirit (or Consciousness) and Matter are, however, to be regarded, not as independent realities, but as the two symbols or aspects of the Absolute, Parabrahman, which constitute the basis of conditioned Being whether subjective or objective.

We have here given a definitive meaning for the word ‘Spirit’. It is none other than Consciousness, as contrasted to Matter, which is the object; and they are not two independent existences, but “two symbols or aspects of the Absolute.”

Proceeding with the text:

Considering this metaphysical triad as the Root from which proceeds all manifestation, the Great Breath assumes the character of Pre-cosmic Ideation. It is the *fons et origo* of Force and of all individual Consciousness, and supplies the guiding intelligence in the vast scheme of cosmic Evolution. On the other hand, Pre-cosmic Root-Substance, (Mulaprakriti) is that aspect of the Absolute which underlies all the objective planes of Nature.

Commentary:

It is to be noted here that “Spirit (or Consciousness) and Matter” are not to be regarded as independent realities but as two symbols or aspects of the Absolute. We have, thus, two parallel processes, as it were, in our symbolism. They both originate in the Absolute, or in Absolute Consciousness—one objective, the other subjective—but they are not separate, but only appear to be separate. There is something that must tie them together.

Now, going on with the text:

Just as pre-Cosmic Ideation is the root of all individual Consciousness, so pre-Cosmic Substance is the substratum of Matter in the various grades of its differentiation.

Out here, our individual consciousness stands in contrast to that which we call Matter, but the burden of the whole statement here is to the effect that these both abide in Absolute Consciousness, or Parabrahman.

Continuing with the text:

Hence it will be apparent that the contrast of these two aspects of the Absolute is essential to the existence of the Manifested Universe. Apart from Cosmic Substance, Cosmic Ideation could not manifest as individual Consciousness, since it is only through a vehicle, [or] (*upadhi*), of matter that consciousness wells up as “I am I,” a physical basis being necessary to focus a Ray of the Universal Mind at a certain stage of complexity. Again, apart from Cosmic Ideation, Cosmic Substance would remain an empty abstraction, and no emergence of Consciousness could ensue.

Commentary:

If we think of the term ‘Absolute’ that appears in the first sentence of this quotation as Absolute Consciousness, then the Manifested Universe depends upon the division into Cosmic Ideation and Cosmic Substance, and these two are necessary in order that a Manifested Universe should exist. This implies there can be no universe if

there is no consciousness in any sense whatsoever; but to be manifested and to have a sense of individual Consciousness, there must be a combination of these two principles. The idea that “I am I,” this particular individual, is dependent upon this combination. The individual is, thus, not an eternal entity, as it were, but the resultant of the combination Cosmic Ideation and Cosmic Substance. But this does not mean that simply through the process of ordinary death one ceases necessarily to lose the sense of “I am I,” but rather that there can be a possibility of a continuation of that “I am I” through the ordinary disruption of death. It ceases in a larger cosmic process where we all fuse in the ultimate Absolute Consciousness. And, again, apart from Cosmic Ideation, Cosmic Substance would remain an empty abstraction. In other words, the idea of a non-conscious physical universe is an empty abstraction, and there could not be any such existence. Existence, in the last analysis, depends upon the root principle of Absolute Consciousness.

Proceeding with the text:

The Manifested Universe, therefore, is pervaded by duality, which is, at it were, the very essence of its *EX*-istence as Manifestation. But just as the opposite poles of Subject and Object, Spirit and Matter, are but aspects of the One Unity in which they are synthesized, so, in the Manifested Universe, there is “that” which links Spirit to Matter, Subject to Object.

Commentary here to the point that duality is “. . . the very essence of the *EX*-istence as Manifestation.” Apart from duality, we have Essentiality Unmanifested, and Subject and Object, Spirit and Matter, are simply two poles of the One Unity; but in the Manifested Universe there must be “that” which links Spirit to Matter, Subject to Object. And this something is now about to be introduced as the principle of force or energy, energy being the connecting link.

