

SYNTHESIS: One World Philosophy

They alone will comprehend the purport of this volume who can comprehend that it does not only seek to present the pabulum of an ancient system for modern consumption but that it has integrated its material with the wider knowledge that has come to mankind during the thousands of years which have passed since that system first appeared.

Consequently we offer here not only a re-statement but also an entirely new and radically fresh world-view which could not have been reached historically earlier.

...All the conflicting doctrines which have appeared in the past were not meaningless and not useless; they have played their part most usefully even where they seemed most contradictory. They were really in collaboration, not in opposition. We need not disdain to illustrate the highest abstract principles by the homeliest concrete anecdotes, and we may describe them as pieces in a jig-saw puzzle which can now be fitted together, for now we have the master pattern which is the secret of the whole. Hence all that is vital and valuable in earlier knowledge is contained in the East-West philosophy; only their fallacies have been shed. A full view of the universe now replaces all the partial views which were alone available before and which embodied merely single phases of the discovery of Truth. Thus the analytic movement which uncovered the various pieces of this world puzzle must now yield to a synthetic process of putting them together in a final united pattern. Culture, on this view, is the timeless truth appearing in the world of time and therefore in successive but progressive periods. Only now has it been able to utter its latest word. Only now does philosophy attain its maturest completion. Only now are we able to reap the fruit of seven thousand years of historical philosophy. Only now have we achieved a world-system, a universal doctrine which belongs to no particular place but to the planet. Knowledge has grown by analysis but shall finish by synthesis. 12.2.186

Not one but several minds will be needed to labour at the metaphysical foundation of the twentieth-century structure of philosophy. I can claim the merit only of being among the earliest of these pioneers. There are others yet to appear who will unquestionably do better and more valuable work. 12.2.187

Henceforth the background of this teaching will be, nay must be, a universal one. It shall resist those who would label it Eastern because they will not be able to deny its Western contents, form, and spirit. It shall resist those who would label it Western, because they too shall not be able to deny its Eastern roots and contents. 12.2.188

It is not even enough to make a comparative study of religions and mysticisms, of metaphysics and systems and practices through the centuries and around the world. Discrimination in what is found becomes necessary, evaluation and critical judgement become essential. It is then that unexamined dogmas and rigid sectarianism with the stifling attitudes they generate are more likely to be dropped. In the end a higher kind of knowledge, the intuitional, coming from a higher level of the mind, must penetrate it all. This is the beginning of the most meaningful events. 17.6.39

People sometimes ask me to what religion I belong or to what school of yoga I adhere. If I answer them, which is not often, I tell them: "To none and to all!" If such a paradox annoys them, I try to soften their wrath by adding that I am a student of philosophy. During my journeys to the heavenly realm of infinite eternal and absolute existence, I did not once discover any labels marked Christian, Hindu, Catholic, Protestant, Zen, Shin, Platonist, Hegelian, and so on, any more than I discovered labels marked Englishman, American, or Hottentot. All such ascriptions would contradict the very nature of the ascriptionless existence. All sectarian differences are merely intellectual ones. They have no place in that level which is deeper than intellectual function. They divide men into hostile groups only because they are pseudo-spiritual. He who has tasted of the pure Spirit's own freedom will be unwilling to submit himself to the restrictions of cult and creed. Therefore I could not conscientiously affix a label to my own outlook or to the teaching about this existence which I have embraced. In my secret heart I separate myself from nobody, just as this teaching itself excludes no other in its perfect comprehension. Because I had to call it by some name as soon as I began to write about it, I called it philosophy because this is too wide and too general a name to become the property of any single sect. In doing so I merely returned to its ancient and noble meaning among the Greeks who, in the Eleusinian Mysteries, designated the spiritual truth learnt at initiation into them as "philosophy" and the initiate himself as "philosopher" or lover of wisdom. [Dup in Basics]

