

The Philosophy of Consciousness Without an Object

A Discussion of the Nature of Transcendental Consciousness

by Franklin Merrell-Wolff

Part 5 of 25

PART I

The Ground of Knowledge

CHAPTER 2

A Mystical Unfoldment

(continued)

The Event came after retiring. I became aware of a deepening effect in consciousness that presently acquired or manifested a dominant affective quality. It was a state of utter Satisfaction. But here there enters a strange and almost weird feature. Language, considered as standing in a representative relationship to something other than the terms of the language, ceased to have any validity at this level of consciousness. In a sense, the words and that which they mean are interblended in a kind of identity. Abstract ideas cease to be artificial derivatives from a particularized experience, but are transformed into a sort of universal substantiality. The relative theories of knowledge simply do not apply at this level. So “Satisfaction” and the *state* of satisfaction possess a substantial and largely inexpressible identity. Further, this “Satisfaction,” along with its substantiality, possesses a universal character. It is the value of all possible satisfactions at once and yet like a “thick” substance interpenetrating everywhere. I know how weird this effort at formulation must sound, but unless I abandon the attempt to interpret, I must constrain language to serve a purpose quite outside normal usage.²³

This state of “Satisfaction” is a kind of integration of all previous values. It is the culminating fulfillment of all desires and thus renders the desire-tension, as such, impossible. One can desire only when there is in some sense a lack, an incompleteness, which needs to be fulfilled, or a sensed goal that remains to be attained. When in every conceivable or felt sense all is attained, desire simply has to drop out.²⁴ The result is a profound balance in consciousness, a state of thorough repose with no drawing or

²³ The reader must have patience with these unusual combinations of conceptions if he would acquire any understanding at all. There is no word-combination that is strictly true to the meaning intended, and so the common medium is strained to suggest a most uncommon content. In any case, there is mystery enough in the relation of idea to its referent, even in ordinary usage. Habit has caused most of us to neglect this mystery, but it has led to the production of many volumes out of the minds of philosophers.

²⁴ When to wish for is to have immediately, it is impossible to isolate desire from possession. The awareness of desire necessarily vanishes. Ordinarily we desire and achieve the object only imperfectly after much effort. Thus we are highly conscious of desire. If there were absolutely no barrier to complete fulfillment, there could be no more consciousness of desiring.

inclining in any direction. Hence, in the sum total, such a state is passive. Now, while this state is, in one sense, an integration of previous values, it also proved preliminary to a still deeper state. Gradually the “Satisfaction” faded into the background and by insensible gradation became transformed into a state of “Indifference.”²⁵ For while satisfaction carries the fullness of active affective and conative value, indifference is really affective-conative silence. It is the superior terminus of the affective-conative mode of human consciousness. There is another kind of indifference where this mode of consciousness has bogged down into a kind of death. This is to be found in deeply depressed states of human consciousness. The “High Indifference,” however, is the superior or opposite pole beyond which motivation and feeling in the familiar human sense cannot reach. But, most emphatically, it is not a state of reduced life or consciousness.²⁶ On the contrary, it is both life and consciousness of an order of superiority quite beyond imagination. The concepts of relative consciousness simply cannot bound it. In one sense, it is a terminal state, but at the same time, in another sense, it is initial. Everything can be predicated of it so long as the predication is not privative, for in the privative sense nothing can be predicated of it. It is at once rest and action, and the same may be said with respect to all other polar qualities. I know of only one concept which would suggest its noetic value as a whole, and this is the concept of “Equilibrium,” yet even this is a concession to the needs of relative thinking. It is both the culmination and beginning of all possibilities.

In contrast with the preceding Recognition, this state is not characterized by an intensive or active feeling of felicity. It could be called blissful only in the sense that there is an absence of all pain in any respect whatsoever. But I felt myself to be on a level of consciousness where there is no need of an active joy. Felicity, together with all other qualities, are part of the blended whole and by the appropriate focusing of individual attention can be isolated from the rest and thus actively realized, if one so desired. But for me there seemed to be no need of such isolation. The consciousness was so utterly whole that it was unnecessary to administer any affective quality to give it a greater richness. I was superior to all affective modes, as such, and thus could command and manifest any of them that I might choose. I could bless with beneficent qualities or impose the negative ones as a curse. Still the state itself was too thoroughly void of the element of desire for me to feel any reason why I should bless or curse. For within that perfection there is no need for any augmentation or diminution.

