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Reflections on Nirvana and Paranirvana

The problem which all the greater religions and the spiritual philosophies address themselves to implies that in some way and in some sense this humanity has become involved in a state or loka of consciousness that must be regarded from more ultimate points of view as a mistake. The positive task before such religions and philosophies is the finding of a method by which the mistake can be corrected and then making this method available to all the units of mankind. This outlook does not imply that the Cosmos as a whole and in every sense is to be regarded as a grand and Divine mistake, although some Vedantins do take this standpoint. It is much more valid to regard the mistake as one resulting from a misuse of the Divine creativeness incarned^{at} in this particular humanity. This means that the story of the Prodigal Son does not simply have an individual application but, in addition, symbolizes the state of this humanity as a whole, though there are individual units that constitute exceptions. Further, this would show why this humanity is sometimes called, by certain spiritual leaders of the race, the Great Orphan. All this simply means that somehow by the unwise use of creative power this humanity produced a sort of secondary universe which it has superimposed upon the primary Cosmos and then, forgetting that the secondary production was a self-produced mis-creation, accepts its appearance as objective reality. As a result the consciousness of humanity is bound in an especial sense which does not apply to embodied consciousness in general. This bondage may be regarded as a sort of grand auto-hypnosis and, as a result, the freeing or curing of mankind is equivalent to a process of dehypnotizing the bound consciousness. When that dehypnotizing is effected

for a given individual he had received the final service of the above mentioned religions and philosophies and enters quite a different order of life.

The state or loka of consciousness resulting from the secondary creation may be regarded as an illusion or maya in the invidious sense. But it is also to be noted that the concept of maya has a still higher connotation which is applied to the whole manifested Cosmos. In this case it is a metaphysical concept and does not carry an invidious meaning. Abandoning for the time being the highest metaphysical point of view, we may say that the primary universe is real in a high relative sense, and it is sufficient that mankind should strive to attain this reality. Reaching beyond ~~this~~ the latter is a matter which concerns only the very few and is not a concern of the multitude for many ^{cycles} ages yet to come. In other words, those who have freed themselves from the secondary bondage are like ~~trains~~ derailed ~~trains~~ trains that have once more been placed upon the track of normal evolution. After that ~~derailment~~ they have but to proceed along the normal course of the Law applying creative effort within the primarily designed range of oscillation. Their problems are no longer to be regarded as of the pathological type, and thus they have transcended the framework of the common religious discipline. They are no longer individuals in need of the special service of Compassion and for them the special dispensation of world-Saviours is no longer ^{required} applicable. The peculiar office of Compassion and of the world-Saviours is for those sick-souls - and these form nearly the whole of the present humanity - who are still bound and confused in the secondary creation of their own ^{and humanities} making.

We are now in a position to interpret Nirvana or the Kingdom of Heaven in the simpler sense. Any advanced student of metaphysics should know that Nirvana exists in more than one sense and that its simplest aspect is not the Summum Bonum that some believe it to be. There is a higher State recognized, called, variously, Paranirvana, Paranishpana and Mahanirvana. The lower Nirvana is, in principle, accessible for all men, but the higher is not. Now, just why is this lower State called a Nirvanic or "blown-out" state, -that is, one that is inconceivable, - when another and higher State is differentiated, thus implying that in some sense the lower Bliss is not inco^wceivable? The answer is clear. The lower state is inco^wceivable to the hypnotized consciousness that produces the bondage of the secondary creation. From the standpoint of the thought-forms possible in the latter state, the freed State, even of the lower Nirvana, is unthinkable. But on the level of cognition possible to the relatively liberated souls it is not unthinkable. In the practical sense, then, He who carries a message of Liberation to those bound in the secondary creation must point to a Beyond that the bound ones cannot possibly comprehend in their present condition. In effect, not much more can be said than that this liberated State exists and that by following a certain course it may be realized. But the nature of the State cannot be so formulated as to be intelligible to the bound consciousness in question.

Relatively to the standpoint of the bound consciousness Nirvana seemingly contrasts as a state of rest, as all the categories of action of the secondary universe are negated. So Nirvana appears, first of all, as a state of rest. But this is only half the Truth. In one aspect this Nirvana is

the Bliss of Rest. But this Bliss can be renounced. However, the man who so renounces remains liberated from the bondage of the secondary universe as he has destroyed its illusion-producing power. Thus he does continue on the level of Nirvana in the sense that he continues in the full realization of the relative reality of that level. Consequently, in a profound sense he has not ceased to be a Nirvani. But he is a Nirvani who continues to act. This simply leads to the recognition that the first Nirvana has two aspects, one of rest and the other of action, but all on a level radically transcending the consciousness and cognition of the secondary universe. This new dualism is not conceivable from the standpoint of the latter, and so can be made clear only to the few who have, in an effective sense, broken the power of the secondary creation. Let us call this higher dualism, Cosmic Consciousness; - the first level of Transcendent Consciousness - of which the rest aspect is Nirvana, in the narrower sense, and the action aspect, ^{is} the Subtle World. The man who is grounded on this Cosmic level can move between rest and action as circumstances permit and necessities dictate, just as men in the secondary universe oscillate between the active stage of the world-field and the after-death state of Devachan. This interpretation justifies those who speak of Nirvana, taken in the indrawn sense, as a sort of higher Devachan.

There are, however, still higher Transcendencies than that of Cosmic Consciousness, as above defined. The latter is not the level of the High Indifference, for instance, for concern in a higher sense, does exist in it. There is the State of Paranishpana or Paranirvana - I have not yet clarified the relation of this to the High Indifference - and this State

transcends Cosmic Consciousness as much as the latter transcends ordinary relative consciousness. Paranishpana consumes the primary Cosmos as completely as Cosmic Consciousness consumes the secondary universe of ordinary relative consciousness. Is Paranishpana a state of Rest or being indrawn in the most ultimate sense? He who can answer this question as a matter of direct Knowledge is no longer a man but has become a Being of another and a higher order. But analogy suggests a Beyondness of a still more transcendent order. There certainly are dimly felt Voices realized on the Level of the High Indifference that point to this greater Beyond. All that man can say at the highest level to which he has attained is: "Thus far I have Realized and this Consciousness I Know is, but Beyond this I do not Know, though I suspect the existence of still more transcendent ~~Reality~~ REALITIESⁿ"

The High Indifference is no more rest than it is action. Certainly, rest can be chosen relatively to that Level, but so can action. From the standpoint of action on that Level, the potentialities of Nirvana in the lower sense can be commanded. The principle here involved is, that whenever Self-identity is established in the self-conscious sense on any level all departments of nature or consciousness inferior to the latter are, in principle, ~~are~~ at the command of the individual who has attained that point. However, achieving this command in the actual or concrete sense involves specific technical attainment. But that which is possible in principle can be made specifically and concretely actual, while such is not the case with respect to powers that are not possible in principle. It is not possible, in principle for a man to wield a power which inheres in a level superior to the highest point he has reached with self-conscious identity.

The primary danger of inferior magic inheres in the fact that the inferior magicians attempt to wield powers to which they are not themselves superior. They employ indirect methods involving something which we may call bribery to cause elemental agencies to act in accordance with the wishes of the former. As they have not the power adequate to command these agencies they are unable to control counter action and so, sooner or later, are swept away by the rebound of the forces they have invoked. But the superior cannot be swept away by the inferior, and herein lies part of the fundamental advantage of the Higher Magic.
