

A Mystical Unfoldment

From *The Philosophy of Consciousness Without an Object* by Franklin Merrell-Wolff

It was during a period when I was a student in the Graduate School of Philosophy at Harvard University that, finally, I became convinced of the probable existence of a transcendent mode of consciousness that could not be comprehended within the limits of our ordinary forms of knowledge. Several factors converged in the forming of this conviction. For one thing, a considerable portion of western philosophy from the Greeks to the present day seemed to imply some sort of insight into Reality that was not reducible to observation or derivable from immediate experience by logical deduction, however acute the course of reasoning might be. At the same time, the profound assurance of truth I had realized in my studies in pure mathematics did not seem to be explained satisfactorily by any of those philosophical interpretations that aim to show that mathematics is derived from the facts of the external world by mere abstraction. Throughout all discussion, the feeling persisted that at the root of mathematics there lay a mystery, reaching far deeper than anything attained through the senses. In addition, for a period of three years, I had had a degree of contact with the Buddhist, Vedantist, and Theosophical phases of oriental thought, and in all these the evidence of some sort of transcendental consciousness was peculiarly decisive. On the other hand, as a factor that acted in a sort of negative sense, the various philosophies that repudiated the actuality of any transcendental or mystical reality seemed to have the effect of barrenness, which left them far from satisfactory. Meanwhile, acting beneath the surface of my consciousness, there was a more or less inarticulate faith that insisted that the truly valid interpretation of reality must be such as would satisfy through and through, and thus not be barren. Yet the dialectical and polemical processes of the various western schools of thought were inadequate for supplying the completely satisfactory solution that, while affording the appropriate recognition of the needs of experience and of reason, at the same time satisfied the hunger for assurance and depth. However, the evidence from history seemed to make it clear that at least some few among mankind had achieved this assurance, which was both reasonable and full. So it seemed to me to be highly probable that there must be mode of consciousness or knowledge not yet comprehended by epistemology and psychology as developed in the West.

At that time I had no clear idea of what this knowledge might be, or of the methods by which one might hope to attain it. I had had some brief contact with the oriental manuals on transformation and realized that they seemed to point to a kind of consciousness that, while not generally realized by mankind, yet was potentially within the range of human attainment. At first I attempted to interpret the material contained within these manuals in the conceptual forms of western thought, but always in these efforts I finally met failure. I soon found enough to know that there was something concealed within the manuals, because I noted certain subtle affective changes they induced within me, and there was aroused also a sense of something near that yet defeated the efforts of my understanding to comprehend. So I began to feel sure of a hidden somewhat to which these manuals were related, if for no other reason than that their first effect was to leave me disturbed and restless. The desire for peace of mind sometimes counseled me to turn away from them, but then the realization that the subsequent position would be arbitrary and artificial, and therefore a repudiation of an honest search for reality, whatever that might be, always forced me to return to those disturbing manuals.

It soon became clear, if this search in a new direction was to be successful, I had to reach beyond anything contained within the academic circles of the West. The manuals demanded a life-practice or attitude that involved the whole man, and thus the requirements were incompatible with the attitude of a tentative *trying*, while part of the man stood back enclosed in a sort of reserve. Again and again I found the statement that, if a man would attain the transcendent realization, he must renounce all, and not merely a part, of what he personally is. I did not find this an easy step to consummate. For years I resisted it, offering part of myself, yet holding back a certain reserve. During all this time, I realized only imperfect and unsatisfactory results, and often regretted the experiment. But it was not long before I found that I had gone too far to turn back. I had realized enough to render forever barren the old pastures, and yet not enough to know either peace or satisfaction. For some years, I rested in this position of indecision, without achieving much visible progress. Yet meanwhile, as time rolled on, progressive exhaustion of the world-desire developed, while concomitantly there grew a greater willingness to abandon all that had been reserved and so compete the experiment.

As the years passed, I began to form a better idea of the goal and of the reasons underlying the requirements of the manuals. All this helped to arouse a greater will to effort, and so I began to experiment more deliberately with the various transformational techniques that came before my attention. All, or nearly all, these were of oriental origin, and in most cases I found them disappointing in their effectiveness. But, finally, I realized that there are several techniques and that these are designed to meet the needs of quite various temperaments and psychological organizations. In time, it became clear that there are important temperamental and psychical differences as between orientals and occidentals, and that this fact implied modification of methods. So I began seeking for the invariable elements in the different techniques, with a view to finding just what was essential. Ultimately, I found one oriental Sage with whose thought and temperament I felt a high degree of sympathetic rapport. This Sage was the Vedantic philosopher known as Shankara. I found myself in striking agreement with the more fundamental phases of his thought and quite willing to apply the highly intellectual technique that he had charted. It was in this Sage's writings that I finally found the means that were effective in producing the transformation I sought.

In the meantime I had met various individuals and groups who offered and rendered assistance in the direction I was seeking to go, and from all of them I must acknowledge having received positive values which had a progressively clarifying effect upon the understanding. But none of them offered methods that proved decisively effective with me. Nearly all these placed their predominant stress upon feeling-transformation and failed to satisfy the intellectual demands that, with me, always remained strong. Of all such Teachers whom I met, either through their living presence or their written word, Shankara, alone, adequately satisfied the intellectual side of my nature. So, while I owe much to many whom I have known in one way or another, it yet remained for Shankara to offer the hint that proved to be decisive.

However, even Shankara did not supply all the specifications for the method that became finally effective. Also, I had to discover adaptations that would satisfy the needs of an academically trained occidental nature. None of these adaptations violated any of the fundamentals of Shankara's teaching. But what I added as a sort of creative discovery was peculiarly decisive in its effect. At the present time, I am convinced that some such original discovery is vitally important in effecting a self-induced transformation.

In the period just preceding the hour when success finally crowned a search that covered nearly a quarter of a century, certain features characteristic of the transcendental consciousness had become theoretically clear. I had attained an intellectual grasp of the vitally important fact that transcendent consciousness differs from our ordinary consciousness in the primary respect that it is a state of consciousness wherein the disjunction between the subject to consciousness and the object to consciousness is destroyed. It is a state wherein self-identity and the field of consciousness are blended in one indissoluble whole. This supplied the prime characteristic by which all our common consciousness could be differentiated from the transcendent. The former is all of the type that may be called subject-object or relative consciousness.

The second fact of primary importance, that I now understand, was that the common denominator, as it were, of both kinds of consciousness lay in the subject or self. This fact is identical, in a significant degree, with the fundamental discovery of Descartes, i.e., that when everything is submitted to critical examination, it still remains impossible to doubt one's own being, however little one may be able to understand the nature of that being. I also discovered the essential timelessness of the subject, or self, and that in its purity, unmixed with any objective element, it can never truly be an *object* of consciousness. I readily realized that if pure subjectivity, or the bare power to be aware, was a permanent or unchanging element and therefore must, as a consequence, stand outside of time and be unaffected by any history, then it must be, of necessity, immortal. I saw that this kind of immortality is wholly impersonal and does not, by itself, imply the unlimited persistence of the quality of individuality that distinguishes one man from another. But the finding of one immortal element affords a definite anchorage and security, grounded in certainty of an order far superior to that of any kind of faith. When I had reached this point in the unfoldment of my understanding, I really had achieved the positive value of decisive importance that, some years later, was to prove the effective entering wedge for opening the Way to the transcendental level of consciousness.

While, in addition to the principles or facts just discussed, there are a number of other statements relative to the transcendent that can be found in literature, yet, in my judgement, the recognition of these is all that is absolutely essential to prepare the understanding for the Transcendental Awakening. These principles or facts are clearly of noetic value, and they can be appreciated quite apart from any affective transformation that may be associated with the arousing of transcendental apperception. In fact, it may be entirely possible that a sufficiently concentrated meditation upon the inner significance of these principles might prove an efficient means for effecting the transformation without the aid of any other subsidiary factor. However, they were not the sole factors that were operative in my experience, though they occupied the position of first importance.

Concurrently with the attainment of the preliminary noetic adjustment, certain important transformations were developing in the affective and conative side of my nature. Early in my studies, I found that the manuals emphasized the necessity of killing out desire. This proved to be a difficult step to understand and far from easy to accomplish. Desire and sentient life are inseparable, and so it seemed as though this demand implied the equivalent of self-extinction. It was only after some time that I discovered that the real meaning consisted in a changing of the polarization of desire. Ordinarily, desire moves toward objects and objective achievements, in some sense. It is necessary that this desire should be given another polarization so that, instead of objects and achievements in the world-field being sought, an eternal and all-encompassing

consciousness should be desired. This interpretation clarified the meaning of the demand and rendered it intellectually acceptable, but did not at once effect the required repolarization. To accomplish this, the wearing power of time proved to be necessary. As the years passed, the outward polarization of the desire did grow weaker, and some months just prior to the hour when the radical transition in consciousness was consummated, it actually had become transformed into a distaste for practically everything belonging to the world-field. It seemed that all in the world-field was drained dry of every significant value. Though there still remained vast quantities of objective secular information of which I was ignorant and that I could have acquired, and there were many experiences that I had never sampled, yet I realized that, as such, they were void of depth and had no more value than David Hume's game of backgammon. If there had not been a compensating polarization of desire in another direction, it seems highly probable that at this stage my state of consciousness would have had a very pessimistic and depressed coloring, but as there was at the same time a strong growth of desire for transcendent consciousness, the result was that the psychical energy did have an outlet. However, there was a critical point at which the shifting polarization had attained something like a neutral balance.¹ At this point there was no decisive wish to go either way and the whole field of interest took on a colorless quality. As I look back upon the whole experience, I would say that this stage was the only one that involved real danger. I found it necessary to supplement the neutral state of desire by a forcibly willed resolution, and thus proceed in the chosen direction regardless of the absence of inclination.² However, once past the critical point, the inward polarization of desire developed rapidly, and presently spontaneous inclination rendered the forcibly willed resolution unnecessary.

