

EARL WARREN, GOVERNOR



STATE OF CALIFORNIA

*State Board of Prison Directors*GEORGE A. BRIGGS
415 EAST ADAMS BOULEVARD
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

January 9th 1945

Dear Franklin

I'll withdraw my question unless you happen to have answer ready. The situation is by no means a simple one. I got hold of some literature yesterday that convinced me of this. No mention of specific gravity was made but I learned a few things about milk and the homogenizing of it.

It seems that every fat globule is surrounded by a membrane of protein. When the globule is broken into five hundred smaller globules the greater surface of these stretches the protein membrane making it much thinner. This possibly might have an effect on specific gravity.

Then the author goes on to talk without much clarity, to me, about the changes in casein, curd-tension and "other phenomena" involved in homogenization.

It is all too confusing and complicated for me. I think I shall retire from my quest and find solace in the relative clarity of mathematics.

Yours cordially,

G A B

A LETTER TO GEORGE BRIGGS

Franklin F. Wolff

January 18, 1945

At last we got my book published under the title *Pathways Through to Space* with the sub-title, "A Personal Record of Transformation in Consciousness." Richard R. Smith of New York is the publisher. I have not yet received serious adverse criticism; though one book dealer in Des Moines said he would not handle such trash and I understand one Seventh Day Adventist got it out of her hands as quickly as she could. Evidently she did not want to be contaminated. I expect forceful antagonism from the traditional religious groups if they ever realize what the book means. There should be criticism from the anti-transcendentalistic philosophers and depreciatory interpretation from the materialistic physiological psychologists. I am very desirous of seeing the two later criticisms as they may bring out points to which I shall have to give serious attention. In my second work, now nearly completed and about the size of *Progress and Poverty*, I have dealt with the philosophical and psychological problems as far as I see them, but I cannot know how successfully until I receive criticism.

I am proposing to call the second work "The Philosophy of Consciousness-without-an-object." Since it implies also Consciousness-without-a-subject, this ontological Consciousness is not a relation, but a substantive self-existence. I believe that it is identical with the Buddhistic Essence of Mind. Naturally, this philosophy denies James' denial that consciousness exists. The position is neither materialistic nor spiritualistic since it attaches ontological value to neither the Subject nor the Object. It affirms three primary organs of knowledge instead of the two generally accepted. These three are (1) sense-perception, (2) conception or intellection, and, (3) the mystical organ or the Samadhindriya. I view the mystical organ as the source of acquaintance with Reality; hence the position is not empiricistic nor rationalistic, in the narrow sense. I believe the error made by the great Rationalists consisted in the failure with the Reason. But I believe they were nearer the Truth than were the Empiricists.

From my standpoint, physics, and more especially mathematical physics, is really a part of fundamental psychology. Indeed, pure mathematics becomes the primary law of the psyche which determines possible a drama of appearance. Experience becomes the occasion which arouses recognition rather than the source of knowledge. It is really quite at variance with current trends which, when not mechanical materialism, are so often biological materialism.

Slowly I am developing mathematical correlations. I have posed one problem to both Jim and Pete, and you may be interested in playing with it. What is the relation between "Substantiality is inversely proportional to ponderability" and " $x^2 + y^2 = 2$ "? By this method I have succeeded in tying together apparently detached and even paradoxical statements in Buddhism, Vedantism and some of the greater Western mystics. Mathematics may indeed be simply a language, but, if so, it is not merely the invention of men, the language of the Gods. Man merely invents the surface forms, but is constrained by underlying experiences as merely necessity.

Yours sincerely,

Los Angeles, CA
January/February 1945

Dear Franklin,

I have read every word of your book [*Pathways Through to Space*] carefully, thoughtfully, feelingly. I am deeply impressed with its clarity, force, coherence and delightful modesty. I wonder if anyone else has written of mysticism from the inside who is as firmly grounded as you are in Occidental science, philosophy and mathematics.

I might quibble about some points of doctrine, but these are irrelevant, or so it seems to me, to the development of your main theses, which are, of course, (a) a report of your own mystical experiences, and (b) reflective discussion of the transition from egoistic consciousness to higher consciousness, as well as suggestions concerning helpful attitudes and technique.

One point I will mention, however. It has to do with the Eros-Logos combination. Wonder if, from your viewpoint, the following statement is acceptable.

The affectional nature of man—I am accustomed to call it the Love principle—dominates and gives direction to the intellect. The latter gains in power and understanding as the former become less and less self-centered. In this process the affectional nature may be likened loosely to the curve of an asymptote. It reaches utter selflessness only at infinity; and there the cognitive faculty in turn expands to infinity. But, along the curve, short of infinity, the growing power and insight of the cognitive faculty suggests to the discerning eye the process of awakening.

