

The Philosophy of Consciousness Without an Object

A Discussion of the Nature of Transcendental Consciousness

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Part 14 of 25

PART III

Introceptualism^{*}

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Religion, Philosophy, and Psychology: these three orientations of human consciousness in their total range and meaning embrace fields of interest or attitude that are, in considerable measure, identical, but each extends into zones which are more or less disparate. Thus the distinctive *quale* of religion remains forever outside the zones of philosophy and psychology, so long as the latter are conceived in their purity as abstracted from the concrete totality of consciousness. But it is no less true that much of psychology is concerned with psychical and psycho-physical fact and process which is of entirely neutral concern with respect to the religious attitude, and, likewise, has little or no value for philosophic integration. Finally, philosophy expresses a mode of consciousness which is not reducible in its inner content to any possible psychology, however much its functions employed may be objects of psychological interest, and which is, in many respects, quite neutral with respect to the religious *quale*. But there is a common area of human attitude and interest wherein these three fields of human interest and function overlap and interact, and it is just in this common field that we find the most vital and persistent problems and concerns which have compelled the attention of men in all times and places. We are probably quite safe in saying that all problems and interests which lie outside this common zone are, relatively, of only secondary or of transitory interest and significance. Thus if mankind could conceivably solve all of these secondary and transitory problems, but failed in dealing with the concerns of the common field, then it would have failed in the most profound sense and would find its successes empty and futile. For while the successes might mean a conquest of a world and the preservation of a vital animal existence, yet the adjustments necessary to a healthy and happy soul would be lacking and the basis for a higher culture would be lost, and, therefore, the achievements, such as they might be, would be but a vain success. A world thus conquered and possessed and a vital life thus maintained would be empty and valueless, with nothing to offer for inner adjustment or to serve the yearning soul. So, before and beyond all other considerations, we must face and master, if possible, the great common

* [This part is more explicitly philosophical than the rest of the discussion. It represents an effort to place the philosophy growing out of the Realization within the system of Western philosophic schools.]

concerns which lie equally before philosophy, religion, and psychology, giving to other affairs the residual attention which is their due. Succeeding in this, then we may die, early or late, rich or poor in outer possessions, with much or little factual information, but in any case Victor in the larger issues.

In an earlier chapter there was described, at some length and in considerable detail, an instance of a transformation in consciousness, which is, unquestionably, part and parcel of the most central religious problem, as that problem is understood by the greater religions. But it is equally a problem of profound concern for that phase of psychology which has sometimes been called “metapsychology” and depth psychology. Finally, it implies a theory of knowledge and a metaphysics, and, therefore, affords a subject-matter for philosophy. Thus this transformation satisfies the conditions which place it within the zone of coalescence of religion, philosophy, and psychology, and gives to it a value that may well prove to be of central importance.

In the present portion of this work it is proposed to devote the primary attention to the philosophical implications with the psychological and religious aspects occupying only a subsidiary position. It is not intended to depreciate either the religious or psychological values and attitudes in any ultimate sense, but merely to subordinate them for the present purposes. The question as to which of these three deals with the most fundamental problems, interests, or attitudes is not raised at all. Probably, the relative valuation of these three can never be separated from human subjectivity, so that always some men will value the one more than the other two, and yet there will always be men who give a reversed valuation. Perhaps it is pertinent to an evaluation of the whole present discussion that the writer should acknowledge that, for him, the problem of transformation has always appeared as primarily a question of philosophy, with the religious *quale* present as undertone, while the pertinent psychological interest in the transformation developed mainly after the event. The factors which played the leading part in the individual consciousness before the event were primarily philosophical, so that philosophy enters the picture as an effective agent and not exclusively as an interpretation afterwards. But spontaneous—namely, not individually and consciously willed—factors entered into the total picture, with the result that a final world-view emerged which is not identical with the one which helped to initiate the transformation process. In some sense or degree, there is incorporated or permitted within the present system of thought something of all the leading current philosophical schools, whereas the earlier orientation was almost exclusively Idealistic. Yet despite this broadening and modifying effect, the Idealistic orientation was most largely confirmed, though the present philosophy does not seem to be completely congruent with any other extant system. Thus, for example, the present system is non-relativistic in its profoundest ramifications and yet it may not be called absolutistic, if the latter term is to be understood as predicating that the Ultimate is an absolute *Being*. The Root of All is conceived, not as an Absolute, but as an unconditioned Non-Relative, which may be viewed as an *Absoluteness* which is ever unknowable to relative consciousness, but which may be Realized through a process that essentially cancels relative cognition.