In addition to the barrier of desire directed toward external objects, the manuals specify a very important and closely related barrier to attainment. This is egoism. The strong feeling for, and attachment to, egoistic differentiation is an insurmountable barrier to a kind of consciousness that, instead of being discrete and ego bound, is continuous, free, and impersonal. So a certain critical degree of dissolution or solution of the egoistic crystallization must be effected if the transformation of consciousness is to be successful. I did not find it difficult to appreciate the logic of this requirement, but again, as in the case of outwardly polarized desire, the difficult part was the actual dissolution of the egoistic feeling. The ordinary technique is the practice of practical altruism until personal self-consideration sinks well into the background. But this is not the only means that effects this result. A desire for the transcendent Self and a love of universals also tend toward the required melting of the egoistic feeling. In this part of the discipline, I found that my already established love of mathematics and philosophy was an aid of radical importance that, supplemented by more tangible practices, finally produced the requisite degree of melting.

In my experience, the preliminary noetic adjustment required much less time and effort than the requisite affective and conative reorientation. With the latter, the wearing-down process of time proved to be necessary. Unquestionably, if the feelings and will could have been made to respond more readily to the leadership of understanding, then the transformation of the consciousness would have been achieved in much less time. But, as human nature is constituted, it appears this phase of the labor does require much patience and the assistance of the maturing that time brings in its natural course.

Preceding the hour of the radical transition in consciousness, there had been two premonitory recognitions of substantial adjustment value. The first occurred about fourteen years before, and second only about nine months prior to, the culminating stage. The first of these illustrates the important difference between the theoretical appreciation of a fact or principle and a kind of adjustment to, or realization of, that which I have called "Recognition." For some years I had been familiar with the Indian concept of Atman and understood that it meant a spiritual "Self" conceived as being the irreducible center of consciousness on which all knowledge or consciousness in the relative sense depended. I had found no empiric or logical difficulty with this concept and had accepted it as valid. I understood quite well, as an immediate implication, that since I am the Self, therefore, the judgement "I am Atman" is practically a tautology. I did not see how any idea could have greater philosophical clarity. But on one occasion, when a friend was outlining a method of systematic discrimination between the Self and the not-Self, finally culminating in the judgement "I am Atman," I recognized in this a profound truth carrying the very highest significance. With this there came a new sense of insight and of joy. It made a difference in me that the theoretical acceptance and appreciation of the judgement had failed to do.

In analyzing the difference between the recognition and the theoretical acceptance without recognition, it seems that in the latter instance there is a quality that might be called mediative distance, while in the case of recognition there is the closeness of immediacy. There is something nonlogical that is added, but, while nonlogical, it is not antilogical. Part of the effect was an increased clarity in the apperception of the logical implications that followed. Spontaneously and with intellectual ease I began thinking consequences that were practically identical with a number of fundamental statements in the *Bhagavad-Gita*. But now these thoughts were my thoughts in a close and intimate sense, whereas prior to that time they were simply ideas that I had touched through my reading, often not feeling very sympathetic with them. Within a considerable range of consciousness, I now felt assurance, whereas previously I had merely believed or accepted because of theoretical considerations. Ideas that formerly had had the effect of constraint upon me now had a definitely joyous and freedom-giving value. And it was only a momentary flash of insight that had made all this difference! The effect persisted and has never been lost at any time since, though the freshness of the insight gradually waned and became a "matter of course" in the background of my thinking and valuation. Much that had been previously obscure in a certain class of oriental thinking I now found myself understanding with a greatly increased clarity.³

In connection with the foregoing recognition, it seems clear to me that the prior theoretical acceptance has prepared the soil of the mind, as it were, for the subsequent realization. While there is something additional in the recognition as compared to the theoretical acceptance, that "something" is not in the nature of concepts nor of an added experience in any perceptive sense. It rather belongs to some other dimension of consciousness, not contained in either concepts or percepts, but which has a radical effect upon value. It may lead a train of thought to new discovery, but is not itself revealed in a subsequent analysis if that train of thought. The formal relationships of the final expression of the thought may be quite clear and understandable to the trained intellect of a man who is without insight and they may stand up quite well under criticism. Yet the insight renders possible much that is beyond the power of the trained intellect that lacks the insight. It can lead the way in radical cognitive discovery and contribute a form to the timebound world that will have its effects, large or small, in the stream

of time. But he who is blind to this dimension of consciousness that I have called “Value” will see only a form, a mere configuration on the surface. Yet another who is awake to Value will, at the same time, recognize depth in the configuration. Also, one who is not awakened may, by dwelling upon the configuration through a method that has long been known as meditation, find the value-dimension aroused to recognition in his consciousness. And it is just this something additional, this somewhat that is over and above the concept, with all its traceable ramifications, that makes all the difference in the world!

The second premonitory recognition had a markedly different background, since it expressed itself in a judgement for which I had not been prepared by prior theoretical acceptance. I had been meditating upon the concept of “Nirvana” when, suddenly, it dawned upon me that I, in the inmost sense, am identical with Nirvana. My previous ideas upon this subject had involved a confusion that, while logical analysis should have dispelled it, none the less persisted. Despite statements to the contrary, with which I was familiar, I had been thinking of Nirvana as a kind of other world standing in disparate relation to this world of relative consciousness. Of course, I should have realized the hidden error in this view, as such an interpretation involved placing Nirvana in the relative manifold. But probably through intellectual laziness, I failed to carry my thought through on this point. The result was that the recognition effected for me a new cognitive discovery as well as a deepening and illuminating effect in the dimension of value. I readily saw the reason why so little had been said, and indeed why so little could be said, concerning Nirvana beyond the assertion of its reality. The inner core of the “I,” like Nirvana, is not an objective existence but is, rather, the “thread” upon which the objective material of consciousness is strung. Relative consciousness deals with the objective material but never finds the “thread” as an object. Yet it is this “thread” that renders all else possible. In fact, it is the most immediate and ever-present reality of all. Nirvana, like the “I,” cannot be located anywhere, as in a distinct place, for it is at once everywhere and nowhere, both in space and time. Upon this “thread,” space and time are strung just as truly as all perceptual experience and all thought consciousness and any other mode of relative consciousness there may be.

This second recognition had implications that actually were to become clear to me at the deepest stage of realization some ten months later. Presumptively, a sufficiently acute thought would have developed the consequences beforehand, but I failed to do this. At any rate, I now see that this second recognition contained the seed of insight that renders clear the Buddhist doctrine of anatman, which in turn constitutes an important part of the central core of that philosophy, as well as one of its most obscure doctrines.⁴ But I shall return to this point at a later time when the ground for its discussion has been better prepared.

For the last two or three years prior to the culminating transition in consciousness, I was aware of a decrease in my intellectual capacity. The meaning of philosophic and mathematical literature that formerly had been within the range of my working consciousness became obscure. The effort to understand much that I had formerly understood reasonably well simply produced drowsiness. At the time this caused me considerable concern, and I wondered whether it might be a sign of premature intellectual aging. However, it proved to be a passing phase, for shortly prior to the culminating point the intellectual alertness returned, and after that it became more acute than it ever had been. The recognition, among other effects, proved to have the value of an intellectual rejuvenation. I mention this development since it seems to have some significance. When observed retrospectively, it would seem that there had been a withdrawal of energy from

the intellectual field into some level that was not consciously traceable. As yet, I have not found any records of an analogous experience on the part of others when approaching the mystical crisis. I am noting this development for such value as it may ultimately prove to have.⁵

During the last few weeks just preceding the transformation, there grew within me a strong expectation and a kind of inner excitement. I felt within me an indefinable assurance that, at last, the culminating success of a long search was within reach. I felt that I was near the discovery of the means whereby I could surmount the apparently unscalable walls that seemed to lie all about. I had been studying and meditating upon the philosophic writings of Shankara more seriously than at any prior time and sensed that in them was to be found the vital key. At the same time, I had a strong desire for a period of solitude. Presently the opportunity came to satisfy this desire, and taking a volume of Shankara's translated works with me, I spent several days in a wild and lonely place.⁶ The study and thought of this period proved to be decisively effective. As a result of this effort an idea of cardinal importance was evolved in my mind. In this case, as in the first premonitory recognition, the value of the idea did not inhere in its being something new to thought as such. It exists in literature, and I had come across it in my reading, but at the time in question it came with the force of a new discovery in a matrix of assurance and with an affective quality that I can hardly express in any other way than to say it was "Light." While the moment of this discovery was not that of the culminating recognition, yet I have reason to believe that it was the critical or turning point that rendered the final recognition accessible. It altered the base of thought and valuation in a profound way and in a direction confirmed by the subsequent realization. Because of the important part this idea played, a brief elucidation of it seems necessary.

It is a common, and apparently quite natural, habit with us to regard the material given through the senses as being something actual. Our science and philosophy may fail to give an adequate interpretation of this material, but still we generally feel sure that it is something. So the larger portion of the human search for Reality is in the field of the things given to our consciousness through the senses. But in my reflecting upon the idea that this universe of things is derived from and dependent upon a primordial plenum, it suddenly struck me that in the midst of the bare and original fullness there could be nothing to arouse discrete or concrete consciousness. It is a similar fact of psychology that a long-continued or unchanging state or quality tends to become unconscious. Thus, in a state of health an individual is only slightly conscious of his body in its organic functioning. But let there be some form of injury or sickness, and at once the individual is conscious of his organism as he was not before. Likewise, when a long-continued period of bodily pain has ceased, there is then a concrete consciousness of well-being such as did not exist before the pain. In such a case, simply to be free of the pain has the value of an active joy, though the same bodily state did not have that value formerly. Through pain the joy-consciousness of health was aroused to recognition. Now, applying this principle in an ontological sense, it follows that the Consciousness of the original Fullness can only be aroused by first passing through the experience of "absence" or "emptiness," in some degree. Thus the active, concrete, and perceptual consciousness is to be viewed as an arousal of specific awareness through the partial blanking out of the full and perfectly balanced consciousness of the Primordial State. As a result, the world of things, apparently given through the senses, is actually a domain of relative emptiness. We become concretely aware only when contacting voids. There is nothing in this to invalidate the positive finding of natural science. Science studies the direct or indirect determinations of the senses and finds those relationships

binding the various parts that render possible the formulation of laws. The question as to whether the terms or facts of science have a substantial base, and if so, what its nature is, is a metaphysical question quite beyond the range and methodology of natural science. Scientific philosophy reveals a real critical acumen in dropping the notion of “substance” as being relevant to our kind of science. It says—I think correctly—that science is concerned with terms in various relations, and nothing else. When it goes further than that and says specifically or in effect that scientific knowledge is the only kind of real knowledge possible to man, or possible at all, it trips on the very error it charges against certain other philosophies, i.e., that of “definition by initial predication.”

