

Challenge to the Concept of the Unconscious

Part 1 of 2

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I welcome all those present, both seen and unseen, to the Convention of 1981.

Last year I was reading in Dr. Jung's *Integration of the Personality*, and came upon a statement which I found positively shocking. It was to this effect, "No doubt, the intellect is the devil . . ."¹ That led to the development of four tapes that were given during that Convention in which I took a position contrary to this statement, for if the intellect is identical with the principle of evil, then he who would seek to walk in the path of righteousness would have to eschew all those capacities, and so forth, that are rendered possible by the intellectual or conceptual principle. That would include all science, all philosophy, all mathematics, and all that is rendered possible by these disciplines, which would imply the elimination of our technological culture. So I challenged this position, and I suggested that the truer interpretation was that given in *The Secret Doctrine*, namely, that the intellectual principle is introduced into the constitution of humanity when the evolution of nascent man, in essentially an animal form, had reached a proper stage known as an ape-like creature but not an ape; and that by this superimposition, man *qua* man became an entity that was more than an animal and was not a product of mere animal evolution. This thesis was developed through a series of four tapes.²

In further readings in the same volume, I came to a statement which I must question just as insistently. This statement is to be found in a paragraph within the book on *The Integration of Personality* starting at the bottom of p. 25, and I shall read the pertinent paragraph into the tape:

What I have said about the unconscious may give an approximate idea of what is meant by that term. Coming now to the problem of individuation, we see that we are confronted with a rather extraordinary task: the psyche consists of two incongruous halves that should properly make a "whole" together. One is inclined to think that the ego-consciousness is capable of assimilating and integrating the unconscious; one hopes, at least, that such a solution is possible. But, unfortunately, the unconscious is really unconscious; it is unknown. And how can you assimilate something unknown? Even if one has a pretty complete idea of his anima and of other such figures, he has not yet sounded the depths of the unconscious. One hopes to dominate the unconscious, but the past masters of this art of domination—the yogis—wind up with samadhi, an ecstatic condition that seems to be equivalent to an unconscious state. The fact that they call our

¹ Carl, G. Jung, *The Integration of the Personality* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, Inc., 1939), 126.

² See the audio recordings, "Is the Intellect the Devil?," parts 1-4.

unconscious the universal consciousness, does not change things in the least: in their case the unconscious has devoured the ego-consciousness. They do not realize that a “universal” consciousness is a contradiction in terms, since exclusiveness, selection, and discrimination are the root and essence of all that can claim the name of consciousness.

A “universal” consciousness is logically identical with unconsciousness. It is true that an accurate application of the methods of the Pali-canon, or of the Yogasutra, produces a remarkable extension of consciousness. But the contents of consciousness lose in clearness of detail with increasing extension. In the end, consciousness becomes vast but dim, with an infinite multitude of objects merging into an indistinct totality—a state in which the subjective and objective are almost completely identical. This is all very well, but scarcely to be recommended anywhere north of the Tropic of Cancer.³

There is a good deal here that I find questionable. First of all, consider the state of *samadhi* and Dr. Jung’s viewing it as equivalent to an unconscious state; hardly would anyone agree with that who has had some acquaintance with this state—and I am one who has known a state of Consciousness which fits the definition of *samadhi* as given in the literature and has had effects that reach well beyond the ranges of ordinary experience. Certainly with respect to that state of Consciousness which broke out in the middle of the afternoon on August 7, 1936, the state was anything but a dim kind of consciousness, but on the contrary an intensely luminous consciousness. But it was a Consciousness not concerned with content in the way that perceptual or conceptual consciousness are respectively concerned with sensible objects and with conceptual ideas. It was more like a Field Consciousness that carried the essence of the resolution of all problems. And the light-value, namely, the “Consciousness-value,” instead of being dim was positively brilliant, but not in the sense of a sensible consciousness.