No orientation which properly may be called philosophical may ignore or disparage the functions of logic. But philosophy is more than bare logic, for the reason that it deals with content in some sense that is not exclusively identical with pure logic.

The formal or logical relations which unite variables are necessary but not sufficient for the formation of a real philosophy. A real or vital philosophy, of necessity, must give to these variables some particular or general valuation or meaning. But these valuations or meanings cannot be derived by logic operating exclusively by itself. Something more is required. Now, this “something more” transcends the necessities of logic and may well open the door to all those human yearnings and needs that would be closed if the necessitarianism of logic alone were valid. When both are properly understood, religious need and human purpose do not require the repudiation of logical necessity in order to realize their proper freedom. We can build conceptual figures which unite apparently incompatible lines of development, or forms of experience, and logical requirements by introducing the notion of multiple dimensions. Thus, while within its own dimension, logic has the final say and wields an unequivocal authority, yet the variables which enter into logical relations may have any degree of extra-logical development within other dimensions. Hence, it is quite conceivable that certain attitudes, interests, or modes of consciousness may focus themselves in dimensions wherein logic is quite irrelevant, yet this fact would not at all render necessary a repudiation of the authority of logic within its own realm. However, an attitude to which logic is irrelevant is simply not philosophy, though it may form part of the subject-matter of philosophy. The philosopher, perforce, must think and produce within the framework of logic as one of his determinants, though he may carry into this structure extra-logical components of unlimited richness and variety.

The content, quality, mode, or way of consciousness which is the ultimate product of the transformation process, previously reported, will supply here the particular valuation or content given to the logical variables insofar as such material may be conceived as an instance of terms in relation or of implicatory development. All of this is a content or material given through immediacy. But, whereas the immediate material which enters into by far the greater part of philosophic literature is of the nature of experiential data of quite wide general occurrence in the consciousness of human individuals, it must be recognized that much of the material which is introduced here is not part of a widely common experience. To be sure, much of it is not without representation in extent and even current literature, but these literary references are, relatively, far from numerous, and they are often distinctly obscure and baffling to the rational mind. A large proportion of the immediacy which is here the primary referent is not a sensible datum, but rather implies the activity of some function of consciousness other than the four which supply most of the content of modern analytic psychology.¹ As a consequence, we are faced with a real practical difficulty. The typical content of philosophy is not a self-determined whole. There is, in the formulation, an inevitable reference to a meaning which derives its content from the congruence of experience common to both the writer and the reader. Philosophy is not written like rigorous and formal mathematics wherein all implicit intuitions are thoroughly expunged. Thus the reader understands a philosophy—as far as he does understand it—because of a content immediately known and beyond the *word*, and which is known as well and in the same sense by the writer. This, together with logic, supplies the common domain of discourse essential for the uniting of the writer and the reader. But when the philosophical content

¹ The four are Thinking, Feeling, Sensation, and Intuition. See Carl G. Jung's *Psychological Types*.

becomes available only through a psychical function which is not commonly active, then, in general, the philosophical writer and the reader will not hold much more in common than the logical structure of the discourse. This, in turn, places the critic at a real disadvantage, for, while he may supply a critique of the purely formal logical structures, he often will prove unqualified in an evaluation of the immediate content itself. If the requisite psychical function is not in some measure active within his own consciousness, he can neither affirm nor deny the actuality of the immediate content in other than arbitrary or dogmatic terms, since for him the affirmed content is not known immediately, and, therefore, the material—as distinguished from formal or logical relations—must fall short of being wholly clear.

Much of the criticism of philosophic Idealism centers in the contention that this philosophy has developed into an airy abstraction wherein nothing but a formal statement without real content remains. In terms that William James has made famous in philosophic literature, Idealism has seemed to many to have become so “thin” that it has lost all substantiality whatsoever. This would seem imply that James views Idealism as a formal philosophy without real content. Now, if we are to view all content as necessarily being of a sensible or experiential nature, then there is much justice in James’ criticism. Idealism in its ultimate and most rigorous formulation is, in high degree, empirically empty. But there remains the question whether *empiric emptiness* implies emptiness in every sense. The thesis here is that such is not the case but, rather, that through a latent psychical function, non-empiric but substantial content may be realized in a sense that is not less compelling than immediate experience—it being understood that the word ‘experience’ is limited in its reference to a psychical state or modification of consciousness produced by sensation in the time-stream. To one who is oriented to the trans-experiential content, the apparently empty abstractionism of rigorous Idealism may become transformed into an abundant fullness and “thickness,” in contrast with which it is just precisely the empiric philosophies that tend to seem empty, shallow, and “thin.” Since I have known this to be the case in my own private reading of Idealistic philosophies, I feel justified in suspecting that the Idealistic philosophers—or, at least, some of them—refer to a content which is not explicit in their systems. In a word, it appears that there is more back of these systems than the formal logical structure which is available for the critical evaluation of all readers. Thus, Idealism may be an expression which is true to its own substantial and immediately realized meaning, and so have a value in the supermundane sense greater than that of any other school of Western philosophy.