While within this state I recalled the basis of my previous motivation and realized that if this state had been outlined to me then as an abstract idea, it could not by any

²⁵ This is clearly a case of dialectic flow paralleling the thesis, antithesis, and synthesis of Hegelian logic. Corresponding to the thesis is consciousness conditioned by desire, to the antithesis is the State of Satisfaction, and to the synthesis the State of High Indifference. Hegel is correct in viewing the process as autonomous. However, I think we can trace the vital logic a little more in detail. There could be no satisfaction without an antecedent felt lack, from which desire grows. But at the moment lack vanishes, satisfaction withers as does a tree of which the roots are cut. Then the dualism is dissolved, leaving a nondual state, which, affectively and conatively considered, is Indifference.

²⁶ At this point I must take radical exception with the thesis of Dr. Jung given in the first chapter of *The Integration of the Personality*. There Jung says: “In the end, consciousness becomes vast but dim . . .” It is no more dim than acute. It is really *nirdvandva*, and no contrasting description is really valid.

possibility have seemed attractive. But while fused with the state, all other states that could formerly have been objects of desire seemed flaccid by comparison. The highest conceivable human aspiration envisages a goal inevitably marred by the defects of immature imagination. Unavoidably, to the relative consciousness the complete balance of the perfect consciousness must seem like a void, and thus the negation of every conceivable possible value. But to be identified with this supernal State implies abandonment of the very base of relative consciousness, and thus is a transcendence of all relative valuation. To reach back to that relative base involves a contraction and blinding of consciousness, an acceptance of an immeasurable lessness. In the months following the Recognition, when I had once again resumed the drama in the relative field, I have looked back to that Transcendent State as to a consciousness of a most superior and desirable excellence. All other values have become thin and shallow by contrast. Nevertheless I carry with me always the memory, and more than a memory, of the immediate knowledge of it, and this is something quite different from a mediately conveyed and abstract portrayal of it as a merely possible consciousness.

As an intimate part of that supernal consciousness, there is a sense of power and authority literally of cosmic proportions.²⁷ By contrast, the marchings of the Caesars and the conquests of science are but the games of children. For these achievements, which seem so portentous and commanding upon the pages of human history, all inhere in a field of consciousness that in its very roots is subject to that Higher Power and Authority. Before mere cataclysms of nature, if they are on sufficiently large a scale, the resources of our mightiest rulers and of our science stand impotent. Yet those very forces of nature rest dependent upon that transcendent and seeming Void in order that they may have any existence whatsoever. The mystery before birth and after death lies encompassed within it. All of this, all this play of invisible and visible forces seem no more than a dream-drama during a moment's sleep in the illimitable vastness of Eternity. And so, from out that Eternity speaks the Voice of the never-sleeping Consciousness, and before the commanding Authority and irresistible Power of that Voice, all dreams, though of cosmic proportions, dissolve.

Now, as I write, there returns once again an adumbrative Presence of that awful Majesty. This time, as I am focused upon the problem of objective formulation, I am less blended in the Identity, and sense IT as "Presence." This mind, which once carved its way through the mysteries of the functions of the complex variable and the Kantian transcendental deduction of the categories, fairly trembles at its daring to apprehend THAT which threatens momentarily to dissolve the very power of apprehension itself. Fain would the intellect retreat into the pregnant and all-encompassing Silence, where the "Word-without-form" alone is true. This personal being trembles upon the brink of the illimitable Abyss of irrelevance that dissolves inevitably the mightiest worlds and suns. But there remains a task to be done and there may be no disembarking yet.