Now genuine wisdom, being in its highest phase the fruit of a transcendental insight, is sublimely dateless and unchangeable. Yet its mode of expression is necessarily dated and may therefore change. Perhaps this pioneering attempt to fill the term "philosophy" with a content which combines ancient tradition with modern innovation will help the few who are sick of intellectual intolerances that masquerade as spiritual insight. Perhaps it may free such broader souls from the need of adopting a separative standpoint with all the frictions, prejudices, egotisms, and hatreds which go with it, and afford them an intellectual basis for practising a profound compassion for all alike. It is as natural for those reared on limited conceptions of life to limit their faith and loyalty to a particular group or a particular area of this planet as it is natural for those reared on philosophic truth to widen their vision and service into world-comprehension and world-fellowship. The philosopher's larger and nobler vision refuses to establish a separate group consciousness for himself and for those who think as he does. Hence he refuses to establish a new cult, a new association, or a new label. To him the oneness of mankind is a fact and not a fable. He is always conscious of the fact that he is a citizen of the world-community. While acknowledging the place and need of lesser loyalties for unphilosophical persons, he cannot outrage truth by confining his own self solely to such loyalties.

Why this eagerness to separate ourselves from the rest of mankind and collect into a sect, to wear a new label that proclaims difference and division? The more we believe in the oneness of life, the less we ought to herd ourselves behind barriers. To add a new cult to the existing list is to multiply the causes of human division and thence of human strife. Let those of us who can do so be done with this seeking of ever-new disunity, this fostering of ever-fresh prejudices, and let those who cannot do so keep it at least as an ideal--however remote and however far-off its attainment may seem--for after all it is ultimate direction and not immediate position that matters most. The democratic abolishment of class status and exclusive groups, which will be a distinctive feature of the coming age, should also show itself in the circles of mystical and philosophic students. If they have any superiority over others, let them display it by a superiority

of conduct grounded in a diviner consciousness. Nevertheless, with all the best will in the world to refrain from starting a new group, the distinctive character of their conduct and the unique character of their outlook will, of themselves, mark out the followers of such teaching. Therefore whatever metaphysical unity with others may be perceived and whatever inward willingness to identify interests with them may be felt, some kind of practical indication of its goal and outward particularization of its path will necessarily and inescapably arise of their own accord. And I do not know of any better or broader name with which to mark those who pursue this quest than to say that they are students of philosophy.(P) (20:1.18)

It is the business of philosophy to cast out error and establish truth. This takes it away from the popular conceptions of religion. Philosophy by its very nature must be unpopular; hence it does not ordinarily go out of its way to spread its ideas in the world. Only at special periods, like our own, when history and evolution have prepared enough individuals to make a modest audience, does philosophy promulgate such of its tenets as are best suited to the mind of that period. (20.2.7)

Viewed from the standpoint of the house in which we all have to live--that is, the body--Advaita Vedanta seems to deal only in ultimate abstractions--however admirable and lofty its outlook. The body is there and its actuality and factuality must be noted and, more, accepted. This is why I do not give any other label to the ideas put into my later books than the generic name philosophy. I do not call it Indian philosophy since there are ideas in the books which do not belong to India at all. I do not identify it with any particular land, race, religion, or teacher from the ancient past or the modern present. Philosophy cannot be limited only to abstract ideas. It includes those ideas but it also includes other things. Its original Greek meaning, "love of wisdom," concerns the whole of man, and not only his abstract thoughts, intellect, feelings, body, or relation to the world around him. It concerns his entire life: his contacts with other people, the morality which guides him in dealing with them, and finally his attitude towards himself. Philosophy must be universal in its scope; therefore, it may embrace ideas which originate not only in India or in America or in Europe, but in every other period of civilization. Not all ideas are philosophical, but only those which are true, useful, in harmony with the World-Idea, and able to survive the test of practice and applicability. 20.1.128

The philosophic outlook rises above all sectarian controversy. It finds its own position not only by appreciating and synthesizing what is solidly based in the rival sects but also by capping them all with the keystone of nonduality. 20.1.471

It is the joyous duty of philosophy to bring into systematic harmony the various views which mankind has held and will ever hold, however conflicting they seem on the surface, by assigning the different types to their proper level and by providing a total view of the possible heights and depths of human thought. Thus and thus alone the most opposite tendencies of belief and the most striking contrasts of outlook are brought within a single scheme. All become aspects, more or less limited, only. None ever achieves metaphysical finality and need never again be mistaken for the whole truth. All become clear as organic phases of mankind's mental development. Philosophy alone can bring logically opposite doctrines into harmonious relation with each other by assigning them to

their proper places under a single sheltering canopy. Thus out of the medley of voices within us philosophy creates a melody. 20.1.481