Some proponents of objective Absolute Idealism have endeavored to establish their thesis as a necessity which may be made manifest by a sufficiently acute analysis of the common elements of consciousness. But criticism seems to have established very clearly that this endeavor has failed. It does not appear that it is possible to derive from the common features of a mundane consciousness either the actuality or the necessity of a supermundane consciousness. The attempt to do so is an analogue of inductive reasoning which never can prove the universal validity of its generalizations. From the base of a transcendent consciousness it may be possible to infer the actuality, or, at least, the possibility, of a derived mundane consciousness, but from the latter as an initial premise it is impossible to deduce a more comprehensive root-source. Hence, one either knows the Transcendental Reality immediately or he does not know It at all, and consequently

such a Reality is not discursively provable from the ground of common experience. It can be speculatively affirmed, but this is less than knowledge, though consequences may be deduced from the affirmation which may be verifiable. It must be Realized to be known. Therefore, the effort to establish the thesis of Idealism by dialectics alone is bound to fail.

But if the effort to establish the thesis of Idealism by dialectics has failed, we are left with but two alternatives; either we must abandon the thesis entirely or ground it upon the authority of direct Realization which is an outcome of a transformation in individual consciousness. We are thus forced to face the question: Is it a valid endeavor to formulate a philosophy which is oriented to a private Realization which is held in common with a small minority of fellow human beings? No doubt this question is debatable. Clearly, if the private Realization had no chance of receiving a sympathetic response in the heart or mind of any other human being, there would be little reason for producing a philosophic formulation, save as an act of artistic production. But if one searches the appropriate literature he will find that this private Realization is not so private as at first it may appear, for there are others who have written from the base of comparable realizations, and that which some among the human whole have realized is, by the sheer fact of the realization itself, shown to be a possibility of the human psyche as such. To learn of this possibility may, indeed, be enough to supply the impulse towards further instances of Self-Awakening, or may strengthen the assurance of those who have had partial glimpses of a Beyond but are not yet well grounded in the new Base. To be sure, this purpose may be achieved through art, poetry, religious practice, and other non-philosophic means, but it still remains true that for some natures the Path to Self-Realization or to the Higher Consciousness is through philosophy. These facts would seem to justify an affirmative answer to the question.

In any case, if it is once granted that there is, or may be, another way of consciousness, outside the field of common experience, then this is a matter of real concern for any psychology or philosophy which seeks to achieve a comprehensive view of all the possibilities of consciousness. Of course, it is possible to build philosophies and psychologies upon the bases of arbitrary assumptions which exclude from the first the possibility of the Realization of a Transcendent Reality, but this would be valid only as a conceptual exercise. Thus, we may say: Let us assume mechanism as a universally and comprehensively valid principle and see what consequences follow. From this we would derive some form of Naturalistic philosophy, and this might prove to be an interesting, and, in some measure, useful excursion. But it is quite another matter when one, instead of assuming, dogmatically affirms mechanism as universally and comprehensively valid. Such a standpoint is at once seriously challenged when any individual says: I have immediate knowledge of that which cannot be comprehended within the limits of mechanism. Likewise, one may assume the standpoint which affirms the categories of empiric life as fundamental and from this derive the anti-intellectualistic instrumentalism of Pragmatism. The resultant philosophies are unquestionably valid for considerable sectors of experience and thought. But when such presuppositions are taken as universally and exclusively valid, they arbitrarily rule out standpoints from which Mechanism and Pragmatism are seen to have a validity which is only derivative and partial. Affirmation of acquaintance with such larger perspectives at once challenges the universal validity of the lesser standpoints. Thus, if there is a perspective from which the whole of empiric life may be viewed as derivative and but a partial manifestation of a

larger Reality, then Pragmatism would have only a pragmatic validity, namely, be a stepping stone to something more durable, and only that. Finally, it is possible to assume that ultimate reality is such that it makes no difference whether it is known or not. With the Neo-Realists, one may say that this reality can enter into relations with consciousness, or can be considered in relation to consciousness, and, yet, again be treated as quite independent of consciousness, in either case remaining unaltered in its own nature. But here we have little more than a logical exercise relative to an essentially unknown and unknowable somewhat since knowledge cannot be derived from beyond the field of consciousness. To be sure, this point of view may well have some pragmatic utility, but it does not wield metaphysical authority. As a universal and exclusively valid philosophy, it would deny forever all hope to those who yearn for certainty, giving in place of this the inflated and unsecured currency of mere probable or possible truth. He who says, "I KNOW," challenges all this.