At the time of the culminating Recognition I found myself spreading everywhere and identical with a kind of "Space" which embraced not merely the visible forms and

²⁷ Surely, no one would be so stupid as to imagine that this is a personal power. The great power of the sun is not wholly manifested in the image of the sun reflected in the drop of water. Inwardly, *I* am the Sun, but as a personal ego I am the image of the Sun lying in the drop.

worlds, but all modes and qualities of consciousness as well. However, all these are not There as disparate and objective existences; they are blended, as it were, in a sort of primordial and culminating totality. It seemed that the various aspects and modes that are revealed to the analysis of relative consciousness could have been projected into differentiated manifestation, if I chose so to will it, but all such projection would have left unaffected the perfect balance of that totality, and whether or not the projecting effort was made was completely a matter of indifference. That totality was, and is, not other than myself, so that the study of things and qualities was resolved into simple self-examination. Yet it would be a mistake to regard the state as purely subjective. The preceding Recognition had been definitely a subjective penetration, and during the following month I found myself inwardly polarized in an exceptional degree. In contrast, the final Recognition seemed like a movement in consciousness toward objectivity, but not in the sense of a movement towards the relative world-field. The final State is, at once, as much objective as subjective, and also as much a state of action as of rest. But since it is all coexistent on a timeless level, the objectivity is not discrete and differentiated, and consequently is quite unlike the relative world. The Godless secular universe vanishes, and in its place there remains none other than the living and all-enveloping Presence of Divinity itself. So, speaking in the subjective sense, I am all there is, yet at the same time, objectively considered, there is nought but Divinity spreading everywhere. Thus the level of the High Indifference may be regarded as the terminal Value reached by delving into that which, in the relative world, man calls his "I," and yet, equally, the final culmination of all that appears objective. But this objectivity, in the final sense, is simply pure Divinity. So the sublimated object and the sublimated self are one and the same Reality, and this may be represented by the judgment: "I am the Divinity."²⁸ The Self is not of inferior dignity to the Divine, nor that Divinity subordinate to the Self. And it is only through the realization of this equality that it is possible for the individual to retain his integration before that tremendous all-encompassing Presence. In any case, the dissolving force is stupendous, and there is no inclination to resist it.

Throughout the whole period of this supreme state of consciousness I was self-consciously awake in the physical body and quite aware of my environment. The thought-activity was not depressed, but on the contrary, alert and acute. I was continuously conscious of my self-identity, in two distinct senses. In one sense, I was, and am, the primordial Self and coterminous with an unlimited and abstract Space, while

²⁸ It was sometime after writing the above that I became acquainted with the one figure in Western history who reveals something of the great Buddha's depth of penetration. I refer to Meister Eckhart, recognized by some as the greatest mystic of the Middle Ages, and in my judgment one of the greatest in Western history. He is the only instance I have found in the West, so far, who reveals acquaintance with what I have called the High Indifference. In other words than mine he has expressed the same meaning as that given above, thus: "For man is truly God, and God is truly man." Also, in the same spirit some centuries later the poet Angelus Silesius (more properly known as Johann Scheffler) wrote in beautiful simplicity:

I am as great as God,
And He is small like me;
He cannot be above,
Nor I below Him be.

There are always to be found witnesses of the Eternal Truth. (These quotations were taken from Jung's *Psychological Types*.)

at the same time the subject-object and self-analyzing consciousness was a sort of point-presence within that Space. An illustration is afforded by thinking of the former as being of the nature of an original Light, in itself substantial, spreading throughout, but not derived from any center, while the latter is a point-centered and reflected light, such as that of a searchlight. The searchlight of the self-analyzing consciousness can be directed anywhere within the primordial Light, and thus serves to render chosen zones self-conscious. Through the latter process I was enabled to capture values within the framework of the relative consciousness and thus am enabled to remember not merely a dimly sensed fact of an inchoate transcendence but, as well, all that I am now writing and a vastly more significant conscious integration which defeats all efforts at formulation. The primordial consciousness is timeless, but the self-analyzing action was a process occurring in time. And so that part which I have been enabled to carry with me in the relative state is just so much as I could think into the mind during the interval of penetration. Naturally, I centered my attention on the features which to me as an individual appeared to be of greater significance.