Now, if it is relative emptiness that arouses to activity concrete consciousness, then it follows that actual substantiality is inversely proportional to sensibility or ponderability. There is most substance where the senses find least, and vice versa. Thus the terms-in-relation of the sensible world are to be viewed as relative emptiness contained in an unseen and substantial matrix. From this there follows, at once, a very important consequence. The discrete manifoldness and apparent pluralism of sensibly given things are quite compatible with a continuous and unitary substantial matrix. The monistic tendency of interpretations based upon mystical insight at once becomes clear, and here is afforded a reconciliation of the one and the many.⁷

It is not my purpose, at the present time, to enter upon an adequate philosophical defense of this interpretation, but simply to present the idea that was of decisive psychological importance with me in removing a barrier to mystical realization. At least, the validity of this idea was, and still remains, clear to me as an individual.

The idea I had just recognized made possible an effective conceptual reorientation. The totality of being had become divided into two phases. The higher phase I called the “substantial” or “transcendental.” This was supersensible and monistic, and served as the base in which the lower phase inhered. The latter phase thus became, by contrast, the sensible and phenomenal world, existing only through a complete dependence upon the supersensible and substantial. Within the latter existed endless multiplicity and divisibility.

There remained now merely the clearing up of the residual barriers to the complete identification of the self with the supersensible and substantial world, accompanied by the thorough divorcement of the self-identity with the phenomenal world. But a few days were required for the completion of this effort. Meanwhile, I had returned from physical solitude to the active concerns of social life, although I remained in a state of considerable mental detachment and continued brooding. Finally, on the seventh of August, 1936, after having completed the reading of Shankara’s discussion of “Liberation,” as given in the System of the Vedanta by Paul Deussen, I entered upon a course of meditative reflection upon the material just read.⁸ While engaged in the course of reflection, it suddenly dawned upon me that a common error in meditation—and one which I had been making right along—lay in the seeking of a subtle object or experience. Now, an object or experience, no matter how subtle, remains a phenomenal time-space existence and therefore is other than the supersensible substantiality. Thus the consciousness to be sought is the state of pure subjectivity without an object. This consideration rendered clear to me the emphasis, repeatedly stated by the manuals, upon the closing out of the modifications of the mind. But I had never found it possible completely to silence thought. So it occurred to me that success might be attained simply by a discriminative

isolation of the subjective pole of consciousness, with the focus of consciousness placed upon this aspect, but otherwise leaving the mental processes free to continue in their spontaneous functioning—they, however, remaining in the periphery of the attentive consciousness. Further, I realized that pure subjective consciousness without an object must appear to the relative consciousness to have objects. Hence Recognition did not, of itself, imply a new experiential content in consciousness.⁹ I saw that genuine Recognition is simply a realization of Nothing, but a Nothing that is absolutely substantial and identical with the Self. This was the final turn of the Key that opened the Door. I found myself at once identical with the Voidness, Darkness, and Silence, but realized them as utter, though ineffable, Fullness, in the sense of Substantiality, Light, in the sense of Illumination, and Sound, in the sense of pure formless Meaning and Value. The deepening consciousness that followed at once is simply inconceivable and quite beyond the possibility of adequate representation. To suggest the Value of this transcendental state of consciousness requires concepts of the most intensive possible connotation and the modes of expression that indicate the most superlative value art can devise.¹⁰ Yet the result of the best effort seems a very sorry sort of thing when compared with the immediate Actuality. All language, as such, is defeated when used as an instrument of portrayal of the transcendent.

There are implications and consequences following from such an insight that do fall within the range of formulation, and in this a man who has the appropriate skill can certainly do more than one who has little knowledge of the art of expression. But the immediate noetic and affective values of the insight, while they may be directly realized, cannot be conveyed by any formulation or representation whatsoever.

A definite line of demarcation must be drawn between the transcendental state of consciousness itself and the precipitated effects within the relative consciousness. The former is not an experience, but a Recognition or an Awakening on a timeless level of consciousness. The latter is an effect precipitated into the time-world and therefore has experiential and relative value. At the final moment, I was prepared not to have the personal, time-bound man share in any of the values that might inhere in the insight. But, very quickly, values began to descend into the outer consciousness and have continued to do so, more or less periodically, to the present day. These precipitated values have much that is of definite noetic content and decided affective value, well within the range of expression.

The listing and delineation of the elements that were precipitated into the relative consciousness from the first stage of insight is the next step.¹¹

1. The first discernible effect in consciousness was something that I may call a *shift in the base of consciousness*. From the relative point of view, the final step may be likened to a leap into Nothing. At once, that Nothing was resolved into utter Fullness, which in turn gave the relative world a dreamlike quality of unreality. I felt and knew myself to have arrived, at last, at the Real. I was not dissipated in a sort of spatial emptiness, but on the contrary was spread out in a Fullness beyond measure. The roots of my consciousness, which prior to this moment had been (seemingly) more or less deeply implanted in the field of relative consciousness, now were forcibly removed and instantaneously transplanted into a supernal region. This sense of being thus transplanted has continued to the present day, and it seems to be a much more normal state of emplacement than ever the old rooting had been.

2. Closely related to the foregoing is a *transformation in the meaning of "Self," or "I."* Previously, pure subjectivity had seemed to me to be like a zero or vanishing point, a somewhat that had position in consciousness but no body. So long as that which man calls his "self" had body, it stood within the range of analytic observation. Stripping off the sheaths of this body until none is left is the function of the discriminative technique in meditation. At the end there remains that which is never an object and yet is the foundation upon which all relative consciousness is strung like beads upon a string. As a symbol to represent this ultimate and irreducible subject to all consciousness, the "I" element, I know nothing better than zero or an evanescent point. The critical stage in the transformation is the realization of the "I" as zero. But, at once, that "I" spreads out into an unlimited "thickness." It is as though the "I" became the whole of space. The Self is no longer a pole or focal point, but it sweeps outward, everywhere, in a sort of unpolarized consciousness, which is at once self-identity and the objective content of consciousness. It is an unequivocal transcendence of the subject-object relationship. Herein lies the rationale of the inevitable ineffability of mystical insight. All language is grounded in the subject-object relationship, and so, at best, can only misrepresent transcendent consciousness when an effort is made to express its immediately given value.

3. There is a sense of enormous *depth penetration* with two phases barely distinguishable during the first stage of insight. The first phase is highly noetic but superconceptual.¹² I had awareness of a kind of thought of such an enormous degree of abstraction and universality that it was barely discernible as being of noetic character. If we were to regard our most abstract concepts as being of the nature of tangible bodies, containing a hidden but substantial meaning, then this transcendent thought would be of the nature of the meaning without the conceptual embodiment. It is the compacted essence of thought, the "sentences" of which would require entire lifetimes for their elaboration in objective form and yet remain unexhausted at the conclusion of such effort. In my relative consciousness, I knew that I was thinking such massive thoughts, and I felt the infiltration of value from them. In a curious way I knew that I KNEW in cosmical proportions. However, no brain substance could be so refined as to be capable of attunement to the grand cosmical tread of those Thoughts.

But still beyond the thoughts of cosmic proportions and illimitable abstraction there were further deeps transcending the furthest reaches of noetic and affective value. Yet, in this, the self-identity remained unbroken in a dimly sensed series of deeps reaching on to ever greater profundities of what, in one sense, was an impenetrable Darkness, and yet I knew It was the very essence of Light itself.

4. I knew myself to be *beyond space, time, and causality*. As the substantial, spatial, and transcendent "I," I knew that I sustained the whole phenomenal universe, and that time, space, and law are simply the self-imposed forms whereby I am enabled to apprehend in the relative sense.¹³ I, thus, am not dependent upon the space-time manifold, but, on the contrary, that manifold is dependent upon the Self with which I am identical.

5. Closely associated with the foregoing realization, there is a feeling of *complete freedom*. I had broken out of the bondage to the space-time manifold and the law-form governing this manifold. This is largely an affective value, but one which, to me, is of the very highest importance. The quest for me was less a search for bliss than an effort to satisfy a deep yearning for Freedom.

6. There is a sense of *freedom from guilt*. That feeling, which is variously called sense of sin, guilt, or karmic bondage, dropped completely away from me. The bindings of a discrete individuality no longer existed. The accounts were closed and the books balanced in one grand gesture. This came at once as an immediate affective value, but I realized readily the underlying rationale. As the individual and personal self, I was bound within the space-time field and necessarily incurred the rebound of all actions there, but, as the transcendent Self, I comprehended that field in its entirety, instead of being comprehended by it. So it might be said that all action and its rebounding were contained within ME, but left the Self, with which I am identical, unaffected in its totality.¹⁴

7. I both felt and knew that, at last, I had found the *solution of the "wrongness,"* the sensing of which constitutes the underlying driving force of all religion and much philosophical effort. Beneath the surface of life, in the world-field, there is a feeling of loneliness that is not dissipated by objective achievement or human companionship, however great the range and penetration of sympathetic adjustment. Religious and other literature afford abundant testimony that this feeling of solitude is very widely, if not universally, experienced. I am disposed to regard it as the driving motif of the religious quest. In common with others, I felt this solitude and realized that the sense of incompleteness that it engenders forces the individual to accept one or the other of two alternatives. He may accept the solitude and despair of ever attaining a resolution of it, in which case he accepts fundamental pessimism as part and parcel of the very core of his life. But the feeling of incompleteness may drive him on to a hopeful quest for that which will effect its resolution. The more common mystical resolution is a sense of Union with God, wherein a companionship with a transcendent otherness is attained. My own recognition had more the value of a sort of fusion of identity, wherein the self and the otherness entered into an indistinguishable blend. Before the final moment of the transformation, I was aware of an otherness, in some sense, that I sought, but after the culminating moment that otherness vanished in identity. Consequently, I have no real need of the term "God" in my vocabulary. I find it useful, at times, to employ this term in a literary sense, because it suggests certain values I wish to convey. But its significance is psychological rather than metaphysical.