In what follows it will not be attempted to *prove* a point of view as the only possible or valid one. It is granted that men may be scrupulously logical and think otherwise. But it is also insisted that a Realization in consciousness which finds no place or adequate recognition in other systems proves the inadequacy of these. The universally valid system, if such may ever be found or created, must embrace the rarer contents of consciousness as well as those which form the mass of common experience. It is proposed here to present the outlines of a system which, while not excluding the contents of the more common experience, yet embraces the wider ranges opened by the Door of Realization. But, first, to prepare the ground and to make evident the need of a further formulation, there will be a brief survey of the principal schools of modern Western philosophy, with a view to showing wherein they fall short of adequacy as a philosophic form for the present purposes.

[The end of Chapter 1 of PART III of *The Philosophy of Consciousness Without an Object.*]

CHAPTER 2

The Four Schools of Modern Philosophy

When human consciousness at some time in the unknown past reached that point in its development where it turned a reflective vision upon its experience, taken as a comprehensive totality, it early discovered two seemingly opposed, yet complementary, components which are ineluctable parts, like poles, of that totality. These we know today as Spirit and Matter, or as *Purusha* and *Prakriti*, in the terminology that is most widely employed. Reflective man, ever conditioned by his own individual psychology, has tended to realize and value one or the other of these components most completely. Some, indeed, have seen them as interdependencies inhering in some common root, while others, less integral in their vision, have seemed to find the ultimate in the one or the other pole. And even those with the more integral vision have tended the greater accentuation to the one or the other component. Inevitably, then, when man became philosophically conscious he tended to divide into schools of thought in which the common denominator or emphasis or even exclusive recognition was either Matter or Spirit, however these two may have been conceived. Thus even a casual perusal of the history of philosophy leaves the student with the strong impression that there are always, in varying terms and forms, two main patterns conditioning the orientation of the worldview of reflective man.

In modern Western terminology the division and contrast between these diverse lines of philosophic orientation is commonly represented by words such as Materialism, Naturalism, Realism, standing in contrast to Spiritualism, Idealism and Subjectivism. In schools of thought these diverging and opposed orientations are most forcibly represented in the modern West as Naturalism and Idealism, the former lying closer to science and the latter to religion. But, in addition to these most radically contrasting systems of philosophy, within recent decades two other schools have arisen which occupy positions intermediate between the more extreme formulations. One of these, Neo-Realism, occupies a position definitely closer to Naturalism than to Idealism, but conceives its objective reality as something considerably more subtle than that of Naturalism, while the other, Pragmatism, diverges from Neo-Realism to a viewpoint rather closer to Idealism, though definitely less absolutistic and more empiric than the latter. These two later schools may be said to be more humanistic than the older and more classical ways of thought, in that they more definitely restrict themselves to the actual human processes of cognition, feeling, conation, with the corresponding contents and valuations. But in any case, the divisions between these various schools are sufficiently notable to justify a fourfold classification, based upon a root twofold division.

All these systems or ways of thinking bring into relief by accentuation authentic elements or complexes which are to be found in actual human experience or consciousness. Thus none may be wholly neglected and a truly synthetic philosophy, when and if it is ever written, must do justice to, or at least find room for, the positive values of each. But there is a strong tendency on the part of representatives of these various schools to formulate their positions in more or less exclusive or privative terms, and this produces features which must be expunged if there ever is to be a synthetic system. It is proposed here to examine the primary features—namely, those held in

common by various representatives of a school—of these various schools, with the central purpose of showing in what respect they are inadequate for the purpose of an integration sufficiently comprehensive to embrace the values and knowledge derived from Gnostic Realization. The purpose of this is to clear the ground for the formulation which will follow, and, as well, to show that a need for such new formulation exists. The discussion will start with Naturalism, pass through Neo-Realism, Pragmatism, and Idealism, culminating in Introceptualism, the term by which I have designated the systematic contribution, which is in some sense and degree new.

[The end of Chapter 2 of PART III of *The Philosophy of Consciousness Without an Object.*]