

## A LETTER TO PETER GESHELL

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Dear Peter:

It is with particular pleasure that I write to you relative to a problem which you pose in your recent note. There are many interests which need discussion and analysis but which must wait until after the war when it will be more possible to deal with realities. We all look forward to the day when we may all be together again.

Regarding the problem you pose in connection with the abstraction of the "subjective moment" from the manifold of consciousness: I do not find anything like a specific and detailed technique for this which may be applied infallibly. I have found it to be mainly a matter of self-analysis in which the element of original self-discovery is an essential part. Thus, while general principles may be formulated objectively and illustrative procedure suggested, yet the individual must do the work himself with an alert mind and ready to modify method as may be suggested intuitively.

First of all, the problem may be viewed as a search for the permanent, in the impermanent or for the invariant element in the midst of change. It is analogous to the basic problem of mathematical analysis wherein we first determine a fixed base of reference—such as the common system of Cartesian co-ordinates—with respect to which we analyze the movement of variables. Now, in the beginning, one might possibly seek for the permanent or invariant in the objectively given. It is, indeed, possible that success might be achieved by this line of approach. In a sense, it is the course followed by Gautama Buddha and, in the end, the ultimate Goal is the same as that achieved by the subjective route. However, it is not the method which I employed and it seems to me to be the more difficult way. In any case, one soon finds that no sensible content of consciousness is permanent. In the end, objective permanency will prove to be very subtle. But whether we go by the subjective road or by the objective road we may well begin with the objective.

Now it is natural to begin at the point where the seeker is. In fact, there is no other place to begin. But where is it that I am? First it might appear to be the particular point on, in, or above the earth I might happen to be—a place defined by latitude, longitude altitude—the three coordinates of three-dimensional space. But, at once, it is clear that this place changes. Generally, I find myself moving about so the values of the three coordinates change. It then may occur to one that the real base is the combination of the meridian through Greenwich, the equator and the mean-level of the sea. But further thought shows this is not fixed since the earth itself is a moving body with respect to other stellar and planetary bodies. I think that you will see the regression this leads towards. Well, then, let us turn about and look in the other direction. Perhaps my body is the permanent base. But this leads to difficulty because the body is clearly subject to change. There is birth, growth, decay, and death.

Now, here is an important point. I see that my body is subject to change. Does that mean that I am subject to change? Superficially one might say "yes," but further analysis reveals that since I can witness and know the fact of body-change I must actually have some base other than

the body. That which merely changes could never know that it changes. There must be some invariant base in order to know the fact of change. But what is it? Perhaps my thought. But again, I find myself able to perceive my thought. It flows into quite variable patterns and while it certainly does color my valuations and judgments, there is clearly much change in it and I find that I know what I am thinking so I am not the same thing as the thinking. We have not yet found the permanent.

Well, ultimately, I find that anything whatsoever, no matter how subtle, which can be a content of my consciousness, is not final and permanent. The course of self-analysis here involves a good deal of progressively more and more subtle discrimination, but, in the end, I reach this conclusion. Sooner or later I come to the conclusion that that which I call “I” or the “Witness” is the permanent element. At this point the seeker is getting “warm,” as the saying goes, but there still are difficulties.

Instinctively we seem to view the “I” as an object of our consciousness, and it may be some time before we realize that so long as the “I” seems to be an object it is being perceived by something else. Well, presently, it dawns that this something else is really “I,” and not the “I” which has become a subtle object. Perhaps I may repeat the process and go after the new “I” in the same way as before, but the results are as before. There is no end to this game. I simply am never there before myself as an object, however subtle. I always stand behind the viewing. Now, this that I can never reduce to an object of consciousness is the subjective moment of the manifold of consciousness of which all content is one part. Ordinarily it is only content which has concerned me, but it becomes clear that if there were no subjective moment or pole there could be no content. The subjective moment is not thought nor is it the coloring of consciousness which feeling may produce. I find that I can perceive the coloring produced by feeling. Depression and exaltation, etc., can be observed and studied. Thus I find that I really stand apart from these qualities. Ultimately I find that I am the bare power of awareness which is quite colorless since it can differentiate the various colorings. The pure power of awareness is unaffected by pain or pleasure, good or evil or any of the other contrasting pairs of opposites. It is always the same. But to be always the same is to be outside time, since “time” is merely another name for change. Here it dawns upon me that since I am timeless, “mortality” is a valid predication of only that which is in time and an object of consciousness, and this includes my body and all my distinguishable qualities, but not I myself, in the ultimate sense. At last, I have found a true invariant.