Through the Recognition, I attained a state wherein I could be at rest and contented in the most profound sense. For me, individually, it was not necessary to seek further, to achieve further, nor to express further in order to know full enjoyment. However, there was a blot on the contentment that grew out of the realization of the pain of the many millions who live in this world, and also out of a knowledge that a private solution of a problem is only a part of the great problem of the philosopher, which is the attainment of a general solution that shall be of the widest possible universality and availability. But all this is not a defect in the adequacy of the transformed state of consciousness itself.

8. There is a decided increase in the realization of the affective qualities of *calmness and serenity*. In the immediate presence of the transcendent state, the disturbing factors produced by the circumstances and forces of the world-field lose their effective potency. They are simply dissolved away as something irrelevant, or as something that acts so far below one as to leave him in his real being untouched. When in the mystical state, there is no need for trying to be calm and serene, but rather these qualities envelope the individual without his putting forth any specific effort. Subsequently, when I have been out of the immediate presence of the state, it has

been easier for me to remain calm and serene than formerly, though the more I am out of the state, the greater is the effort required to retain these affective qualities.

9. The *significance and value of information is radically changed*. Formerly, I acquired information very largely as part of the search for the Real. In the transcendent state I felt myself to be grounded in the Real, in a sense of the utmost intimacy, and since then I have continued to feel this grounding, though involving sometimes less and sometimes more the sense of immediate Presence. At the present time, knowledge, in the sense of information, has value chiefly as an instrument of expression or a means to render manifest that which is already known to me in the most significant sense. This making manifest is valuable, not alone for the reaching of other individuals, but likewise for the enriching of my own personal consciousness. The abstract and superconceptual knowing attains a formal and experiential clarification through giving it concrete embodiment in thought. Nevertheless, in all this, knowledge-as-information serves only a secondary role, quite inferior to the vital importance it formerly had. It seems as though, in an unseen and dark sense, I already know all that is to be known. If I so choose, I can give a portion of this knowledge manifested form so that it is revealed to the consciousness of others, as well as to my own personal consciousness. But there is no inner necessity, at least not one of which I am conscious, that drives me on to express and make manifest. I feel quite free to choose such course as I please.

10. The most marked affective quality precipitated within the relative consciousness is that of *felicity*. Joy is realized as a very definite experience. It is of a quality more intense and satisfying than that afforded by any of the experiences or achievements that I have known within the world-field. It is not easy to describe this state of felicity. It is in no sense orgiastic or violent in its nature; on the contrary, it is quite subtle, though highly potent. All world-pleasures are coarse and repellant by contrast. All enjoyment—using the term in the Indian sense—whether of a pleasurable or painful type, I found to be more or less distasteful by contrast. In particular, it is just as completely different from the pleasures experienced through vice as it is possible to imagine. The latter are foiled by a sense of guilt, and this guilt persists long after the pleasure-quality of the vicious experience has passed. The higher felicity seems almost, if not quite, identical with virtue itself. I find myself disposed to agree with Spinoza and say that real felicity is not simply the reward of virtue, but *is* virtue. One feels that there is nothing more right or more righteous, for that matter, than to be so harmonized in one's consciousness as to feel Joy at all times. It is a dynamic sort of Joy that seems to dissolve such pain as may be in the vicinity of the one who realizes it. This Joy enriches rather than impoverishes others.

I doubt that anyone could possibly appreciate the tremendous value of this felicity without directly experiencing it. I felt, and feel, that no cost could be too high as the price of its attainment, and I find that this testimony is repeated over and over again in mystical literature. It seems as though but a brief experience of this Joy would be worth any effort and any amount of suffering that could be packed into a lifetime that might prove necessary for its realization. I understand now why so much of mystical expression is in the form of rhapsody. It requires an active restraint to avoid the overuse of superlatives, especially as one realizes that all superlatives, as they are understood in the ordinary range of experience, are, in fact, understatements. The flowery expressions of the Persian and Indian mystics are not at all overstatements. But this mode of expression is subject to the weakness that it suggests to the non-mystical reader a loss of critical perspective upon the part of the mystical writer. It is even

quite possible to be abandoned in the Joy, and so a real meaning does attach to the idea of “God intoxication.” On the whole, it seems probable that the most extreme experience of this Joy is realized by those in whom the affective side of their nature is most developed. If the cognitive interest is of comparable or of superior development, it seems likely that we would find more of the restraint that was evident in men like Spinoza and Buddha.

The Joy seems to be a dynamic force. If one is justified in saying there is such a thing as experiencing force, in the ordinary sense of “experience,” then it certainly is true that one experiences a force either associated with, or identical with, the Joy derived from the transcendental level. In my experience, the nearest analogy is that afforded by a feeling of force I have sometimes experienced in the vicinity of a powerful electric generator.¹⁵ There is something about it that suggests a “flowing through,” though it is impossible to determine any direction of flow, in terms of our ordinary spatial relationships. It induces a sense of physiological, as well as emotional and intellectual, well-being. The sheer joy in life of a healthy youth, who is untroubled by problems, faintly suggests a phase of this sense of well-being. It gives a glow to life and casts a sort of sheath over the environment that tends toward an effect of beauty which at times is very strong. I have demonstrated to my satisfaction that this joyous force, or whatever else it may be called, is capable of being induced, in some measure, in those who may be in the vicinity. I find there are some who will report feeling the joyous quality, even though the state I might be experiencing was not announced or otherwise noted. It is not inconceivable that in this “force” we are dealing with something that may be within the range of detection by some subtle instrument. Clearly there are detectable physiological effects. Nervous tensions are reduced and the desire for ordinary physical food decreases. In fact, one does have a curious sense of feeling nourished. On the other hand, there are some after effects that suggest that one’s organism has been subjected to the action of an energetic field of too intense or high an order for the nervous organism to endure easily. For my part, during the past eight months, I have experienced frequent alterations between being in this “force-field” and being more or less completely out of it. The latter I have come to regard as a sort of deflated state. Particularly in the early days and after periods when the “force” and joy qualities had been especially intense, I found that in the subsequent deflated states there was a subtle sense of fatigue throughout the whole body. Return of the joyous state would at once induce the feeling of well-being. However, I soon realized that a due regard for the capacities of the physical organism rendered necessary a discriminating restraint when inducing the joyous “force-field.” I found that this “force” was subject to the will in its personal manifestation and could be held within the limits of intensity to which the organism could adapt itself. In the process of time, it does seem that my organism is undergoing a progressive adjustment to the higher energy level.

There are times when this “force” seems to be of the nature of a flame with which I am identical.¹⁶ In general, this flame is not accompanied with a sense of heat, but under certain conditions it is. Thus, if, while in the “force-field,” I permit myself to feel disturbing affections, I begin to feel heat in the organism. The effect is of such a nature as to suggest that the affective disturbance has a value analogous to resistance in an electric circuit. It is well known that an electric conductor of sufficiently high resistance will produce heat, and so the analogy is readily suggested. Further, the “force-field” does seem, at times, to produce a feeling of heat in others who are in the vicinity. These are objective effects, apparently well within the range of objective determination. Yet, the inciting cause is a state of consciousness that I find to be subject, in considerable degree, to conscious control through the intervention of purely mental control with

no manual aids. Does this not confirm the suggestion of William James that there is such a thing as a penetration of energy into the objective field of consciousness from other zones of consciousness that are ordinarily in disparate relationship?

Though the symbols of the electromagnetic field and of fire go far in indicating the quality of this subtle and joy-giving “force,” they fall short of full adequacy. The “force,” at the same time, seems to be of fluidic character. There is something in it like breath and like water. At this point it is necessary in some measure to turn away from the mental habits of the modern chemist and physiologist and try to feel a meaning closer to that given by the ancients. It is important that the “water” should not be thought of as simply H₂O, and the breath as merely a pulmonary rhythm involving the inhalation and exhalation of air. In the present sense, the essence of the water and air lies in their being life-giving and life-sustaining fluids. The chemical and physical properties of these fluids are mere external incidents. In a sense that still remains a mystery to science, these fluids are vitally necessary to life. The joy-giving “force” is Life, but it is life in some general and universal sense of which life-as-living-organism is a temporary modification. Thus, to be consciously identical with this “force” is to be consciously identical with Life as a principle. It gives a feeling of being alive, beside which the ordinary feeling of life is no more than a mere shadow. And just as the shadow life is obviously mortal, the higher Life is clearly deathless. It may be said that time is the child of Life in the transcendent sense, while life-as-living-organism is the creature of time. Right in this distinction lies one resolution of the whole problem of immortality. So long as the problem is stated in terms of life-as-living-organism, immortality remains inconceivable. In fact, in this sense, all life is no more than a “birthing”-dying flux with no real continuity or duration at all. But the higher Life is identical with duration itself. Hence, he who has consciously realized himself as identical with the higher Life has at the same time become consciously identical with duration. Thus, death-as-termination becomes unthinkable, but, equally, birth has no beginning.