Again quoting from the text:

This something, [necessary for connecting Subject and Object, Spirit and Matter] at present unknown to Western speculation, is called by Occultists Fohat. It is the “bridge” by which the Ideas existing in the Divine Thought are impressed on Cosmic Substance as the Laws of Nature. Fohat is thus the dynamic energy of Cosmic Ideation; or, regarded from the other side, it is the intelligent medium, the guiding power of all manifestation, the Thought Divine transmitted and made manifest through the Dhyān Chohans, the Architects of the visible World. Thus from Spirit, or Cosmic Ideation, comes our Consciousness, from Cosmic Substance the several Vehicles in which that Consciousness is individualized and attains to self—or reflective—consciousness; while Fohat, in its various manifestations, is the mysterious link between Mind and Matter, the animating principle electrifying every atom into life.

Commentary:

At last the picture emerges as to how a Manifested Universe is in principle possible. We find that there are three primary components, as follows: first, there is the principle of Absolute Consciousness, the universal matrix of all that is in the Essential as contrasted to the Manifested sense, and as developments under this—pre-Cosmic Ideation, Cosmic Ideation, and, finally, individual conceptual ideation. Second, there is the principle of Mulaprakriti, or Root Matter, which is the Object derived from Absolute Consciousness, or Parabrahman, ultimately. This is the noumenon of Matter—the physical universe that appears before us and also including subtle manifestations of objectivity that are not realized by our outer or gross sensuous consciousness. And finally, a third element which is that which unites the Ideational Consciousness with the Material Universe, namely, Fohat, which represents all that's implied by the principle of energy or force. This last, then, is in a certain sense a derivative principle and not here viewed as the most primary principle of all. As in my own system, the system here gives to consciousness, primacy.

Now, we can see that it is possible, as one views this total complex, to take three perspectives, namely, the perspective of consciousness, the perspective of the object or matter, and the perspective of dynamism, energy, or force. And, actually, historically we find that there are various schools of philosophy which orient themselves to one or another of these three perspectives. Thus, with respect to the object or matter, we have the various schools of Realism, including Materialism among them. Then in the field of dynamics or force, we have the various schools oriented to the energetic principle, like Voluntarism, as in the case of Schopenhauer, or Vitalism, as in the case of Bergson. And finally, we have the various schools that are oriented to consciousness, either in the sense of a primary asserting of the point of view of *that* which is conscious and of consciousness itself. This was represented by the school of Idealism, which has many representatives, and of Introceptualism, which is the name I've given to my own perspective, which is very close to Idealism but differs in the following respect: the Idealism proper orients to *that* which is conscious rather than to consciousness itself. This school evolved out of the critical Idealism of Immanuel Kant and has various representatives manifesting subdivisions of this. Thus there is the subjective Idealism of Fichte, who followed Immanuel Kant immediately; aesthetic Idealism of Schelling, who was oriented to the aesthetic side or the sensuous side; the rational Idealism of Hegel; and the voluntaristic Idealism of Schopenhauer. In as much as my own orientation was to consciousness itself, as in the basic sense of *Consciousness-without-an-object-and-without-a-subject*, it was not quite the same as Idealism so I invented a term to represent it, namely, 'Introceptualism'.

Now, it is possible to take any one of these three points of view and give primacy to one of the three principles that are here laid down. As I study the statements made by Dr. Joy, he seems to be oriented primarily to the energetic principle, or the principle of energy or force, and tends to view development of ideation as derivative from this. That gives a very different perspective from the one which I present wherein I give primacy to the principle of consciousness and view all energetics, as well as the object or matter, as standing in a derivative position. And this is carried out practically in giving to the principle of ideation primacy with respect to all energetics rather than viewing ideation as

the child of energetics which is the position which seems to develop in the tapes giving the discussion between Dr. Joy and myself. In this way, I think I have succeeded in clarifying the difference in orientation between us. The orientation I have given seems to be quite in harmony with the position put forth in this portion of *The Secret Doctrine*.

There is one important point that should be noted here. I did not derive my philosophy from a study of this portion of *The Secret Doctrine*. It grew out of a Realization, and thus serves, to a degree, as a confirmation of the statements made in this portion of the text.