

A LETTER TO JIM BRIGGS

Franklin F. Wolff

January 7, 1945

Dear Jim:

You, as well as Pete, have run into some difficulties in the understanding of part of *Pathways Through to Space*. I am glad to hear this, for one who reported no difficulty would most likely fail almost wholly in understanding what he had read. In many of the conceptions there is an inherent difficulty which grows out of the nature of language as such. It is only partly a selection of words and word-patterns that confuses the understanding. The main problem lies in the fact that conceptual forms, as they are commonly employed, mean an objective content which stands in contrast to a subject or "I." The state of consciousness on which the book is grounded is one wherein the subject and object are co-extensive instead of standing in a relation of contrast or opposition. In relation to such a state of consciousness, no thinkable content, however skillfully developed, can be true in the sense that conceptual organization can be true either in respect to an objective world-order or with respect to other parts of a conceptual system. In the rigorous sense, all that one can say with respect to the transcendent consciousness that is, at the same time, quite correct, is that the Transcendent is *not* anything which anyone can think or imagine. But such a statement is wholly negative and gives the impression that the Transcendent is identical with annihilation, a conclusion which is quite false. Buddha employed this rigorous method in His more discursive material with the result that He has been largely misunderstood even by large groups of His followers. On the other hand, the danger of the positive formulation is that the reader will give an objective interpretation of the ideas, and thus will fall into another kind of misconception? But at any rate he will derive a positive meaning and the effect should be a subtilizing of consciousness, and this is all to the good. By either course I had to assume a risk and it appeared to me that the risk of a positive statement would be less.

Five persons, outside the Assembly and including the publisher, have written reviews or evaluations of the book that showed, on the whole, rather better understanding than I had expected. But, in general, reviewers, so far, seem to be afraid of the book. Indeed, a complete stranger to adumbrations of the consciousness would be quite lost. Every student of the Assembly has an advantage in this respect. If and when the book is understood, both in its direct statement and unspoken implications, there should be a wide opposition to it from the following classes: a.) Churches that have descended from church-council Christianity (as contrasted to Gnostic Christianity which was pronounced heretical about 500 A.D. by the councils); b.) Materialistically-oriented sociologists; c.) The physiological psychologists with their strong biological orientation colored by Darwinism; d.) All anti-transcendentalistic philosophers. The philosophy I have suggested, and developed more fully in *The Philosophy of Consciousness-without-an-object*, is anti-materialistic, anti-theistic, anti-empiric (in the sense that the empiric always involves a time-bound consciousness and employs components from sensation) and it affirms the primacy of consciousness over life. Some day I should get a raking over the coals and that, will be an important sign that the book is really doing its work.

In my recent writing, I have gotten into some really tough conceptions where I had to draw rather heavily upon mathematics, even including a little integral calculus. There is a little problem on which you might think a bit. What connection is there between “Substantiality is inversely proportional to ponderability” and $x^2 - y^2 = 2$? This is a rather unusual kind of religious symbolism.

If you will point out in what specific respect the book presents difficulties I may be able to clarify further. In the meantime, bear in mind you must add meditation to your thinking to get what the book really means.

We are all concerned that you should be laid up in the hospital, and hope that it will not have to last much longer. I suspect that the damp climate has much to do with it. However, I have found that good underlies every misfortune, and that one may find it if he but looks for it.

May every good attend you.