11. There is also associated with the deep feeling of Joy a quality of *Benevolence*. It seems as though the usual self-interest, which tends to be highly developed in the midst of the struggles of objective life, spontaneously undergoes a weakening in force. It is not so much a feeling of active altruism as a being grounded in a kind of consciousness in which the conflict between self-interest and altruism is dissolved. It is more a feeling of interest in good being achieved than simply that I, as an individual, should realize the good. Before the attainment of the Recognition, I felt a distinct desire for the attainment of good as something that I, individually, might realize, but once I became identified in consciousness with the transcendent state, the individually self-centered motivation began to weaken. It is as though there is a spreading out of interest so that attainment on the part of any self is my concern as truly as my own individual attainment has been. There is not the usual sense of self-sacrifice in this, but, rather, a growing impersonality of outlook. In such a state of consciousness, one could readily accept a course of action that would involve personal hardship, if only it would serve the purpose of bringing the realization more generally within the range of attainment. It is not a motivation in which the thought of heroism, nobility, or reward plays any part. It simply seems to be the appropriate and sensible course to follow if circumstances indicate that it is necessary. All this is a spontaneous affective state born out of the very nature of the consciousness itself, without thought of an ethical imperative. In the more deflated states of consciousness, I find the force of the feeling considerably weakened, and then it becomes necessary to translate it into the form of a moral imperative to set up a resistance to the old egoistic habits. But on the higher level, the

moral imperative is replaced by a spontaneous tendency that, when viewed from the relative standpoint, would be called benevolent.

The underlying rationale of this induced attitude seems clear to me. When the “I” is realized as a sort of universal or “spatial” Self, synthesizing all selves, the distinction between the “me” and the “thou” simply becomes irrelevant. Thus the good of one self is part and parcel with the good of all selves. Consequently, altruism and self-interest come to mean essentially the same thing.¹⁷

12. Associated with the transcendent Life-force, there is a very curious kind of *cognition*. It is not the more familiar analytic kind of intellection. To me, this development has proved to be of special interest, for by temperament and training my mental action, heretofore, has been predominantly analytic. Now analysis achieves its results through a laborious and painful dissection of given raw material from experience and reintegration by means of *invented* concepts applied hypothetically. This gives only external relations and definitely involves “distance” between the concept and the object it denotes. But there is another kind of intellection in which the concept is born spontaneously and has a curious identity with its object. The Life-force either brings to birth in the mind the concepts without conscious intellectual labor or moves in parallelism with such birth. Subsequently, when these concepts are viewed analytically and critically, I find them almost invariably peculiarly correct. In fact, they generally suggest correlations that are remarkably clarifying and have enabled me to check my insight with the recognition of others.

Undoubtedly, this cognitive process is a phase of what has been called by many “intuition.” For my part, however, I do not find this term wholly satisfactory, because “intuition” has been given a number of meanings that are not applicable to this kind of cognition. Accordingly, I have invented a term that seems much more satisfactory. I call it “*Knowledge through Identity*.” As it is immediate knowledge, it is intuitive in the broad sense, but as it is highly noetic, it is to be distinguished from other forms of immediate awareness that are largely, if not wholly, non-cognitive. There are intuitive types of awareness that are quite alogical, and, therefore such that they do not lead to logical development from out their own nature. In contrast, Knowledge through Identity is potentially capable of expansive development of the type characteristic of pure mathematics. Knowledge through Identity may give the fundamental propositions or “indefinables” from which systems can grow at once by pure deductive process. Knowledge through Identity is not to be regarded as an analytic extraction from experience, but rather as a Knowledge that is original and coextensive with a Recognizable, but nonexperiential, Reality. It is capable of rendering experience intelligible, but is not itself dependent upon experience.

A realization of Knowledge through Identity does not seem to be an invariable, or even usual, consequence of mystical unfoldment. My studies of the record have led me to the tentative conclusion that it occurs in the case of certain types of mystical unfoldment, of which Spinoza, Plotinus, and Shankara afford instances. In such cases, the cognitive interest and capacity is peculiarly notable. But the larger class of cases in which the mystical sense is well developed seems to be of a quite different type. The well-known Persian mystics, presumptively the larger number of the Indian mystics, most of the Christian mystics, and naturalistic mystics such as Whitman seem quite clearly to fall into some other classification or classifications. With all of these, the affective consciousness is dominant and the cognitive interest and capacity may

be—though not necessarily—but poorly developed. With them, expression is almost wholly in terms of art or way of life, rather than in terms of philosophical systems. Apparently, the noetic quality of their mystical consciousness is quite subordinate to the affective, and in some cases, even to the sensuous, values.

13. *Atypical features.* There are certain respects in which the precipitated effects from the transcendent consciousness, as experienced by me, differ from typical mystical experience. I have not known the so-called automatism, a class of psychical manifestations that are so commonly reported. My psychical organization does not seem to be of the type requisite for this kind of experience. I have never heard words coming as though uttered on another level of being and having the seeming of objective sound. Even the thought has not seemed to come from a source extraneous to myself. I have thought more deeply and more trenchantly than has hitherto been possible for me as a personal man, but the sense of immediate union with the thought has been greater than was ever true of the former personal thinking. Never has my thought been less mediumistic. Formerly, my personal thought has often been a reflection of a thought originated by someone else and not fully made my own before I used it. There is a certain kind of mediumship in this, although in this sense practically everybody is a medium part of the time and many all the time. The thought that I have found born in the Recognition is non-mediumistic in the strictest sense, since it is MY thought but more than my *personal* thought.

There never has been at any time a writing through my hand in an automatic sense. What I have written has been my own conscious thought, with full consciousness of the problems of word selection and grammatical construction. The effective words and the correct constructions I find myself able to produce much more easily than formerly, but there is a conscious selective effort required at all times.¹⁸

When in the field of the “Life-force,” the action of the understanding is both more profound and more trenchant than when in the “deflated” state, but the difference is one of degree and not of two radically separated and discontinuous states of consciousness of such a nature that the inferior consciousness is quite incapable of understanding what is written under the guidance of the higher. The inferior phase of consciousness, when operating by itself, does not understand as easily nor does it have as wide a grasp of the bearings of the thought. But, in some degree, the inferior phase readily becomes more or less infused with the superior by the simple application of the effort to understand. The effect is analogous to the superposition of two rays of light, with both of which I am identical, the resultant being an intensified consciousness that is at the same time relative and transcendent, in some way that is not wholly clear to introspective analysis.

These states of Recognition have never been associated with the so-called photisms. They most certainly had a Light-value, and I frequently have occasion to use the word “Light” to express an important quality of the higher consciousness, but this is “Light” as an illuminating force in consciousness and not a sensible light apparently seen as with the eyes. There have been a very few of these so-called photisms when in a kind of dreaming state when half asleep, but these have not occurred at times close to the periods of the deeper Recognitions.

Never have I had experience of the type commonly called psychical clairvoyance. It is possible that the strength of my intellectual interest operates as a barrier to this kind of experience. I admit having an interest in such experience and would consider it a valuable object

of study if it came my way. But I would not tolerate such a capacity for experience if the price exacted was a growth of confusion in understanding. On the whole, psychical clairvoyance seems to be quite frequently associated with mystical unfoldment, perhaps more the rule than the exception. There even seems to be some tendency to confuse this clairvoyance with genuine mystical value. However, the two are by no means identical, nor are they necessarily associated.

I have found that there is a very important difference between psychical experience and noetic Recognition. The transcendent Consciousness is highly noetic, but on its own level is quite impersonal. In order that a correlation may be established between the personal consciousness and the transcendental state, there must be an active and conscious intermediating agent. The evidence is that this intermediating agent may be, and apparently generally is, an irrational psyche of which the individual is more or less conscious. But the intermediation may be intellectual with little or no conscious correlation with the irrational psyche. It seems practically certain that the precipitated effects within the personal consciousness by the two routes should not be congruent in form.

14. If *ecstasy* is to be regarded as a state of consciousness always involving a condition of trance, then that state of consciousness that I have realized and called “transcendental Recognition” is not one of ecstasy. However, there is considerable reason for believing that Ecstasy, or Samadhi—the Indian equivalent—is not necessarily associated with trance. It becomes very largely a question of the basis of classification. If the externally discernible marks or symptoms of a state are to be regarded as determinate, then ecstasy, as ordinarily conceived, is a trance or trancelike condition. But if the inner consciousness-value is to be the ground of classification, then there is excellent evidence that Ecstasy or Samadhi may be realized without trance.¹⁹ The latter basis of classification seems to me to be of far more significance, for the external symptoms of trance mark widely different inner states of consciousness, such as those of hysteria, mediumship, and hypnosis, as well as Ecstasy in the higher sense.

By subsequent comparison it appears that the noetic and consciousness values that I have realized have a very great deal in common with those reported by Plotinus as characteristic of the state of Ecstasy. I find a marked congruency between my present outlook and that given in the teachings of Buddha and in the writing of Shankara. But neither of these men regarded the state of trance as necessary for the realization of the states they called Dhyana or Samadhi, although Buddha seemed to have no objection in principle to the use of trance as a means of attaining the higher state of consciousness. It seems rather clear that the state of the personal organism is a matter of secondary importance, while other factors are primarily determinant.

