Consciousness and its Transformation
Sri Aurobindo's contribution

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Introduction

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The 24 papers collected in this book were all presented during the Second International Conference on Integral Psychology, which was held in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram at Pondicherry in January 2001. The aim of this conference was to encourage research on consciousness in the light of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, and to lay bridges between their work and psychology as an academic science.

The interest in consciousness within science has gone over the years through many ups and downs. The subject was virtually taboo right from 1920 till the late seventies. But since then the situation has gradually changed, and the last couple of years have seen a tremendous increase in the number of books and articles published on consciousness, not only in the popular press, but also by reputed academic publishers and peer-reviewed journals. This renewed interest in consciousness seems to have arisen mainly from the confluence of recent developments in neurophysiology, artificial intelligence and cognitive psychology. Neurophysiology is getting closer and closer to finding the exact neurological correlates in the brain of the mental processes that take place in the mind. Recent developments in Artificial Intelligence show that many mental processes that till recently were considered the prerogative of the conscious human mind, can now be imitated by computers that operate without any apparent consciousness. At the same time psychological research has shown that even in us, human beings, almost all cognitive processes can take place without any direct involvement of our conscious awareness. So the question arises what our consciousness actually is, what purpose it serves biologically and how it interacts with, depends on, or gives rise to the material process in the brain. Many answers to these questions have been suggested, but none of them is considered completely satisfactory and it is becoming increasingly accepted that satisfactory answers may never be obtained from within the purely physicalist framework that has dominated the field so far.

There has been an impressive quantity of excellent, sophisticated research on the physical correlates of consciousness, but virtually no research worth the name on the nature and development of consciousness itself. It has been suggested by several authors that useful approaches to consciousness research might be found in the Indian spiritual traditions. Though some interesting work has been done in this direction, especially on the basis of Buddhist thought, creating a true integration of traditional Eastern spirituality and modern, largely Western, science has not been found simple. While the two approaches have some common elements, like their respect for experience and experiment, their basic philosophies and objectives are too far apart.

Sri Aurobindo's work in this area could make a major, perhaps a decisive contribution. Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is able to serve as a comprehensive alternative to the fundamental ontological and epistemological premises on which science at present is basing itself.

Sri Aurobindo has not only provided a well-worked out ontology and epistemology, but he has also given detailed descriptions of yogic processes and techniques that can be translated into the core elements of a new methodology appropriate for the

rigorous and systematic study of the subjective aspects of consciousness. These two elements could form the foundation for a whole new approach to science in general, but they are specifically relevant for psychology, which they can transform into a truly Integral Psychology that is capable of looking after both the objective and the subjective aspects of our existence. Sri Aurobindo has also produced, together with the Mother, a real treasure of psychological insights that are not only relevant for those who do yoga, but for anybody interested, personally or professionally, in the working of the human psyche. This work may prove to be especially valuable for the development of new forms of applied psychology, like integral psychotherapy, integral education, human resource development, and personal growth. It is these applications of integral psychology that will make a true integration of spirituality and modern life pragmatically feasible.

One could summarise Sri Aurobindo's contributions to the field of consciousness studies in five closely related points. First of all there is the unequalled height and profundity of his own realisation and the work he and the Mother have done to make the supramental consciousness operational within the earth atmosphere. Second there is the vastness and perfection that we find in his synthesis of the different systems of yoga. Leaving aside everything that is narrow, external, or limited, he took of each system the psychological essence and uplifted it by aiming not only at liberation, but at a complete, supramental transformation of the human being. Third, he created a wonderful, comprehensive philosophy in which all the different schools of Indian thought fit beautifully, not diminished, but enriched and fulfilled by the wider framework in which they find themselves. Fourth, he developed a psychological system that is in the best sense of the word integral. It not only encompasses all aspects and levels of human nature, but it looks at them from the perspective of an ongoing individual and cosmic evolution of consciousness, so that each little element or movement is linked back to its divine origin and points forward to its divine fulfilment, finding there its true significance and meaning. Finally, there is the sheer beauty and perfection with which Sri Aurobindo has expressed his insights. We know from the *Record of Yoga* how much of his personal sadhana was directed towards the perfecting of his mind and will as instruments of expression for the truths he encountered. The awesome quality of his writings, especially Savitri, is perhaps the most concrete proof of the validity of his psychological theories and the efficacy of the methods of his Yoga.

