

PREFACE

Although 'philosopher' will not be found among the various occupations listed in Bob Cracknell's ample curriculum vitae, I believe that it ought to be.

According to his official biography, Bob served a hitch in the Royal Air Force as a young man. Following his discharge, he worked as a hospital orderly. At a later point in his explorations, he even sampled life on the edge as a hobo. Eventually, however, he discovered and developed his considerable psychic talents after joining (and eventually breaking from) the Spiritualist movement in England. This proved to be a decisive turning point.

During the 1970s and 1980s, Bob's psychic abilities were put to the test both by experts in the field of parapsychology (he passed with flying colours), and by his own practical work in the field of psychic detection. He was so successful in tracking murderers, kidnapers and con artists that, with eminent good reason, the tabloids of Fleet Street dubbed him 'Britain's Number 1 Psychic Detective'. Having been contracted by some of the largest firms in England, he went on to found his own detective agency, employing over thirty people. For the last ten years, though, he has lived

in quiet seclusion on the island of Cyprus, writing and meditating.

The fascinating details of this life story (of which I have been able to give only the barest sketch here) may be found in Bob's earlier books, *Clues to the Unknown*, *The Casebook of a Psychic Detective* and *The Psychic Reality*.

Nevertheless, beneath all of these dramatic changes of costume and scene, I sense a single unifying leitmotif: the philosophical quest. Bob Cracknell is a philosopher. And let me hasten to add that I am not talking about a piece of sheepskin hanging on the wall. As I know from my own experience, earning a Ph.D. only entitles you to become a professor of philosophy. It does not make you a philosopher.

Again, I insist that Bob Cracknell is a philosopher. Oddly, this is a distinction that Bob would be most reluctant to claim for himself. He doesn't even like to be called a teacher. Not because of false humility, mind you (he once suggested to me that humility is little more than inverted ego) but because of an adamant insistence that each of us assumes responsibility for our own thoughts and deeds. But this only serves to heat up the key question: Just what, after all, is a philosopher?

Bob's fellow countryman, R. G. Collingwood (1889-1943) was a professor of philosophy (at Oxford) and a genuine philosopher to boot. He put

it this way: Everyone has a philosophy, but not everyone is a philosopher. By 'having a philosophy', Collingwood meant that we all possess a more or less coherent set of beliefs that guide our thoughts and actions. The image he used was that of a solid central 'ring' of basic principles on which hangs the multitudinous expressions of our inner mental and outer practical life. As a rule, we are not consciously aware of the existence of this ring, or if it is as solid as it might be. Nor are we likely to question those principles, should we by chance become aware of them. Indeed, since we have built our lives on the foundation of these presuppositions, we are prone to resist such critical analysis — often with violence.

In other words, we try our level best not to look in the bathroom mirror, where we stand naked before ourselves. Catching a glimpse of ourselves out of the corner of our eye, most of us wince and turn away, fearfully retreating back into the dark shadows of wilful ignorance. We would rather hide from our philosophy than question it.

Philosophers, then, are those unique individuals who are unafraid of seeing the unvarnished truth as it is reflected in the mirror of self-knowledge. Their heroic task is to drag the hidden ring of presuppositions into the bright light of conscious awareness. Not only that, but true philosophers go a daring step further by inspecting the soundness of

their own philosophy, revising or even overthrowing it altogether, if necessary. To be a philosopher means engaging in a severe, inevitably painful, process of self-inquiry. Now, it is reasonable to ask why this process is important to the rest of us. As Collingwood himself said many times; we do not struggle with our deepest problems and questions in perfect isolation. Rather, we receive each alike from our environment. In doing their own work, then, the philosophers do the work of others, namely, those of us who are too lazy or too timid to look in the mirror. The self that the philosopher scrutinizes is therefore not a strictly personal and private entity; it is also the collective Self, and it is our common root assumptions that are placed under the harsh light of reality — that is, critical consciousness. So it is no mystery why real philosophers often get into trouble with the authorities and end up having to quaff a goblet of hemlock juice (either literally or figuratively speaking.) Happily, Bob Cracknell has managed to evade such an unfortunate fate. Which is why you, have the fortunate pleasure of reading the book that you now hold in your hands. As you will see for yourself, this book was written by a man consumed with a fiery passion for greater awareness, perception, consciousness, self-knowledge, or call it what you will.

That is why I insist that Bob is a philosopher. It is also why I feel deeply privileged to know him, and honoured to be able to call him my good friend.

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