In the book dealing with the states called Cosmic Consciousness written by Maurice Bucke, there are instances given where the sensible consciousness was very strong, as in the case of St. Paul on the road to Damascus, and in the case of St. John of the Cross, and, in a measure, true also of the experience reported by Maurice Bucke as his own where at first he thought there was a fire in the vicinity and then discovered that it was subjective. What I knew had intense light-value, and light may be equivalent to Consciousness-value, but not a sensible light.

I took this up with a Sage and he said that if in this type of imperience the mind is prepared to assimilate what comes into the Consciousness, then there is no sensible light. In other words, sensible light is the unassimilated overflow, and in the case of Saul, who became after this experience Paul, in as much as he was persecuting the very movement that he later so greatly served, there is every reason why there should be a substantial spillover in terms of sensible light. But make no mistake about it; it is in no sense a dim consciousness. And as later Jung speaks of the objects, and so forth, it does not have objects in our ordinary sensible sense of mountains, trees, houses, and the like,

³ Jung, *The Integration of the Personality*, 25-26.

nothing of that kind whatever, nor even ideas that are the characteristic components of conceptual consciousness, and yet it was the ultimate answer to all the deep questions that plague the soul of man. It led to the knowledge that all is well in the inner depths, and that all problems become ultimately answered, but not in the language of the intellectual mind or of sensual art. To communicate anything of this kind of Realization takes skill, and in the ultimate sense the last meaning of it cannot be communicated. No one might produce volumes.

The word ‘unconscious’, I find also to be unsatisfactory as a designation of a psychical state or quality. Sri Aurobindo has challenged this conception also, and has suggested that what we are dealing with is different *ways* of consciousness, and with that I would heartily agree.⁴ What it would mean is this: that with respect to one way of consciousness another way may be unconscious; and in our general experience, is so. But to imply that that which Jung calls the unconscious, is in fact unconscious to itself is something I do not accept at all. The position of my philosophy in this respect is quite definite. But here we’re dealing with a question of imperience.

And let me put in a footnote at this point concerning this term, which is a coined word by someone else. I practice in the use of the word ‘experience’ the restriction of it to sensible experience, but when one deals either with an introceptual or a conceptual immediacy, I don’t use the word experience, but the word ‘imperience’. Like experience, this state or movement is immediate, not derived by reflection. A state of *samadhi* is immediate and even more so than sensuous experience since sensuous experience depends upon the mediation of the senses; the *samadhi* Consciousness does not, so it is much more completely immediate. But there is a very important difference between sensuous immediacy and introceptual immediacy, and for that reason I use different terms. The end of the footnote.

There is another point of diversion from the statement of Dr. Jung which I regard as being of major importance. To bring this out, I shall quote again from the large quotation that I made in the beginning:

The fact that they [the yogis] call our unconscious the universal consciousness, does not change things in the least: in their case the unconscious has devoured the ego-consciousness. They do not realize that a “universal” consciousness is a contradiction in terms, since exclusiveness, selection, and discrimination are the root and essence of all that can claim the name of consciousness.

Now, here I shall have to demur. First of all, I do not regard consciousness or the determination of a state as being conscious or unconscious as a *logical* determination, but a determination of *fact*, and, therefore, it is meaningless to speak of

⁴ Aurobindo Ghose, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, vol. 20 of the *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centennial Library* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, 1970), 370:

What we call unconsciousness is simply other-consciousness; it is the going in of this surface wave of our mental awareness of outer objects into our subliminal self-awareness and into our awareness too of other planes of existence. We are really no more unconscious when we are asleep or stunned or drugged or “dead” or in any other state, than when we are plunged in inner thought oblivious of our physical selves and our surroundings.

contradiction in that connection. Contradiction is a matter of logic; whether I am conscious or not is a matter of fact. However, this may throw some light upon the way in which Dr. Jung is employing his terminology, and it may be a different way from that which I derive from my reading of him. That possibility must be considered as relevant. Now, in determining that a state is conscious or unconscious is a question of empiric fact. No doubt, the principle of contrast must be present or there could not be a recognition of difference of state.

