

Consciousness in Yoga Philosophy

- from Lila M. Mallette, Ph.D. (Gurudev Sri Rasalilananda), 6274 Edsall Road, #108, Alexandria, VA 22312-2639 USA

- Upon reading the excellent article by Mick Burley, and the comments from Mary Scott, I would like to add the following remarks: First, the terms 'purusa' and 'prakrti' can be applied to almost every apparent dichotomy observed in reality, especially in the higher frequencies occupied by consciousness. If we term solid matter as 'prakrti' and the space that lies between the atomic and sub-atomic particles of which solid matter is composed as Ćpurusa¹, and picture the ultra-electric frequencies of consciousness as being that which interpenetrates them both, we begin to see some of the true picture of the realities of consciousness; As the human consciousness inhabits and interpenetrates the physical body in which we live during this lifetime, as an example.

The Self, and the consciousness of which our Self is composed cannot be defined in verbal terms, or any other visible manner, although great music, painting and evocative poetry come probably as close as anything can come to doing so.

Human consciousness and reality of Self can only be experienced, and can only be studied within ourselves, using an appropriate form of meditation, in what can be termed "subjective science", and we must keep in mind that the human consciousness/entity is the only instrument in the Universe which is sensitive enough to detect and examine our own and the consciousness of other humans; and that human consciousness must be developed and elevated to higher levels of awareness first, mainly through the practice of meditation.

It is possible to be objective about our own inner consciousness only after lengthy study and contemplation, but it can and must be done before any real understanding of the human Self and consciousness can be achieved, because no formula on a blackboard, or in the printed page can possibly depict the majesty and grandeur of what we are all about as humans, on this planet, at this particular point in time and space.

The Eastern philosophies can help, and so can the Western sciences, but a realistic melding must take place first, leaving out the superstitions and dogma of the religions which have arisen as a means of preserving the Eastern philosophies down through the centuries, and we must look, seek, search, and examine for ourselves that which we have been taught, and which we see around us every day, even on the cutting edge, so-called, of the "new science."

This cannot be stressed too strongly: The scientist must first examine her/himself when it comes to the study of consciousness, because it is only our own to which we have total access through meditation (if used properly), since one of the basic laws of human privacy is that we cannot invade the consciousness or private inner or outer space of another without their express invitation and consent.

Traditions are fine as far as they go, but one meets with one's own interpretation of things as one progresses, and must be prepared to go beyond that which has already been written about, and into the places, spaces and levels of reality which cannot be expressed in words or symbols. I offer these thoughts as fodder for future thought by those who seek the fullest truths about reality, and ask only that their possibilities be considered.

Consciousness: realisation AND research

- from: Roger A. McMaster-Fay, MRCOG, FRACOG, Clinical Lecturer, Faculty of Medicine, University of Sydney.

Dr S.K.Chakraborty's 'oriental (Indian) background' gives him a 'sense of risk in consciousness research' which I agree with, but I do not agree that 'research is unlikely to lead to realisation'. I have found that searching for the truth (research) the path of knowledge, invariably leads one to some improved / broader / higher realisation of consciousness. I have found that all our circumstances are in fact a gift of the Lord (Prasad) and all lead one to some improved / broader / higher realisation of consciousness if we allow them to. When one tries to understand the true dynamics of any material system through research using one's mental capacity to the full, one can and must overcome the ego to succeed. I therefore do not believe that 'objective research is predicated on preserving the ego'. I also do not believe that 'detached objectivity in research can hardly contribute to realisation'. The path of truth and knowledge can lead to the realisation that S.K.C. alludes to. The only aspect missing then is love and that can develop as one put one's heart into one's work. I believe that once one opens oneself to the truth it is just a natural process for greater conscious realisation to unfold. Whether one can cope with what one finds or is brave enough to carry it through is another matter.

Even so I thoroughly enjoyed S.K.C.'s correspondence and do believe that he has pointed out an important difference between objective research and subjective realisation, I do believe that realisation can come on the western scientific path of truth.

Epistemology and Hermeneutics

- from: Paul Anderson, 2 b Church Hill, Morningside, Edinburgh EH10 4BQ

I write about your thought-provoking interview with Ken Wilber in the last issue of Network (no.67). One point he raises struck as being especially important. The final section of the interview introduces the notion of epistemological relativism. This particularly post-modern view, Wilber believes, says that our world is an interpretation, a view that places science, art, poetry, fact and fiction, history and so forth on the same epistemological footing.

This tendency denies any 'real truth'. It places emphasis only on shifting, relative interpretations with the consequence that no interpretation is better than any others because no ahistorical, objective standard exists to assess epistemological claims. The problem with this view, as Wilber is fond of pointing out, is that it involves a massive contradiction. 'It claims,' he asserts, 'that there is no universal truth, but it presents that claim itself as a universal truth.'

This is indeed an important point. But it is one in which Wilber perhaps glosses over too rapidly. The same point is raised with regard to hermeneutics by Richard Rorty in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, but is addressed with very different consequences (ch. vii). Hermeneutics, Rorty believes is not a successor to previous epistemologies nor is it a kind of super epistemology. Rather, hermeneutics is what we get when epistemology stops.

The difference between epistemology and hermeneutics could be likened to the difference in approach of Plato and of Socrates. Platonic thought, representing epistemology, operates as a kind of cultural overseer that knows everyone's common ground. It knows about physics, psychology, poetry, religion and art because it knows the ultimate context (Forms,

the Mind, Language) within which these activities operate. As such evaluation is possible because knowledge of the ultimate context allows commensurability.

Socratic thought, representing hermeneutics on the other hand, is like an informed dilettante, a polypragmatic intermediary between the various activities. Such thought encourages the various disciplines out of their self-enclosed practices and facilitates discussion between them. But it does so without presupposing what the common ground between the discourses should be. Disagreement between the discourses are compromised or transcended in the course of the conversation. I use this illustration of Rorty's - that since hermeneutics is not another epistemology and hence cannot be dismissed in the manner in which Wilber dismisses it - to raise the question as to how dialogue should proceed between Wilber's system and hermeneutics? Is it possible to integrate the latter into the former? Is it desirable?