In one of your lyrics you say, “Man reflects just what I seek.” Let me give you a curious example. Vaihinger was a pupil and disciple of Kant. In his *The Philosophy of As-If*, he continuously tries to show that Kant is a relativist, a voluntarist. You, in turn, look for and find Illumination in Kant. Maybe both of you are right from your respective frames of reference.

As I conclude your book I am more deeply impressed than ever before by the conviction that there are many paths, many doors, and that “in my Father’s house are many mansions.”

Yours cordially,

George A Briggs

Here is the quotation from Henry James the Elder. When I first saw it more than thirty years ago it seemed topsy-turvy. But, as the years went by, it gains in significance. Here it is: “Nature is subject to Man; and Man is object to Nature. Man is subject to God; and God is object to Man.”

February 8, 1945

Dear George:

Your judgment of my book gave me a great deal of satisfaction. I was particularly pleased that you felt it was modest. All along I have dreaded the judgment of megalomania, though so far no one has made this judgment to my knowledge. Whitman has been thus criticized and so, also, Russell interpreted Fichte's use of the 'I'. As a matter of fact, this criticism is justified only when the I is used in an exclusively personal reference in a sense that gives high preeminence to one's self, while depreciating others. It is not valid when the 'I' refers to a transcendental Self conceived as underlying all personal selves as well as one's own. But the instance of Russell shows quite clearly that even highly intelligent men may fail to make the distinction.

Actually, having to write in terms of the first person pronoun is quite distasteful to me and I would prefer impersonal mathematical demonstration, but in dealing with this kind of material such a course is actually more pretentious. I believe that it is more critically objective and scientific to report the material of self-analysis in terms of the first person than to lay claim to dogmatic certainty without showing how one arrived at the knowledge. When anyone else tells me something which I am not at once able to verify in principle, I ask, "How do you know?," "By what means did you derive this knowledge?," etc. If he holds back this information, he is not apt to impress me or to command my interest. So I felt that I was bound to give the reader as much of the inside view as I could reveal through analysis.

In doing this, I invite psychological criticism, but retain the right of counter-criticism. I have made it a point to inform myself on much of the relevant psychology and have already dealt with this problem in my second manuscript [*The Philosophy of Consciousness Without an Object*]. The idea here is not personal self-protection, but guarding the mystical Way, as such, from scientific and philosophical depreciation.

Seriously, I desire to know the philosophical and psychological criticism. I know that *Pathways* is vulnerable, as I was aware of points on which it could be assailed when I wrote it, and have become aware of more since I have studied Jung and Leuba. I believe I could criticize it in such a way as to satisfy the materialistic physiological psychologists. But, in my second work I believe I have successfully answered this criticism. There remain the possible lines of serious criticism which I do not anticipate and, if there are such, I very much want to know them before publication of the second book. It is my belief that Truth has nothing to fear from any honest and competent criticism. If the conception is true, as I most certainly am convinced it is, then, in principle, it can be affirmed with a stronger argument than any that can be brought against it. Most emphatically, I do not believe that Truth requires immunity from adverse argument. In this, I continue in the spirit of Shankara . . .

If there is logical error, I wish to know it, by all means. If provision for proper freedom of action in the objective field of science is inadequate, I want to know that. Of course, the most primary propositions are unproved, in the objective sense, and unprovable. In the philosophy, of course, I beg the question at the point of beginning, but every thinker does this and cannot avoid doing it. One begins either with an arbitrary assumption or a conceptual interpretation of an insight. Logical criticism cannot get at the insight, but it can isolate contradiction, if there is such. Humanism can criticize the consequences for life here by means of James' pragmatic criterion. Ontological criticism is possible only by one who is familiar with the same Way. This latter I do not expect from the schools or the journals. As I must, perforce, deal with compound conceptions that are paradoxical, there may be apparent

contradiction which needs more clarification. Only my critics can tell me what I do not see . . .

I view Love, Life or Will (in the sense of Schopenhauer) as ontologically complementary and equal to Thought, Reason or Idea. Further, in general, in the process of objectification of the Will, primacy lies in the Will. But in the reverse or systolic process, primacy or leadership is assumed by the Idea. Now, insofar as Theopathic mysticism is concerned, we seem to have an exception to this principle, but it is found not to be so if one examines the matter more carefully. Theopathy does not transcend dualism, but only substitutes a subliminal and supersensible object for the external. The real transcendence of Sangsara requires more than this. Consciousness must rise above dualism . . . Knowledge—in the sense of Gnosis or Jnana—alone is adequate.

Cordially yours,

Franklin