One of the things one would like to see at present is that more people begin to study his work, delve into the treasure house of the spirit, open their mind to its marvellous vistas, open their heart to the infinite love and wisdom that is hiding below the surface of our human existence.

It is with this in mind that the Second International Conference on Integral Psychology was organised.

The Second International Conference on Integral Psychology

The first International Conference on Integral Psychology was held in Matagiri in October 1999. There is a tangible spiritual atmosphere in Matagiri and this meeting of about 28 people, all deeply interested in both psychology and Integral Yoga, was

marked by a sustained sense of harmony and genuine communion. The second conference, of which this book contains the proceedings, was in this respect a true continuation of the first. But there were two areas in which the second conference differed considerably from the first: the variety of the participants and the richness of intellectual content. When we formulated the central objective for this second conference as the building of bridges between Sri Aurobindo's work and Psychology as an academic science, we could hardly imagine how well this objective would be reflected in the backgrounds of the 110 participants and in the topics of the 24 formal presentations and the multitude of informal exchanges. There were 3 representatives from the California Institute of Integral Studies, which was founded in the early fifties with the express purpose of introducing Indian Culture, and especially Sri Aurobindo's thought, into the social sciences. There were scholars from Harvard and New York, from the universities of London and Paris, from several other cities of Europe, from Athens and Jerusalem, from all major regions of India and of course from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and Auroville. Most participants, but not all, had a deep involvement in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and the majority were psychologists, though a few other disciplines also had their representatives: medicine, philosophy, education and even one each from applied mathematics and theoretical physics.

The topics of the 24 papers presented during this conference cover a correspondingly wide area. For the purpose of these proceedings we have grouped them under five different headings:

- Integral psychology itself
- Integral psychotherapy
- Integral yoga and the Indian tradition
- Modern psychology and spirituality
- Epistemology and methodology
- The transcripts of two experiential workshops

As could be expected from authors with such different backgrounds, their papers contain different and here and there contradictory positions. A further elaboration, and often a reconciliation, of these different viewpoints took place during informal discussions in between the sessions. From all these unrecorded discussions, one remark stood out for me. It was made in the context of psychotherapy, where the differences in approach were perhaps the most striking. Someone had noted that while in the West psychotherapy is considered essential to overcome psychological difficulties, in India people don't trust it, perhaps because they feel that it is not sufficiently in harmony with the essence of their being. Dr. Kiran Kumar then said something that, I think, contains in seed-form the very essence of integral psychology. He said,—I'm quoting from memory,— "if I have a psychological problem, I don't look for the person who has the highest degree or the most sophisticated method, I look for the one who has the highest consciousness." In integral psychotherapy we should do the same: we should use the system that is based on the highest consciousness. This is not Jung's or Freud's, but Sri Aurobindo's. This approach, I think, holds equally for integral psychology. What makes a school of psychology integral is not just that it covers all aspects and levels of the being, let alone that it amalgamates all available ways of looking at human consciousness and behaviour. A true synthesis transcends and integrates all these various types and fields of knowledge *in the highest consciousness*. In the individual, a real integration of the nature is only possible

around what Sri Aurobindo calls the Psychic Being, and it can find its fulfilment only in the supramental consciousness. The same must be true for Integral Psychology.

This acknowledgement of the primacy of consciousness is closely related to another, seemingly conflicting, but in reality complementary insight, an insight that one finds back again and again, throughout the Indian tradition. Sri Aurobindo expresses it in *The Synthesis of Yoga* as follows: "The supreme Shastra is the eternal Veda secret in the heart of every thinking and living being." (p. 53) It is true that most of us do need therapists and gurus, scriptures and theoretical systems to get us moving in the right direction, but in the end, the only knowledge that is truly transformative is still the knowledge that is found inside our own heart.