It seems to me that this which I have called the Primordial Consciousness must be identical with von Hartmann's "Unconscious." For what is the difference between "consciousness" and "unconsciousness" if there is no self-consciousness present? Sheer consciousness which is not aware of itself, by reason of that very fact, would not know that it was conscious. Thus, an individual who has never known ill health or pain remains largely unconscious of his organism. But with the coming of pain he is at once aware of that organism in a sense that was not true before. Then, later, with the passing of the pain, particularly if it has been of protracted duration, he becomes conscious of well-being in his organism. Well-being has taken on a new conscious value. It is at once suggested that self-consciousness is aroused through resistance in some sense, an interference with the free flow of the stream of consciousness. When this occurs, a distinction between consciousness and unconsciousness is produced that had no meaning before. Now this line of reflection has suggested to me that the real distinction should not be made between consciousness and unconsciousness but rather between self-consciousness and the absence of self-consciousness. When there is no self-consciousness in a given zone there is then no more valid basis for predicating sheer unconsciousness than there is for saying that it is a zone of consciousness that is not self-conscious. On the basis of such a view, would not the problem of interpreting how the so-called "unconscious" enters into consciousness become greatly simplified?

The Primordial Consciousness cannot be described as conceptual, affective, or perceptual. It seems that all these functions are potentially There, but the Consciousness as a whole is a blend of all these and something more. It is a deep, substantial, and vital sort of consciousness, the matter, form, and awareness functions of consciousness all at once. It is not a consciousness or knowledge "about," and thus is not a field of relationships. The substantiality and the consciousness do not exist as two separable actualities, but rather it would be more nearly correct to say that the consciousness is substance and the substance is consciousness, and thus that these are two interpenetrating

modes of the whole. It is certainly a rich “thick” consciousness and quite other than an absolutely “thin” series of terms in relation.²⁹

While in the State I was particularly impressed with the fact that the logical principle of contradiction simply had no relevancy. It would not be correct to say that this principle was violated, but, rather, that it had no application, for to isolate any phase of the State was to be immediately aware of the opposite phase as the necessary complementary part of the first. Thus the attempt of self-conscious thought to isolate anything resulted in the immediate initiation of a sort of flow in the very essence of consciousness itself, so that the nascent isolation was transformed into its opposite as copartner in a timeless reality. Every attempt I made to capture the State within the categories of relative knowledge was defeated by this flow effect. Yet there was no sense of being in a strange world. I have never known another state of consciousness that seemed so natural, normal, and proper. I seemed to know that this was the nature which Reality must possess, and, somehow, I had always known it. It rather seemed strange that for so many years I had been self-conscious in another form and imagined myself a stranger to this. It seemed to be the real underlying fact of all consciousness of all creatures.

I remembered my former belief in the reality of suffering in the world. It had no more force than the memory of a dream. I saw that, in reality, there is no suffering anywhere, that there is no creature in need of an aiding hand. The essential consciousness and life of all beings are already in that State, and both never had been, and could not be, divorced from it. The world-field with all its striving and pain, seemingly lasting through milliards of years, actually is, or seems to be, a dream occurring during a passing wink of sleep. I simply could not feel any need or duty that would call me back to action in the world-field. There was no question of departing from or deserting anybody or any duty, for I found myself so identical with all, that the last most infinitesimal element of distance was dissolved. I remembered that it had been said that there were offices of compassion to be performed in the world, but this idea had no reality in the State because none there was or ever could be who had need for ought, although those who were playing with the dream of life in form might delude themselves with imagining that a need existed. But I knew there was no reality in this dream.³⁰

²⁹ See James' use of the terms 'thick' and 'thin' in *The Pluralistic Universe*.