The analysis so far has carried us to a valid intellectual recognition that is sound. But, so far, it is not yet the mystical “breakthrough.” This involves more, part of which is not under the control of candidate. The mystical awakening may be thought of as the arousal to activity of a new organ or function. Such has been recognized and variously named by the mystics down through history. In Sanskrit it is called “Samadhindriya.” But this is not to be regarded as a sensuous organ. We might call it the “transcendental organ” which is both super-sensuous and super-conceptual. It gives a consciousness which differs from conceptual consciousness in a manner somewhat analogous to the way in which the latter differs from sensual consciousness. The concept may mean the super-conceptual value, but is not identical with it.

The difference may be illustrated by an event in the history of astronomy. You may remember that the planet Neptune was predetermined both as to its actuality and location by mathematical calculation from the perturbations of other planets. Subsequently, by telescopic observation in the pre-determined part of the sky the planet was seen and the calculation verified.

Now, the calculation is like the conceptual knowledge and, as far as it could go, was perfectly correct. But the perception of the planet through the telescope gave kind of knowledge of the planet. The telescope corresponds to Samadhindriya, save that it was built objectively, whereas the organ built subjectively. A large part of the life-discipline of the Way is related to the building of this organ. It may, indeed, be the fruit of several incarnations of effort. But when it is ready and the mind is prepared, its functioning is sometime started in a way which is quite spontaneous so far as the candidate is concerned. Actually, it is very likely that the Master has had a very definite hand in this, though in a way not known to the candidate.

It is the arousal of the so-called organ that is equivalent to the “New Birth.” Self-identity is established upon a new base of reference. The one really valid religious end is achieved. The conceptual preparation is valuable in two respects. (a) It helps to achieve proper alignment for the objective or personal consciousness, and, (b) it renders possible collaboration between the new consciousness and the intellect. It is this combination that distinguishes mastery from simple mysticism.

The transcendental organ gives certain knowledge, but this certainty and even omniscient quality applies to the pure knowledge, not to the intellectual interpretation. The latter is subject to being more or less correct and must be prepared to face criticism. In one sense, the Awakening is extremely simple. The Awakened One is at once more at home in the new world than he was in the old, and everything is perfectly obvious until he tries to talk about it. Then he finds he has a very complex problem in his hands. Metapsychology and transcendental philosophy takes the best that one has of intellectual resource. Even in the ordinary sense, an infant can see, but, it would require a very able scientist and philosopher to understand what seeing means. But understanding seeing is not much use unless one can see, so there is a sense in which the most infantile mystic has an advantage over the greatest intellectual who is only an intellectual. So, the combination is necessary for command. All paths merge at the final Initiation, for the [Awakened One] and the philosopher are at-one.

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Much have I been concerned in the total present set-up with humanity. I would not say that avoidance of a new dark age, much worse than the last and perhaps final, is wholly impossible. But the problem is so enormously complicated, the wisdom of those who have power and the general morality is so low that I see no ground for optimism. If the Orientals were right—and I think they were—in viewing the last world war as the mark of the spiritual bankruptcy of the West, the present set-up reveals the spiritual bankruptcy of well-nigh the whole world. Of course there are some Keepers of the Light, but They are far too few to deal with such massive darkness. The moral failure of the church and school is as bad a sign as any. As I see it, the worst will come after the war. In fact, it will be merely a state of war continued at another level. Indeed, I do not see how our bill of rights can withstand the new collectivism, the shadow of which is already over the land. Withdrawal to a sort of western Shangri-La on the part of the spiritual warriors is one possibility I now see.

I am not speaking words of false comfort to one who like you has a strong mind. You may well have to assume the duties of another kind of Officer in the days ahead. Everyone who can thus function certainly will be needed.

Of late I have been drawing to a conclusion the companion book to *Pathways Through to Space*. This I have had in mind even while writing the latter, since in this way many points were

covered only sketchily. Many problems were left unfinished and I was well aware of several points where the conceptions and interpretations were open to psychological and philosophical criticism. As a matter of fact, I welcome all such criticism as an aid in the perfecting of interpretation both in the transcendental and objective senses. At any rate, the companion work devotes much space to the critical problem and naturally will not be as easy reading. One of the conceptions has actually involved the use of the calculus to build the pattern. I shall be interested in your reaction, when you have had a chance to study it. I believe that it renders more clear the common ground between the Atmavidya of Shankara and the doctrine of Anatma of Buddha.

Here is one problem for you to think about if you wish. What is the relation between “Substantiality is inversely proportional to ponderability” and “ $x^2 + y^2 = 2$ ”?

May your Vision remain undimmed in the present darkness and may all good abide with you.

Yours in the Great Work