

Reflections upon the Dialogue with Brugh Joy

Part 7 of 7

Franklin Merrell-Wolff

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I wish at this time to consider, in the form of a tape, certain points emphasized by Dr. Brugh Joy in the tape discussions which took place last year.¹ What I seek to achieve is a differentiation between the processes enunciated by Dr. Joy as contrasting to processes emphasized by myself. There is no question here as to the validity of one of these points of view and the invalidity of the other; rather, the point I would make is this: that there are different ways of approaching the problem of how Liberation is attained. There exists in the world different ways of viewing this, some of them contrasting strongly. And in particular, the way enunciated by the Zen Buddhists contrasts rather strongly with that enunciated by Sri Shankaracharya. Much that has been affirmed by Dr. Joy seems to be in harmony with the position presented by the Zen Buddhists, whereas, I myself take a position which is much more consonant with that of Sri Shankaracharya. It's entirely possible that both ways are right ways given the appropriate individual: for one man the Zen way may be the right way, for another the way enunciated by Shankara, or still other ways that have been put forth, say, in the Bhagavad-Gita, or in the writings of Sri Aurobindo, or of Patanjali, to name a few. What I wish to do is to define my own position in such respects as it contrasts with the position enunciated by Dr. Brugh Joy

Among the various points emphasized by Dr. Joy in the discussions there are certain ones that are of particular interest for the present purpose. These are four in number and I will list them: first, there is a very heavy emphasis of the importance of experience to the extent of implying that the authority of experience is unconditional with respect to any philosophic conceptual statement; second, there is presented the view that the conceptual order is only a scaffolding relative to the experiential order; third, there is throughout the discussions, a heavy depreciation of the function of judgment—nonjudgmental consciousness is repeatedly emphasized; and fourth, mathematics was viewed as being only of descriptive value. I shall deal with these questions at some length.

First, as to the meaning of experience: it is in general that which we derive *immediately*; whereas, conceptual thought is *mediate* consciousness or consciousness operating upon mediated material. It is not immediate. This is the distinction that generally applies. Now, in ordinary philosophy, both Western and Eastern, there generally has been an identification of two functions, faculties, or organs of cognition, namely, sense perception and conceptual cognition. And in fact, in the case of the logical Buddhists, Dignaga has made it virtually an aphorism, which he placed on the outside of his book, that there were two such functions and only two. This position has, however, been questioned by Sri Aurobindo and he has presented the idea that there are several such functions of cognition. In my own case, I found it necessary to introduce a third

¹ See the audio recordings, "Dialogue with Brugh Joy," parts 1–21.

function, which I called “introception,” and instead of referring to introceptual cognition as *experience*, I introduced a coined word—‘imperience’. Thus, that which is given by sense perception and sensuous action—the interaction of the affections and so forth—is experience and is immediate. The introception, on the other hand, is applied to those states which are realized in trance, at least in that form where the knowledge is neither sensuous nor conceptual, but based upon the principle of *knowledge through identity*. Both the sensuous knowledge and the introceptual knowledge are immediate; the conceptual knowledge is mediate—these distinctions are important.

Now, in my own work my treatment of experience is restricted in this way. I do not regard it as always authoritative, but I do regard the introceptual cognition or imperience, as authoritative. I do not know with certainty whether Dr. Joy uses “experience” in the broad sense as including all immediate knowledge, but drawing a conclusion from the context of the tapes, I have the impression that he does so. Now, this means that we have to consider the sense in which we are speaking. If Dr. Joy is using the word ‘experience’ in the comprehensive sense, then the statements in the tape virtually imply that all knowledge comes from experience, and at once we are confronted with a problem that occupied the thought of Western philosophers from the late portion of the 17th century far into the 18th century. And the problems that grew out of this point of view are well known. I will proceed to give a brief discussion of them.

The theory that all knowledge comes from experience was first enunciated in the Western philosophy by John Locke, who lived from 1632 to 1704, and published his remarkable essay in 1690.² This point of view stood in contrast to the position maintained by Descartes, Leibniz, and Christian Wolff on the continent, these men maintaining that there were such things as innate ideas, that is, innate conceptual knowledge entities. The thesis of John Locke was carried on by Bishop Berkeley of Ireland and David Hume of Scotland. But David Hume was a keen logician, and he showed that if all our knowledge comes from experience and from no other source, then we would have no knowledge of law. In fact he said that if we saw the sun rise a million times we would have no basis of assurance that it would rise tomorrow. The empiric knowledge gave you only fact but no such thing as necessity or of law operating in the universe. This was a conclusion that aroused Immanuel Kant from what he called his “dogmatic slumbers,” and as a result a door was for opened for the entertaining of the idea that we could have real knowledge in the sense of knowledge of law, which after all means that we are not restricted to mere empirically determined fact, but that we can know the interconnection between facts. He pointed out in his introduction that the conclusions reached by David Hume would imply that mathematics was impossible; yet mathematics is a fact. Applied mathematics is a fact that is of empiric or sensuous importance. By means of it, we are able to build structures such as bridges, machines, buildings that will stand, and we can know with reasonable assurance before construction that they will stand, and this in a sense is an empiric verification of mathematical determination.

² John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London: Thomas Basset, 1690).