Dualism answers the intellect's questions and satisfies the heart's yearnings but monism responds to the intuition's highest revelations. Both standpoints are necessary, for man is both a thinking and a feeling being; it is not enough to regard him only as an intuiting one. But this does not mean they are all on the same level. What is silently revealed to us by inner stillness must always be loftier than what is noisily told us by intellectual activity. 20.1.476

The comparative study of religion, mysticism, and metaphysics, as they have appeared in different centuries and in different parts of the world, will have a liberating effect on those who approach it in a thoroughly scientific independent and prejudice-free spirit. A comparative view of all the different spiritual cultures leads to a broader understanding of each particular one. 20.1.479

Philosophy can be true to itself, to its highest purpose and clearest perception, only by discarding all bias and prejudice, narrowness and polemics, and accepting the visitations of grace through whatever mode it chooses to manifest. Philosophy must and does welcome the old and traditional but refuses to confine itself to that alone. It must and does greet the new and original if the holy spirit is therein too. It cannot be tied by time or place, group or race, celebrity or anonymity. 20.1.482

Philosophy does not indulge in a superficial, anaemic eclecticism but in a large and living synthesis. Thus, it wholeheartedly advocates the study of Indian spiritual culture if made from an independent standpoint and included in a comparative view, but it unhesitatingly refuses to swallow wholesale the same study from a convert's standpoint and as the follower of some guru. 20.1.484

None of these teachers tells, or seems able to tell, the whole story. Each gives out all he can--a fragment of it. The hour is at hand when they should be joined together, when a synthesis of truth should be made from all of them. 20.1.508

[It is the incapacity of our thinking, the poverty of our perception, the vividness of our sense-experiences, and the encrustation of our habitual outlook which creates and maintains the illusion of the world's materiality and prevents us from noting that it is really a presence within consciousness. How can those who test reality like Dr. Johnson by using their feet or like any bricklayer by using their hands affirm any other doctrine than that of materialism? Contrarily, how can those who use their God-given intelligence to test reality arrive in the end at any other doctrine than that of mentalism? Those materialists who tell

us today that the line of the soul is an unscientific one and that it is a legacy left to us by primitive simpletons are themselves unscientific and oversimple. For] ...science, which began by repudiating mind and exalting matter, is being forced by facts to end by repudiating matter and exalting mind. This is why philosophy today must sharply emphasize and teach, alongside of ancient lore, the profounder mentalist import of vital facts of modern discovery which have not yet received their deserved reward of recognition from the world. 21.4.128

The time will come, and cannot be avoided, when both the new and the accumulated facts will force scientists to regard Mind as the real thing they have to deal with, and matter as a group of states of mind. But by that time they will be something more than mere scientists alone; they will be somewhat on the way to becoming philosophical scientists. 21.4.164

The belief that to touch a wooden stick is to touch matter is no longer good science. And it was physics, a science with its feet well on the solid ground, which brought about this striking change in outlook. 21.4.165

In this century the two streams of science and mysticism are converging into mentalism. 21.4.166

When a mystical seer proclaimed on the basis of his own insight that the reality of the universe was not matter but mind, educated people could afford to disregard his proclamations. But when leading scientists themselves proclaimed it on the basis of verifiable facts and rational reflections, they could not help giving their confidence to it. Consequently, those who have seriously absorbed the latest knowledge have been falling away from intellectual materialism. It is indeed only the uneducated, the half-educated, the pseudo-educated, and the word-educated who today believe in this miserable doctrine. 21.4.167

If therefore I began these studies with Indian texts I was compelled to abandon my original premise that the full and pure teaching could be found in them alone and had to widen my research until it again became an all-Asiatic one. The Ariadne's thread which finally led me through this metaphysical maze was indeed placed in my hands whilst visiting Cambodian China where I encountered amid the deserted shrines of majestic Angkor another visitor in the person of an Asiatic philosopher. From him I received an unforgettable personal esoteric instruction whose final vindication unfortunately had to wait a little longer and whose inspiring demonstration of the value of a human guide to make a clearing through this thick jungle of obscurity and mystery, was memorable. PB The Wisdom of the Overself *Preferatory*

Even my former books were mostly based on the old outlooks, the old limited viewpoints which the new knowledge transcends. 12.2.189