³⁰ We are throughout all this presentation confronted with the old philosophic problem of Illusion and Reality. It is involved in all the great monistic philosophies. It appears that William James, at one stage in his philosophic life, earnestly strived to resolve certain fundamental difficulties inherent in such philosophies, at least in their Western form. His effort failed and he gave up monism entirely, advancing in its place a frankly pluralistic philosophy. While he did not dogmatically close the door to the possibility of a speculative resolution of the problem, he left the impression of grave doubt that such a resolution existed. James saw quite clearly that there are different states of consciousness which are ineluctable facts. If these are represented by the twenty-six letters of the alphabet, then the unity of them all would not be simply one fact, but the twenty-seventh fact. Thus there is no resolution of manyness into unity.

James' critical analysis is acute and is probably sound if we restrict ourselves to the limitations of Aristotelian logic. But this is not the whole of logic, as is evidenced by the development of the logic of relatives, not to mention the dialectic of Hegel. There is no good reason to suppose that current Western knowledge of logic is the whole of logic. Now, there is a logical principle which, I believe, so far clarifies

The imperative of the moral law no longer existed, for there was not, and is not, either good or evil. It seemed I could invoke power, even in potentially unlimited degree. I could choose action or rest. If I acted, then I could proceed in any direction I might select. Yet, whether I acted or did not act, or whether I acted in one way or another, it all had absolutely the same significance. It was neither right nor wrong to choose anything, or putting it otherwise, there was neither merit nor demerit in any choice. It was as though any choice whatsoever became immediately Divinely ordained and superior to the review of any lesser tribunal.

To me, individually, the State was supremely attractive, and as the period continued, I seemed to be rising into an irrevocable blending with it. I recalled that if in the self-conscious sense I never returned from this State there would be some in this world who would miss me and would seem, in their relative consciousness, to suffer. Yet

the problem as to render the speculative resolution much more probable. I shall introduce the principle by reference to a very common oriental figure.

People who live in a country where venomous serpents are a serious hazard are familiar with the delusion of seeing a snake that is not there. We who have been much in the wilds of the far West know this delusion quite well. One early learns to be everlastingly on guard, so that near the surface of his mind he is always watching for snakes. Often it happens that a stick, piece of rope, or other long slim object will be perceived, half unconsciously, and lead to a reaction of the organism before rational recognition of the object is possible. One seems to see a snake, feels the shock, pauses, and perhaps jumps, before a rational judgment is possible. A moment later he sees his error. I have had this experience many times, and on analysis find that it reveals a great deal. The snake, at first seemingly seen, a moment later is a stick, rope, or such other material object as it may be. The question then is what happened to the snake? Did a snake become a stick, and so forth? The final practical judgment is that the snake did not become a stick, but never was there. Yet there is no doubt that, in a psychical sense, experience of snake was there. Well, then, what is the nature of its existence? We certainly do not attribute to it substantial reality. It assuredly cannot bite or otherwise be dangerous in an objective sense. The moment after the rational recognition and judgment, there simply is no snake. Further—and this subtle point is the very crux of the matter—*the snake ceases to have ever been*. I know that the process works this way since I have observed it again and again. It remains true that there had been a state of psychical delusion, yet there is a vitally important sense in which the snake ceases to be, both as a present and past fact. The delusion neither added anything to the reality nor took anything away. There is thus no problem as to how to integrate it within reality.

Now, the speculative resolution of the monist's problem is found by applying the above principle of interpretation to the whole of relative experience. The latter differs from the snake experience in that it is massively collective and is, generally, not at once corrected by a rational recognition and judgment. It is to be viewed as like unto a vast delusional insanity and is to be corrected as a dream-problem is corrected, simply by waking up. Human suffering is of like nature to the suffering of the delusionally insane, and there is no real cure in terms of the premise of the insane state.

But what is the difference between reality and delusion, since the delusion is a psychical fact? Simply this: The reality is substantial, while the delusion is empty. In Buddhist terms, the only actuality in the delusional modification of consciousness lies in its being of one sameness with the essence of mind, but there is no actuality of content. All experience is simply the revelry of the mind and has no substance in itself.