Now, when he says that the universal consciousness swallows up the ego-consciousness, it is not necessarily true. Again, I speak from my own imperience. In those days when I was seeking the breakthrough which is commonly known as Realization or Enlightenment, I was aware of the fact, as a result of my readings, that it was associated with the psycho-physiological condition of trance. I also knew from my reading that it is possible to become locked-in to a trance state. In the biography of Ramakrishna, it is stated that he was so locked-in for a period of six months, and as the state was not fully catatonic, namely, such as had no biological process whatsoever, food had to be put into him, and this the disciples did. Knowing that a locked state was possible, and in as much as I did not have with me a guru competent to handle my own operations and to draw me out of the state if necessary, I was concerned with the problem.

I spoke of this to the Sage I referred to before, who was not my guru, and he said that one could handle this problem by suggesting to himself that before going into such a trance that he would come out of it in two hours. But I was not satisfied with this. I was a little inclined to question its efficacy in my own case. But when I entered into the state on the 7th of August 1936, I found available a process that previously I did not know existed, and that was a process of dividing the consciousness so that the ordinary ego-consciousness that was aware of the world about—of the house that was behind me, and of the trees that were before me, and the garden, and of all the other objects—that became separated from another way of consciousness that went through the deep state of Realization. And furthermore, the first part of ordinary ego-consciousness stood on the sidelines, as it were, with the power to record what was transpiring. So the ordinary consciousness, which Dr. Jung apparently calls the ego-consciousness, was not consumed or completely set aside, but functioned on the sidelines. This is a technique that I highly recommend if one is able to employ it. I had had no practice bestowed upon me or taught to me involving this practice. It seemed to break forth of itself, but I found it very valuable. In recent days there have been situations where it has been quite important. It seems to render deep trance unnecessary. To be sure, the Consciousness which is Realization or Enlightenment is a kind of Consciousness that normally is associated with trance, but I found that it was possible to use this other technique, and I do recommend it.

Connected with the state which I have called either Realization or Enlightenment, there is in addition to Consciousness, which is luminous in an extreme measure, there is associated a quality commonly known as *ananda*, and this is defined as bliss, joy, felicity, happiness. As I imperienced this, it was a far more delightful state than anything that I had ever known or ever heard of in the field of ordinary experience. In fact, it even had the effect of making the experiences which we call pleasure to seem like a less grievous kind of pain to have to endure them. Its value is beyond my capacity to define it. It is most utterly rich. I can see very easily how the yogi could be tempted to abandon himself

to it and forget all the suffering creatures in the world. Actually, in this state I found that it was difficult to believe that there was such a thing as suffering creatures anywhere. But these states do not last forever. One comes out of them. And if it is important for him to maintain a physical body whereby he can live here, then it is well that he should not be in these states for too long a time, for I found though I felt wonderful in the state, when I came out of it there was a deep fatigue spread throughout the physical body. Not a gross muscular fatigue, but a subtle kind of fatigue that was more profound than any other kind of fatigue that I had known before. I found that it was possible to reduce the state's intensity, and I did so reduce it in subsequent imperiences of it until I finally reached a point which the gross physical body could endure without the symptom of deep fatigue. But at this point the intensity of the state was so small that I felt a profound disgust with the limitations of a gross physical body. However, I have in my practices since, used the principle of restraint in the participation of any *ananda*.

In this connection, I had been told by one who is trained in the Jungian psychology that there are Realizations known in India that cause death in three days. I can well believe that, from my experience of what I would call a modest development of the *ananda*. There is a tendency in one when in such a state to want to open himself to its full manifestation, and I can easily see how that might destroy a gross physical body. To be sure, he would depart, as it were, in what we might call a blaze of light and rich delight. He would not for himself regret the losing of a gross physical body which was proving to be a damper on his rich imperience. But if he is to bring some message, some aid, to this suffering world, then an outer vehicle is necessary; so for this larger end, it seems right that one should restrain himself in the experience of the rich *ananda*.