It is thus not enough for a conference on integral psychology to bring people from very different locations, cultural backgrounds and academic disciplines together in an atmosphere of beauty and spiritual presence. The most important is not the bridge between big things, like "Yoga" and "Psychology", and perhaps not even the numerous small bridges between people from different backgrounds and disciplines, though there were plenty of occasions for all those. The most crucial bridge is the inner bridge, the bridge between our psyche and our outer being, between our soul and our mind and vital. I think one can say without much exaggeration that this was the major motivation for the participants to the conference: they came with the hope and expectation to bring their inner reality and their outer mental framework closer together, to forge a closer clink between their highest aspirations and their daily work. For we all have these two worlds in ourselves. Our minds are trained in the ways of science, while our soul and our inner consciousness are the stuff that Integral Yoga deals with. Almost every speaker mentioned this aspect in some way or another, sometimes explicitly by speaking about it; sometimes, even more impressively, by the way they delivered their presentation. I hope that even in each of the written texts of these proceedings you will find this living link back in some way or another. I hope even more fervently that reading this book will encourage you to bring all the different parts of your being together under influence of the highest, most beautiful part of your self, the psychic being, the divine spark, which is hidden in the heart of man:

...A being no bigger than the thumb of man
To face the pang and to forget the bliss,
To share the suffering and endure earth's wounds
And labour mid the labour of the stars.
This in us laughs and weeps, suffers the stroke,
Exults in victory, struggles for the crown;
Identified with the mind and body and life,
It takes on itself their anguish and defeat,
Bleeds with Fate's whips and hangs upon the cross,
Yet is the unwounded and immortal self
Supporting the actor in the human scene.
Through this she sends us her glory and her powers,
Pushes to wisdom's heights, through misery's gulfs;
She gives us strength to do our daily task
And sympathy that partakes of others' grief
And the little strength we have to help our race,
We who must fill the role of the universe

Acting itself out in a slight human shape
And on our shoulders carry the struggling world.
This is in us the godhead small and marred;
In this human portion of divinity
She seats the greatness of the Soul in Time
To uplift from light to light, from power to power,
Till on a heavenly peak it stands, a king.

Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, pp. 526-27

For it is only through the psychic transformation spoken of here, that we can safely enter on the long road towards the glorious future that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother envisioned for humanity.

Reversal of consciousness
Thoughts on the psychology of the new birth

A.S. Dalal

Sri Aurobindo uses the term "reversal of consciousness" in speaking about the evolution of consciousness. He states: "The principle of the process of evolution is a foundation, from that foundation an ascent, in that ascent a reversal of consciousness and, from the greater height and wideness gained, an action of change and new integration of the whole nature." (Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* , p. 724) By reversal of consciousness Sri Aurobindo means a complete "turnover" of the consciousness which takes place at each radical transition in the evolutionary ascent of consciousness: the emergence of Life from Matter, the emergence of Mind from Life, and the evolution of Overmind into Supermind.

The Mother uses the term "reversal of consciousness" for another kind of total and radical change of consciousness, the change from the normal or ordinary consciousness in which one is ignorantly identified with the ego into the consciousness in which one is identified with one's true self. She describes the phenomenon as

> a revolution of the basic equilibrium, that is, a total reversal of consciousness comparable with what happens to light when it passes through a prism. Or it is as though you were turning a ball inside out, which cannot be done except in the fourth dimension. One comes out of the ordinary three-dimensional consciousness to enter the higher four-dimensional consciousness, and into an infinite number of dimensions.
>
> The Mother, Questions and Answers 1950-51 , p. 19

Speaking about the phenomenon in less abstract terms, the Mother says:

> ...when the phenomenon occurs, it brings with it an inexpressible something, so new and so definitive, that doubt and questioning are no longer possible. It is truly, in the absolute sense of the phrase, a new birth.
>
> You become a new person, and whatever may be the path or the difficulties of the path afterwards, that feeling never leaves you. It is not even something—like many other experiences—which withdraws, passes into the background, leaving you externally with a kind of vague memory to which it is difficult to cling, whose remembrance grows faint, blurred—it is not that. You are a new person and definitively that whatever happens. And even all the incapacity of the mind, all the difficulties of the vital, all the inertia of the physical are unable to change this new state—a new state which makes a decisive break in the life of the consciousness. The being one was before and the being one is after, are no longer the same. The position one has in the universe and in relation to it, in life and in relation to it, in understanding and in relation to it, is no longer the same: it is a true reversal which can never be undone again.
>
> *The Mother, Questions and Answers 1957-58 , pp. 336-37*

In the same context the Mother makes a further remark which has an important bearing on transformation. She says:

> And since we are speaking of that, I shall remind you of what Sri Aurobindo has said, repeated, written, affirmed and said over and over again, that his yoga, the integral yoga, can begin only after that experience and not before.
>
> So one must not cherish any illusions and fancy that one can begin to know what the supermind is and form any idea of it or assess it in any way, however minimal, before having had that experience.
>
> Therefore, if you want to advance on the path, you must very modestly start on your way towards the new birth, first, and realise it before cherishing the illusion that you can have supramental experiences."
>
> *The Mother, Questions and Answers 1957-58 , pp. 337*

This implies that from the viewpoint of Integral Yoga, transformation which can come about only by the descent of the supramental consciousness into mind, life and body, can take place only after what the Mother calls a reversal of consciousness.

The nature of such a reversal can be best understood by looking at some of the basic characteristics of the ordinary consciousness. One of the most fundamental characteristics of our normal consciousness is our sense of an ego, that is, of a self that exists as a distinct reality, separate from the rest of the universe. Regarding this "egoistic ignorance" as Sri Aurobindo calls it, he writes:

> ...the ego is a falsification of our true individuality by a limiting self-identification of it with this life, this mind, this body: it is a separation from other souls which shuts us up in our own individual experience and prevents us from living as the universal individual: it is a separation from God, our highest Self, who is the one Self in all existences and the divine Inhabitant within us." Sri Aurobindo, The Life Divine, p. 740

Regarding the effect of a reversal of consciousness on the ego, the Mother says:

> When this [a reversal of consciousness] happens to you, almost all the questions you ask yourself or ask me will be solved.
>
> And anyway, your attitude in life will be so different that you will understand what is meant when one speaks of living spiritually. And at that moment you will also understand a great thing, a very great thing: how to live without ego.
>
> Until then, you cannot understand it. The whole of life is so dependent on the ego that it seems absolutely impossible to live and act except with or by the ego, but after this new birth you can look at the ego with a smile and say to it, "My friend, I don't need you any more.''

The difficulty of conceiving an egoless state in our normal consciousness has been perhaps most clearly expressed by Carl Jung who states:

> To us, consciousness is inconceivable without an ego.... If there is no ego, there is nobody to be conscious of anything. The ego is therefore indispensable to the conscious process... an egoless mental condition can only be unconscious to us, for the simple reason that there would be nobody to witness it.... I cannot imagine a conscious mental state that does not relate to a subject, that is, to an ego. (Jung, 1958, p. 484)

An egoless state which Jung regards as inconceivable is experienced only by a total reversal of consciousness, as a result of which one comes to identify with what is divine in oneself instead of the normal identification with the ego. We will return later to the subject of identification with the Divine.