The adequacy of the snake-rope analogy has been ably challenged by Sri Aurobindo Ghose in his *The Life Divine*, with the consequent introduction of doubt as to the objective validity of the figure. However, the analogy does seem to be subjectively valid since the relative consciousness tends to vanish, like the snake into the rope, while the self-consciousness is immersed in the Transcendent. It appears that Aurobindo has made necessary a reexamination of the classical metaphysical theories grounded upon realizations of the above sort. This subject will be considered later in the present work.

it was only with effort that I could give this thought any effective force. For many years I had known from my studies that reports existed of realizable states of consciousness such that the relative state could be completely and finally abandoned. I had also been impressed with the teaching that it was a wiser course to resist that tendency and hold correlation with the relative form of consciousness. I had been convinced by the reasoning supporting the latter course and had for some time resolved to follow it, if ever the opportunity to choose came to me. This doubtless established a habit-form in the personal consciousness, and so far as I can see, that habit alone, or at least mainly, was the decisive factor. For while in the State there simply is no basis for forming any kind of decision, unless that ground is already well established in the individual consciousness out of the life that has gone before. As a result, there was a real conflict between the attraction the State had for me, as a center of individual consciousness, and the impress of the earlier-formed choice, but *I*, in my inmost nature, was not a part of this conflict, rather standing back indifferent to the outcome, knowing quite well that any outcome was Divinely right. The issue seemed to be a closely drawn one, for as time went on—from the relative standpoint—the organized man appeared to be vanishing, but not in the sense of the disappearance of a visually apparent object. It was more a vanishing as irrelevance may cause an issue or a consideration to disappear. It was as though Space were progressively consuming the whole personal and thinking entity in a wholeness-comprehension, beside which all particularities are as nought. Personally, I seemed powerless in the process, not because I lacked command of potential power, but simply because there was no reason—no desire—for rendering the potential kinetic. In the end, I fell asleep, to awaken the next morning in full command of my relative faculties, and clearly the issue had been decided. Was it a victory? From certain points of view, yes. Yet, as I recall the profounder State of Consciousness, which has continued ever since to seem close to the deeper recesses of my private consciousness, I cannot say that in the ultimate sense there was either victory or defeat. The choice was right, *for no choice could possibly be wrong.*

The full cycle of this final Recognition lasted for some hours, with the self-consciousness alert throughout the period. But the depth of the State developed progressively, and at the final stage entered a peculiarly significant phase which strained my self-conscious resources to the utmost. There finally arrived a stage wherein both that which I have called the Self and that which had the value of Divinity were dissolved in a Somewhat, still more transcendent. There now remained nought but pure Being which could be called neither the Self nor God. No longer was “I” spreading everywhere throughout the whole of an illimitable and conscious Space, nor was there a Divine Presence all about me, but everywhere only Consciousness with no subjective nor objective element. Here, both symbols and concepts fail. But now I know that within and surrounding all there is a Core or Matrix within which are rooted all selves and all Gods, and that from this lofty Peak, veiled in the mists of timeless obscurity and surrounded by thick, impenetrable Silence, all worlds and beings, all spaces and all times lie suspended in utter dependence. On that highest Peak I could Know no more, for the Deeps of the deepest Darkness, and the SILENCE enshrouded in manifold sheaths of Silence rolled over me, and self-consciousness was blown out. But ere this I heard as the faintest shadow of a breath of consciousness a Voice, as it were, from out a still vaster BEYOND.

There remain to be considered the effects of these Recognitions upon me as an individual center of consciousness, thinking, feeling, and acting within the relative world. Of course, in this, my own statement is necessarily incomplete, since it is confined to an introspective analysis, and lacks the objective valuation which only a witness could supply. But it can render explicit that which no one else could know, since it reveals, as far as it goes, the immediate conscious values.