In his writings Dr. Jung frequently skirts and refers to Eastern yoga, particularly in the Indian form. This is natural in as much as yogic discipline deals with the psyche, as does also Western depth psychology. But there is a very important difference in the purpose which is being followed in the Eastern yoga, on one hand, and the depth psychology of the West. One finds in the volume *The Integration of Personality* a continual emphasis of the process of bringing about *wholeness* in the psychical sense. In fact, it has been pointed out to me that the end of depth psychology, unlike Western religion, is not oriented to goodness, but to wholeness—a completeness in the psychic life of the individual human being here in this world. On the other hand, the yogic discipline is oriented to a departure from this world, in the sense of the whole outer cosmic existence, into another domain which is not badgered by the problems and suffering that so many of us know here. Thus, there is a similarity in the sense of dealing with psychical material in the two disciplines, but the objectives are quite diverse. For my part, my orientation follows that of East Indian yoga, particularly with respect to the specific orientation of Sri Shankaracharya. Nonetheless, in reaching out to an understanding of the problem of Western man, I have long devoted much attention, even a principal attention, to the psychological developments of the West.

Now, there are different psychological interests. The earliest form of it, which begins with Fechner, is a purely scientific approach for the purposes of understanding the psyche, not in the sense of a special interest in therapy, of making man more adjusted to his world. My own early academic experience in psychology was in this field of a more or less pure scientific interest. But since that time there has been a development in psychology which has called itself depth psychology, which is in major degree oriented

to the therapeutic problem. How can man get along with himself? How can neurosis and psychosis be cured? This of course is a specialized interest rather than the generalized psychological research of the early days of Fechner, Wundt, Titchener, and the rest. But, when we make a study of Oriental yoga, we find that in a profound sense it deals also with the therapeutic problem. How can the suffering of man and the ignorance of man be cured is the ultimate question of the yogic penetration. There is thus a certain similarity. But there are very important differences, not only as to method, but as to goal. Western psychology, in this therapeutic sense, seems to aim always at bringing about an adjustment between man and his world, as well as with himself, so that he can live here in a reasonably happy and effective sense. On the contrary, Eastern yoga aims at a departure from that which it regards as essentially *maya* or illusion. That means departure from world relationships, world action, all of this that makes up the principal subject matter, in fact, of our material science. This is not true of all Eastern proficients, but it is predominant among the older Eastern proficients.

Now, it is characteristic of this difference that Jung calls his book *The Integration of Personality*—the making of a completed, wholistic, empiric entity in this world. The self is a compound, as the term is used by Dr. Jung—quite contrary to the Self or *Atman* of Sri Shankara. For the latter, the Self is not a complex, but rather pure subjectivity, of which concrete knowledge in the direct sense, is really impossible. It stands more as an implication which renders our experience and our thinking here possible, rather than an object before consciousness. But as I study Jung and find him using also the same term, the ‘self’, it seems to be a complex subject matter, a somewhat which can be analyzed and so forth; and that what is sought is a rounding out of that self so that it may be balanced in all respects.

The problem, thus, as envisaged by our Western proficients as contrasted to the Eastern proficients is quite difference in objective. I find, for myself, the Eastern way to be the more profound, the more easily grasped essentially, the more attractive, and even having something like a well-nigh mathematical purity in it. But when I look at the complex conception of the self as it appears in Western psychology, it is not essentially simple. It is complex and devious; and we even can seriously consider how much unrighteousness has to be added to righteousness to render one whole. That’s very foreign, certainly to the yoga of Shankara, for one would say of it that it is preeminently a way of righteousness. I don’t find myself in sympathetic accord with a notion of wholeness that implies an appropriate mixture of righteousness with unrighteousness. The other, the Eastern way, which involves the withdrawal from all the *mayavic* and ugly mess of Western evil and of worldly evil and confusion—a thing not desirable, but something to be departed from. But I must admit that this is the easy way and that it is pretty selfish to depart from the miasma of human, agonal suffering.