For my own part, never in my life have I lost objective consciousness, save in normal sleep. At the time of the Recognition on August 7, I was at all times aware of my physical environment and could move the body freely at will. Further, I did not attempt to stop the activity of the mind, but simply very largely ignored the stream of thought. There was, however, a “fading down” of the objective consciousness, analogous to that of a dimming of a lamp without complete extinguishment. The result was that I was in a sort of compound state wherein I was both here and “There,” with the objective consciousness less acute than normal. It is very probable that the concentrated inward state would have been fuller and more acute had the objective stream of consciousness been stopped entirely as in a trance, but with regard to this I cannot speak from personal experience.²⁰

The literature on the subject of mystical states very clearly reveals their transiency. Often the state is only momentary and, it is said, rarely exceeds two hours in duration. Of course, the only phase of such states that affords a basis for time-measurement is that part that overlaps the objective consciousness. The inmost content of the state does not lend itself to time-measurement at all. Its value, therefore, is not a function of time. But if we take the perspective of the personal consciousness, it is possible to isolate a period during which the recognition was more or less full, and this can be measured. In my own experience, I am unable to give definite data with respect to this feature. For the first ten days following the awakening, I was far too greatly occupied with the contemplation of the values unfolding in my consciousness to think of the question of time-measurement, and in addition, at that time I had not been familiar with psychological studies on the subject and so knew nothing about duration norms. As I look at the whole period retrospectively, I do not see how a very definite time-measurement could have been made. There was a sharply defined moment at which the state was initiated, but there was no moment at which I could say it definitely closed. A series of alternate phases and variable degrees of depth of consciousness are discernible, so that at times I have been more transcendently conscious and at others less so. A different base of life and valuation has become normal, so that, in one sense, the recognition has remained as a persistent state. Yet there are notable differences of phases.

During the first ten days, I was repeatedly in and out, or more in and more out—I am not sure which is the more correct statement—of what I have called the “Life-force” field. I soon found that the stronger intensity of the field was a real strain upon the organism and so I consciously imposed a certain restraint upon the tendency of the states to deepen until I finally achieved a certain adjustment and adaptation with respect to the nervous organism. After the close of the first ten days, it was suggested to me that it would be well to keep a record of the effects of the transformation, and so at that time I began to write and continued to do so for about four months. While the effort at formulation was a little difficult at first, the writing soon acquired momentum, and presently I found ideas developing in my consciousness faster than I could give them expression. During this whole period, there were many times when the consciousness was dominantly on the noetic level, with more objective intervals interspersed. At first, the range of oscillation was more notable than toward the end. In the course of time, it seems, the personal consciousness has gradually adapted itself to a higher level, so that the periods of inward penetration do not afford the same contrast as formerly. The first period of a little more than one month constitutes a phase that stands out by itself, with a fairly sharp dividing line at its culmination between the eighth and ninth of September. During this time the prime focus of my consciousness was toward the transcendent, while in the subsequent phase, continuing to the present, I have rather taken this transcendent consciousness as a base and focused more toward the relative world. The consequence is that there is a sense in which I look back to those first thirty-odd days as a sort of high point in consciousness, a seed-sowing period, from which various fruitings have followed ever since. Frankly, these thirty-odd days constitute a period that I view as the best I have ever known. Referring to a symbol that Plato has made immortal, I would say that this was a time when I stepped outside the “cave” and realized directly the glory of the “sun-illuminated” world, after which I turned back again to the life in the “cave,” but with this permanent difference in outlook—that I could never again regard the “cave life” with the same seriousness that I had once given it. Thus, in this cycle, there is something to be differentiated from all the rest.

During the first month, the current of bodily life was definitely weaker than during the preceding and following phases. The desire for sentient existence was decidedly below normal. The spontaneous inclination was all in the direction of the transcendent consciousness. Physical life was clearly a burden, a sort of blinder superimposed upon consciousness. I even felt a distaste for physical food. I am convinced that if I had not supplemented the weakened desire for physical existence by a definite and conscious will-to-live, the body would have started into a decline. I became hypersensitive and found it very difficult to drive an automobile in traffic. I had to exert the will consciously, where formerly I had acted through automatic habit. But on the other hand, I found the will more effective than previously, so I was enabled adequately to replace spontaneous inclination with conscious control. Fortunately, my earlier studies had prepared me for this state of feeling and I knew that I was facing a temptation that others had faced before me. For there is such a thing as a world-duty that remains even after the desire for sentient existence has disappeared. But this did not keep me from thinking how delightful it would be to abandon all to the transcendent consciousness.

Concomitantly with the loss of desire for sentient life, there was a growth in the sense of power. I felt I had a certain power of conscious control over forces that ordinarily operate beneath the level of consciousness, and my subsequent experience has tended to confirm this. It is a sort of raw power without the detailed knowledge of how to apply it. In other words, the knowledge of effective practical use had to be developed through experiment. But I have found, very clearly, that I possess a power that formerly I did not know. I can choose and will consciously, where formerly the current of unconscious forces was determinant.

Before the close of the first month, the decision to continue as an active factor in the world-field had become definite, despite the distaste I felt for this domain. It felt like turning one's back upon a rich mine of jewels after gathering but a handful, and then marching back into the dreary domain of iron and brass. However, I found that it could be done, and then I accepted what I thought would be a future in which the best would always be a memory. I had found what I sought during many years and could see nothing but anticlimax thereafter, so far as the immediately realized consciousness values were concerned. So the further Recognition, which closed the first cycle, came as a complete surprise, for not only did I not seek it, I did not even know that such a state existed, or if it existed, that it was within the range of human consciousness. I had now already known a state of consciousness that certainly had the value of Liberation. A subsequent search through mystical literature revealed that it was substantially congruent with mystical experience as such and was distinctly more comprehensive than many of the mystical unfoldments. So far as I was familiar with it, the Brahmanical literature always represented the Liberated State as the end-term of all attainment. In this literature, I had found nothing requiring more depth of insight than I now had glimpsed, although there was a vast mass of psychic detail quite foreign to my experience. So I was quite unprepared to find that there were even deeper levels of transcendence. However, had I understood a few obscure references in Buddhist literature, I would have been warned.

In order to reach some understanding of the culminating phase of the Recognition, certain contrasting facts concerning the first phase must be given emphasis. As I have already affirmed, there is sufficient evidence of the fact of mystical recognition, together with reported affective value, to render it an object of possible desire. Long ago I had learned enough to realize that it was desirable and had set forth in search of it. There also exists a sufficient statement of the

reasons why an individual who has attained this Recognition should turn his back upon it, as it were, to show that such a course was desirable in its social bearings. But there does not seem to be anything further that could be conceived as an object of desire. Now, the culminating effect of the present Realization with respect to desire is that the latter has fulfilled its office in the individual sense, and there is nothing more to wish for. I certainly felt in the transcendent state abundant completion and vastly more than I had anticipated. So, what more could there be?

I see now that there was a defect in this completion that kept it from being a full state of equilibrium. It consisted pre-eminently of the positive end-terms of the best in human consciousness. Thus it was a state of superlative Joy, Peace, Rest, Freedom, and Knowledge; and all this stands in contrast to the world-field as fullness contrasts emptiness.²¹ Hence there did exist a tension in the sense of attractiveness that was incompatible with the perfection of balance. There was a distinction between being bound to embodied consciousness and not being so bound that made a difference to me. I had to resist the inclination toward the latter state in order to continue existence in the former. In other words, there are in this earlier phase of Recognition certain tensions that call for a higher resolution. But it was the perspective of the culminating Recognition that rendered all of this clear. The first stage did not, of itself, disclose any further possibility of conceivable attainment, and so I was disposed to give it a greater terminal value than it really possessed.

So far I have outlined three progressively comprehensive Recognitions. Each was realized after a period of conscious effort in the appropriate direction. In each case I had some reason to believe that there was a goal to be sought. In the first two instances I was aware that there was something more remaining to be realized, because the sense of incompleteness was only partly liquidated. In the third instance this liquidation seemed to be complete, and then I simply turned my back upon the full individual enjoyment of it for such a period of time as might be necessary to fulfill some more comprehensive purpose reaching beyond individual concerns. In contrast, the culminating Recognition came with the force of an unexpected bestowal without my having put forth any conscious personal effort toward the attainment of it. Thus, in this case, my personal relationship or attitude was passive in a deep sense.

During the day preceding the final Recognition, I had been very busy writing and my mind was exceptionally clear and acute. In fact, the intellectual energy was of an unusual degree of intensity. The mood was decidedly one of intellectual assertion and dominance. This feature is interesting for the reason that it is precisely the state of mind that ordinarily would be regarded as least favorable for the "breaking through" to mystical modes of consciousness. The rule seems to be that the thought must be silenced or at least reduced in intensity and ignored in the meditation.²² In the records of mystical awakening, it is almost always made evident that preceding the state of Illumination there is at least a brief period of quiescence of conscious activity. Sometimes this appears as though there were a momentary standing still of all nature. For my part, I had previously been aware of a kind of antecedent stillness before each of the critical moments, though it was not translated as stillness of nature. But in the case of the fourth Recognition, the foreground was one of intense mental tension and exceptional intellectual activity. It was not now a question of capturing something of extreme subtlety that might be dispersed by a breath of mental or affective activity. It was more a case of facing an overwhelming power that required all the active phase of the resources of consciousness to face it.

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, that 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 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 that would suggest its noetic value as a whole, and this is the concept of "Equilibrium," yet even this is a concession to the need 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, is 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 for 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 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 that 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 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 defect 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 this, all this play of visible and invisible forces seem no more than a dream-drama during a moment's sleep in the illimitable vastness of Eternity. And so, from out of 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 function of the complex variable and 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” that embraced not merely the visible forms and 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 to an exceptional degree. In contrast, the final Recognition seemed like a movement in consciousness toward objectivity, but not in the sense of a movement toward 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 judgement: “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 the 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 co-terminous with an unlimited and abstract Space, while 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 that defeats all efforts at formulation. The primordial consciousness is timeless, but the self-analyzing action was a process occurring in time. And so the part that 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 that to me as an individual appeared to be of the greatest significance.

It seems to me that this that 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 that 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 of 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 richly "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 complimentary 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 co-partner 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 that 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 billions 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 dreams of life in form might delude themselves with imagining that a need existed. But I knew there was no reality in this dream.³⁰

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 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 party to 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 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 in 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 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 that 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 that could be called neither the Self nor God. No longer was "I" spreading everywhere through 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 all beings, all spaces and all times lie suspended in utter dependence. On that highest Peak I could Know no more, for the Deeps of deepest Darkness, and the SILENCE enshrouded in manifold sheaths of Silence rolled over me, and self-consciousness was blown out. But o'er this I heard as the faintest shadow of a breath of consciousness a Voice, as it were, from out a still vaster BEYOND.