The Recognition of September 8th and 9th initiated a radical change of phase in the individual consciousness, as compared to the cycle of the preceding month. As already noted, the latter was very largely an indrawn state of consciousness, and the physical organism tended to become overly sensitive to the conditions of physical life. It was more difficult than it had been to meet the ordinary problems arising from the circumstances of the environment. The tumultuous forces of the modern city seemed far too violent to be endured. Even though living in the relative isolation of a suburban community, there still remained the irritations of a mechanical age and subtle impingements of a nature very hard to define. My natural inclination was to seek the wilds where the competitions of objective life-pressures would be at a minimum. It was a real problem of endurance. In contrast, after the final Recognition I noted a distinct growth of organic ruggedness. And, although I have never come to enjoy the harsh dissonances and regimented existence of modern town life, yet I find I have a definitely increased strength for the making of the various needed adjustments. There is an increased capacity to assert command with respect to the various environmental factors. I seem to have the capacity to will embodied existence, regardless of inclination.

On the intellectual side, I have noted a definite revitalization. I have found myself able to sustain creative and analytic thought activity at a higher level than formerly and for longer periods of time. Difficult concepts have become easier of comprehension. The seeming aging effect in the mind, that had been troubling me for sometime, passed, and in its place there came a very definite increase of intellectual vitality, and this has remained to the present hour as a persistent asset.

The affective changes are in the direction of a greater degree of impersonality. There is certainly less personal emotional dependence, and as far as I can detect, a practical unconsciousness of anything like personal slights, if there has been anything of that sort. I do care deeply for the growth of durable well-being, especially for those who come within my orbit, but also in the sense of a general social growth. Yet I find myself considerably indifferent to, when not disgusted with, the rather trivial foibles which make up so large a part of the day-to-day life of most human beings. I am not yet superior to the feeling of indignation, but this feeling is mainly aroused when noting the rapid growth of willful and violent irrationalism, which has so rapidly engulfed most of the present world. However, I recognize this as a defect due to insufficient personal detachment. For, philosophically, I do realize that men have the right to learn the lessons that folly has to teach, and it is but natural that a certain class of leaders should make capital of this fact. Still, it remains hard to reconcile current morally decadent tendencies with the decades and centuries of relative enlightenment that have been so recent. I find that I had had too high an opinion of the intelligence of the average man, and that the individual who is capable of understanding the wisdom contained in the fable of the goose that laid the golden egg is really quite above the average in his level of

intelligence. Frankly, I have not yet completely adjusted myself to the disillusionment which comes with a more objective and realistic appreciation of what the average human being is, when considered as a relative entity. This comes partly from an increased clarification of insight, and while I am much more certainly aware of the Jewel hidden within the mud of the personal man, yet I see more clearly also the fact of the mud and its unwholesome composition. It is not a pretty sight and not such as to increase one's regard for this world-field. All in all, the more objective my understanding of the actualities of this relative life, the more attractive the Transcendent World becomes.

Probably the most important permanent effect of the whole group of Recognitions is the grounding of knowledge, affection, and the sense of assurance on a base that is neither empirical nor intellectual. This base is supersensible, superaffective, and superconceptual, yet it is both conscious and substantial and of unlimited dynamic potentiality. I feel myself closer to universals than to the particulars given through experience, the latter occupying an essentially derivative position and being only of instrumental value, significant solely as implements for the arousing of self-consciousness. As a consequence, my ultimate philosophic outlook cannot be comprehended within the forms that assume time, the subject-object relationship, and experience as original and irreducible constants of consciousness or reality. At the same time, although I find the Self to be an element of consciousness of more fundamental importance than the foregoing three, yet in the end it, also, is reduced to a derivative position in a more ultimate Reality. So my outlook must deviate from those forms of Idealism that represent the Self as the final Reality. In certain fundamental respects, at least, the formulation must accord with the *anatmic* doctrine of Buddha, and therefore differ in important respects from any extant Western system.³¹

³¹ The main text of this chapter was written and completed toward the end of March 1937, just after finishing the text of *Pathways Through to Space*. The footnotes were added seven years later. The latter reflect the expanded perspective afforded by a quite considerable study of the transformation problem, both in Western psychological sources and in Buddhist sources which had not been available for me prior to the cycle reported. Though the problem has not had a wide consideration, it has attracted the attention of some of the best minds the world has ever known. I know now that although the ground covered has only rarely been traversed so far, to judge by the mystical records, yet all the Way has been pioneered long ago. This simply reveals the fundamental universality of the problem.