There remains 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 that 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 8 and 9 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 that 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 level of intelligence. Frankly, I have not yet completely adjusted myself to the disillusionment that 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 anatomic doctrine of Buddha, and therefore differ in important respects from any extant western system.³¹

Notes

¹ In the symbolical language so commonly employed for portraying the stages on the Way, this "critical point" is represented by the desert symbolism. The field of consciousness is watered by the stream of libido (the term of analytic psychology), and when this stream is turned off, the garden or jungle that filled that field withers, leaving a

desert. Between the turning off of the libido-stream and its subsequent breakthrough on another course, there is a lapse of more or less time, or at least so I found it. The resultant state is one of aridity with no interest anywhere. Mystical literature is full of references to this stage.

² At this stage, encouragement from a Sage whom I knew was an important, perhaps decisive, help. But while this Sage encouraged and stimulated flagging interest, he would not tell me what to do, leaving me to my own devices.

³ In the contrast between the theoretical acceptance and the Recognition, I did not find any addition or diminution of thinkable content. But in the case of the recognition, the effect upon the mind was something like an insemination—a vitalizing force. In addition to the unseen, inward deepening of value, there was an objective effect, in that the thought flowed more spontaneously, more acutely, and with much greater assurance. The thought developed of itself, in high degree, without the sense of conscious labor. At the same time, I *knew* the truth of the thought and did not merely *believe* in it. Yet, everything that I could think and say might very well have been worked out by the ordinary methods of conscious intellectual labor. But in the latter case, the sense of assurance is lacking, as well as the sense of supernal value. With these recognitions there is, in addition to the transcendental values, a genuine rejuvenation and vitalization of the mind. This fact became extremely notable at the time of the later radical transformation.

⁴ The doctrine of the nonexistence of the atman. This is equivalent to the denial of the reality of the self, either in the sense of the personal ego or in that more comprehensive sense of denial of substantive self-existence of the subject, whether pragmatic or transcendental.

⁵ About two months prior to the “breakthrough,” while occupied with a course of lectures in a middle western city, I experienced a three-week period of heavy drowsiness. Except when actually on the platform, I desired to sleep practically all the time. I simply had to give way to this inclination a good many hours of each day, but it did not seem that I could ever get enough sleep. The condition broke very suddenly, and then my mind became more alert than it had been for some years. I was aware of the great inner excitement and somehow seemed to know that I was near the day of final success. In later studies of Dr. C. G. Jung’s contribution to the psychology of the transformational process, at least something of the meaning of this stage seemed to be clarified. In the language of analytic psychology, the transformation is preceded by a strong introversion of the libido, followed by a sort of brooding incubation. Normal sleep itself is manifestly an introversion, and so it is quite understandable that protracted introversion of psychical energy should produce a state of continuous drowsiness. From the standpoint of analytic psychology, the introversion of the libido and the incubation are the prior conditions of animation of contents of the unconscious depths of the psyche. I do not think that either von Hartmann or Jung has seen into the nature of the Unconscious as fully as possible, since their views are limited by the methodology of objective empirical research, aided by intuition, but, judging by the content of their contributions, lack the perspective of direct mystical realization. Nonetheless, I would judge the recorded studies of these two men as lying on the highest level of Western literature. I would rate Dr. Jung, by far, as the greatest Western psychologist, and von Hartmann as a philosopher deserving much higher valuation than he has yet received.

⁶ At the time of writing *Pathways Through to Space*, one of the purposes was the keeping of a record, not only of the inner processes as far as they lay within the field of consciousness, but as well to note external circumstances that might conceivably have some relevance. I had been acquainted with this as a standard practice of the psychological laboratory where subjects, or human reagents, were required to note bodily and psychical states of themselves, as well as more objective facts, as state of weather, external sounds, etc. This data might or might not have a bearing upon the outcome of a specific experiment, but the fact of its relevance or irrelevance could not be determined until the results of experiment were later analyzed by the experimenter. I followed this rule of procedure in my record, not necessarily implying that every noted circumstance was significant, but rather aiming to record all that I could think of that might subsequently prove to be significant, although it might seem to have no bearing at the time. One noted circumstance of this sort has proved to be surprisingly significant. At the time of the period of solitude, I was engaged part of the time in the exploration of a gold prospect in the region of the Mother Lode country of California. This entailed considerable periods underground, and while my thought was necessarily engaged a good deal of the time with the concrete details of what I was doing, yet my mind would repeatedly return to reflection upon the material in Shankara’s work, which I was reading much of at the time when not actually otherwise occupied. At that time I did not know that it was a standard practice in the Orient to place candidates for

the transformation inside caves at certain periods, and often for very long periods. It does, indeed, appear that there is some relation between the transformation of “rebirth” and the entering into the earth.

Jung’s researches have shown that in the symbolism of the Unconscious, the Unconscious itself is often represented by water and the earth, as well as by other symbols, so that a dream or hypnogogic vision, wherein an individual appears to enter water or the earth, carries the meaning of introversion of the libido into the Unconscious. In connection with the transformation this has the value of entering the womb of the Great Mother Unconscious, preliminary to the Rebirth. Now, there is some mysterious interconnection between the physical ritualistic reproduction of the processes of transformation in dreams and hypnogogic visions and those dreams and visions themselves. That such is the case is at least a tentative conclusion that is forced upon one as one studies the Indian and Tibetan Tantric literature, and the study of western ritualism simply tends to reinforce this conclusion. As I, myself, have never been oriented to ritualism and have never sought from it a personal value, the conclusion forced upon me that it does have important transformation value is quite objective, all the more so as I find in retrospect that I actually performed an exercise, unconscious of what I was doing, which is a conscious practice in the Orient.

That entering the earth, literally, would have a suggestive value to the non-intellectual part of the psyche is at once evident. But I cannot escape the conclusion that more than suggestion is involved. In some manner, actual life springs from the earth and the sea and so there is a sense, more than figurative, that the earth is, indeed, the Mother. Now, anyone who has real acquaintance with the transformation literature from the ancients to our day is bound to be impressed with the widely current rebirth symbolism. Jesus, himself, said, “Ye must be born again.” But all life comes from the womb. Nicodemus partly understood Jesus’ dictum, but, being a materialist, he could derive only a stupidly literal interpretation. The real gestation of the new Birth is in the womb of the Unconscious, and for this the literal entering of the earth facilitates the process. To find a rationale for this, one must turn to the recurring content of mystical thought. The mystic ever finds the world in complete correspondential relationship with inner psychical realities. Hence, objective relations are not irrelevant, though the degree to which they are determinant varies from individual to individual. With some, slight contact with these objective factors is enough; for others, protracted discipline is necessary.

⁷ It has come to my mind that the reader might be inclined to question whether this account may be called a narrative description, as I did call it in the last chapter, since so much of the writing is manifestly discursive. However, it really is narrative description, on the whole, since it is a record of a process of thought that took place and had vitally determinant effects in the past. Only in subsidiary degree is this autobiographical material related to the objective life of a physical personality. In much higher degree it is an autobiography of intellectual steps and processes. Thus the discursive material that appears here is primarily not interpretative after fact, but rather part of a process in which interpretative factors were traceably determinant in my own consciousness as it became more and more oriented to the transformation. These interpretations were pragmatically effective agents. Whether or not they have a larger objective truth-value is not the question that is before us at present. Later, I shall return to this larger problem.

⁸ At the time I was seated out of doors, a fact that may prove to be of some significance. References to a value attained by being under the sky with nothing intervening are to be found in mystical literature. Edward Carpenter has said that he could not write in the vein of *Towards Democracy* except when he was out of doors under the sky. It is significant that the Sanskrit word Akasha means “sky” as well as “space” “primordial matter,” and, in a certain sense, the “higher mind.” The sky is the matrix of Light. Thus the sun, the moon, and the stars are embedded in the sky, and the whole sky, from the perspective of the earth, is luminous. Thus, coming from underground out to under the sky is symbolical of leaving the dark place of gestation and entering the Light-world of new birth. That which was hidden becomes revealed; that which was unconscious becomes conscious.

⁹ The final thought before the “breakthrough” was the very clear realization that *there was nothing to be attained*. For attainment implied acquisition and acquisition implied change of content in consciousness. But the Goal is not change of content but divorcement from content. Thus Recognition has nothing to do with anything that happens. I am already That which I seek, and therefore, there is nothing to be sought. By the very seeking I hide Myself from myself. Therefore, abandon the search and expect nothing. This was the end of the long search. I died, and in the same instant was born again. Spontaneity took over in place of the old self-determined effort. After that I knew directly the Consciousness possessing the characteristics reported by the mystics again and again. Instead of this process being irrational, it is the very apogee of logic. It is reasoned thought carried to the end with mathematical completeness.

¹⁰ The Indian and Persian mystics have developed a sensuous poetic imagery for suggesting supernal Value, which reaches far beyond that of the representatives of any western race. To the western mind these portrayals seems extravagant. Actually, however, they are inadequate, since sensuous imagination is crippled at its root by its medium. Mathematical imagination, by being freed from sensuous limitation, soars much higher, but nearly everybody fails to have an appreciation of what has happened. As the reader may be interested in a sample of the Indian imagery, I shall quote a few lines from the opening part of the *Mahanivana Tantra* (translated by Arthur Avalon):

The enchanting summit of the Lord of Mountains,
resplendent with all its various jewels, clad with many a
tree and many a creeper, melodious with the song of many a
bird, scented with the fragrance of all the season's
flowers, most beautiful, fanned by soft, cool, and perfumed
breezes, shadowed by the still shade of stately trees;
where cool groves resound with the sweet-voiced songs of
troops of Aspara, and in the forest depths flocks of kokila
maddened with passions sing; where (Spring) Lord of the
Seasons with his followers ever abide (the Lord of
Mountains, Kailasa)...

The "Lord of the Mountains" is the door to the Transcendent.

¹¹ The reader is warned that this is still part of the record, and not the more systematic interpretation after fact. The contents precipitated into the relative consciousness as a result of the first insight had a more or less determinant part in preparing the ground for the culminating Recognition that came later, and thus are part of the aetiology of the process.

¹² By "superconceptual" I mean beyond the form of all possible concepts that can be clothed in words. However, the nature of this knowledge is nearer to that of our purest concepts than it is to perceptual consciousness.

¹³ Surely no one will be so clumsy as to suppose this "universe-sustaining I" is any more the personal "I" than the reflection of the sun in water is the real sun itself.

¹⁴ The residual personality continues to exist by karma, and continues to pay prices and reap rewards. But all this lies below the new base of reference.

¹⁵ In my reading some years subsequent to writing this, I was particularly impressed by a reference to the "fire" in C. G. Jung's *Integration of the Personality*. Dr. Jung quotes an uncanonical saying attributed to the Christ, which runs as follows: "Whoever is near unto me, is near unto the fire." (p. 141) Here, also, identification with the "fire" is implied, as well as effects upon those who are near. Fire is that which burns up and so transforms (sublimates) everything except the ash. To understand these mystical uses of words one must isolate and idealize the essential functions of the corresponding literal or physical process.

¹⁶ At the time of the transformation, I called this joy-filled "force" the "Current." The latter term broke into my mind spontaneously and was not the result of an objective reflective search for a descriptive term. A "sense of flow" is an immediate fact of the state, to be distinguished from the objective interpretative judgement: "It is a flow." The step from the immediately given to the conceptual interpretation involves the problem of criticism, which I shall have to face later. But this much I may say here—there are interpretations that one feels at once are substantially true to the sense of the immediate value, while others falsify it. True, in this spirit, was the description I gave of the seeming of the Flow. I said it was a Flow that did not proceed from the past to the future, but rather, turned upon itself so that there was continuous motion with no progress or decline. I later found that this conception evoked no intelligible meaning in minds that were mystically blind. Certainly, in the sense of objective reference, it is meaningless; nonetheless I must still affirm its substantial truth with respect to the sense of the immediate realization. At the time I was not familiar with analogous references in mystical literature, but I have found them

since. Thus, in the *Secret of the Golden Flower* the “circulation of the Light” stands as the critical accomplishment of the “Great Work.” In this, among other effects, immortality is accomplished. Now, analysis of the symbol helps a good deal. Thus the “circulation” suggests self-containedness, while the straight line of chronological time has direction and is therefore dogged by the pairs of opposites. The time-line does not progress any more than it degrades. It gives life and takes it away. Hence, the philosophic pessimist is the one who has seen deeply. Only through the “circulation of the Light” is the tragedy of world-life mastered.

¹⁷ The first time I experienced the consciousness of benevolence certain consequences were striking. At the time, I was sitting in a very humble shack, quite alone, located on one of the creeks of the Mother Lode country of east central California. Insects and other creatures were rather overfamiliar companions. Spiders, scorpions, daddy longlegs (in great numbers), centipedes, slugs, gnats, and rattlesnakes were creatures one could never safely forget. But when the state of benevolence was superimposed upon my own private consciousness, it included all these creatures as much as any other. My goodwill included them equally with more evolved beings, and there was nothing forced in the attitude. It was no conscious moral victory, but just a state of natural feeling. This state of immediate feeling is transient just as is true of other phases of mystical states of consciousness. But it leaves a permanent effect upon the moral judgement. One can no longer kill anything, no matter how repulsive or destructive it may seem, without a feeling of guilt. This definitely increases the difficulty of objective life. For when the individual sees the objective realities clearly, he finds that there is no embodied living in this world that does not imply killing, and, therefore, guilt. The farmer must destroy the enemies of his plants and stock, or have the latter destroyed, and without the farmer no man has food. And then, within our blood there is constant war, with tiny creatures being killed and devoured all the time. Hence, all life here depends upon the taking of life. It is a very ugly world that comes into view when the blinders are removed from the eyes. Saints (who continue to live) and vegetarians share the guilt with all the rest. The amount of guilt does vary, of course, but difference of degree is not a difference of principle. All men who live in this world inevitably share guilt, and thus there are none who may cast the first stone. There are none who may sit in judgement upon others, unless at the same time they judge themselves and accept sentence along with the others. Release from guilt lies only in the Beyond.

¹⁸ There is at times a spontaneous upwelling that leads to the most effective production, but at the same time there is conscious selection and judging upon the part of the mind that was trained in the schools. The resultant product is thus a joint product of deeper and more superficial levels, both part of myself. I might suggest this compound action by a figure. If we were to think of the mental accumulations of a lifetime as being filed away in a sort of hall of records in which there is only a dim illumination so that, ordinarily, much of the material is hard to locate, and therefore not easily used, the state of illumination is like a brilliant light suddenly appearing in that hall that renders everything filed, at once available. The light has the additional effect of leading well nigh unerringly to the most appropriate selection of the material that is pertinent to the problem at hand. The once known and forgotten tends to become known again, and all this without laborious trying.

¹⁹ Thus, according to the handed-down record, Gautama Buddha discouraged the practicing of the trance state, though He did not repudiate it as a possible means. Yet, Samadhi is a fundamental part of the Buddhist Way. The implication is that bodily condition is essentially irrelevant.

²⁰ A study of the word “ecstasy” in an adequate dictionary clarifies a good deal that is confusing about the word as it is employed in literature, particularly that of a medical sort. As the term is of high importance in relation to mysticism, this study is very helpful. The dictionary gives four uses, which cover a wide range of meanings, and I shall quote these in full. Ecstasy is defined (see Century Dictionary and Cyclopedica) as:

a. “A state in which the mind is exalted or liberated, as it were, from the body; a state in which the functions of the senses are suspended by the contemplation of some extraordinary or supernatural object, or by absorption in some overpowering idea, most frequently of a religious nature; entrancing rapture or transport.

b. “Overpowering emotion or exaltation, in which the mind is absorbed and the actions are controlled by the exciting subject; a sudden access of intense feelings.

c. “In medicine, a morbid state of the nervous system, allied to catalepsy or trance, in which the patient assumes the attitude and expression of rapture. (‘Ecstasis’ is a synonym for this usage.)

d. “Insanity; madness.”

Etymologically, the word carries the meaning of “any displacement or removal from the proper place, a standing aside.”

From the external point of view, all four meanings are consistent with the etymological sense of the word. But in the intensive sense, the difference of meaning is as great as the difference between a snake and an eel, which are only analogous but not homologous. In the sense of the first meaning, the “displacement from the proper place” is true only on the assumption that personal egoism is the proper place. It is a prime thesis of mystical philosophy that this assumption is a fundamental error.

The proper meaning of the Sanskrit word “Samadhi” reveals a much more profound insight into the real meaning of mystical Ecstasy. “Samadhi” has the significance of “putting together, joining with; union; combination; performance; adjustment, settlement; justification of a statement; proof; attention, intentness on; deep meditation on the supreme soul, profound devotion.” Thus the prime meaning is that of “bringing together of that which is improperly separated.” This gives a value that is highly positive and superior, while the etymology of “ecstasy” is depreciatory. It is a difference of viewpoint that parallels that between the Ptolemaic and the Copernican systems, with the profounder Indian view corresponding to placing the center in the sun. The typically ancient Greek orientation was not spiritual but sensuous-materialistic, the philosophers of the type of Plato and Plotinus being the exceptions. The Greeks realized bodies rather than space. Hence, a consciousness which stood disassociated from bodies appeared as not in the proper place. The general Greek insight is not as profound as supposed. It is the great exceptions who have lived to our day, just because they have seen more truly, and while these have deserved the honor we have given them, they have not justified us in extending that honor to the Greek civilization as a whole. Our own spatially oriented mathematics is nearer to the feeling of the Indian than the typical Greek.

²¹ So long as there is contrast and not indifference to the contrasting elements, the state is not *nirdvandva*—freed from the pairs of opposites. The feeling of superlative value is, after all, a dualistic state. In a genuinely absolute state, there is not, and could not be, any preference whatsoever. A consciousness of Bliss, of All Knowledge, or of Compassion is thus colored with something relative, so long as it is felt or known that there is anything else with different value. Any possible report of the state of *nirdvandva* inevitably seems to the relative consciousness as nothing at all. This adequately explains why the unilluminated psychologists view the highest of mystical states of consciousness as identical with unconsciousness. There is a serious error with this interpretation, but only he who has known the actuality immediately can know, and he cannot tell what he knows to one who does not also know. One can only categorically affirm: “It is not unconscious.” However, it is as little like what is ordinarily understood to be consciousness as to be indistinguishable from unconsciousness as viewed from the relative perspective.

²² The manuals are generally, if not universally, insistent upon mental quiescence and emotional calmness. I am not here developing a critique of the manuals, but simply reporting what actually happened. But there may be a valid need of such a critique.

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.

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 to 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 *nirvandva*, and no contrasting description is really valid.

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.

²⁸ It was sometime after writing this 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 judgement 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 truly man.” Also, in the same spirit some centuries later, the poet Angelus Silesius (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. (Quotations taken from Jung’s *Psychological Types*.)

²⁹ See James’s 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 of 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 resolution existed. James saw quite clearly that there are different states of consciousness that 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 the many-ness into unity.

James’s 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 that, I believe, so far clarifies 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 judgement 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? a rope? The final practical judgement 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 judgement, 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 judgement. 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 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 reexamination of the classical metaphysical theories grounded upon realization of the above sort. This subject will be considered later in the present work.

³¹ The notes for this chapter were added seven years after the chapter was written. The notes reflect the expanded perspective afforded by a quite considerable study of the transformation problem, both in western psychological sources and in Buddhist sources that 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 as 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.