A second basic characteristic of the ordinary consciousness is what Sri Aurobindo describes as our "psychological ignorance". This, he says, "consists in a limitation of our self-knowledge to that little wave or superficial stream of our being which is the conscient waking self." (Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine,* p. 732) The conscient waking self is only a fraction of the total psyche, which Freud compared to an iceberg, nine-tenths of which lie submerged below the surface and constitute what he called the unconscious. From the viewpoint of Integral Yoga psychology, the parts of our being of which we are unconscious are far more enormous than what Freud conceived as the unconscious. For we are unconscious of all that lies below, behind, around and above the surface consciousness. We are unconscious of what lies *below* the surface consciousness, the subconscient, which Sri Aurobindo describes as a

> quite submerged part of our being in which there is no wakingly conscious and coherent thought, will or feeling or organized reaction, but which yet receives obscurely the impressions of all things and stores them up in itself and from it too all sorts of stimuli, of persistent habitual movements, crudely repeated or disguised in strange forms can surge up into dream or into the waking nature. (Sri Aurobindo, Letters on Yoga, p. 353)

We are unconscious of what lies *behind* the surface consciousness, the subliminal, from which, says Sri Aurobindo,

> come all the greater aspirations, ideals, strivings towards a better self and better humanity without which man would be only a thinking animal—as also most of the art, poetry, philosophy thirst for knowledge....
>
> (Sri Aurobindo, Letters on Yoga, p. 360)

We are unconscious of what lies *around* the surface consciousness, surrounding the body, what Sri Aurobindo calls the circumconscient or environmental consciousness which, he says, "each man carries around him, outside his body, even when he is not aware of it,—by which he is in touch with others and with the universal forces" and through which "the thoughts, feelings, etc. of others pass to enter into one—...also... waves of universal force—desire, sex etc. come in and take possession of the mind, vital or body." (Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga* , p. 1602)

Lastly, we are unconscious of what lies *above* the surface consciousness, the superconscient, which Sri Aurobindo describes as "...successive states, levels or graded powers of being overtopping our normal mind—higher ranges of Mind, degrees of spiritual consciousness and experience" from which "...the secret spiritual Power acts upon the being and by its pressure brings about the psychic transformation or the spiritual change." (Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* , p. 933)

Freud's metaphor of the iceberg is therefore too inadequate to convey the infinitesimal nature of what we are conscious in relation to that of which we are unconscious. Employing a more adequate metaphor, Sri Aurobindo says: "Our mind and ego are like the crown and dome of a temple jutting out from the waves while the great body of the building is submerged under the surface of the waters." (Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 556) Using a still more powerful metaphor, he states: "We are not only what we know of ourselves but an immense more which we do not know; our momentary personality is only a bubble on the ocean of our existence." (Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 556)

Even with regard to our outer being, the personality or the mask , which Sri Aurobindo compares to a bubble on the ocean of our total existence or being, we are only partly aware. Essentially, psychological maladies arise due to unconsciousness or lack of awareness, and the various psychotherapies may be looked upon as methods of enhancing awareness, because awareness in itself has some therapeutic value. As Ken Wilber states:

> A common thread to all these levels of treatment... psychoanalytic, cognitive, humanistic, transpersonal... is this: awareness in and of itself is curative.... Every therapeutic school... attempts, in its own way, to allow consciousness to encounter (or reencounter) facets of experience that were previously alienated, malformed, distorted, or ignored. (Wilber, 1999, p. 531)

But, as is well known, a mere intellectual awareness or insight is not enough to bring about a therapeutic change in one's behaviour, still less can it change one's feelings. This was well expressed by a psychiatrist who after undergoing psychoanalysis remarked to his friend: "Before undergoing analysis I was a son-of-a-bitch; now I am a well-analysed son-of-a-bitch." So Wilber rightly adds a note to his statement about the curative effect of awareness. He states: "...when I say awareness is curative, this includes working through; awareness needs to be stable and pervasive; it needs to permeate the problem." (Wilber 1999, p. 676) However, from the viewpoint of yoga, the insights gained through psychotherapy leave the ordinary consciousness fundamentally the same, that is, more or less totally unconscious. For Sri Aurobindo remarks: "It is only by a change—not a mere readjustment—of man's present nature

that it can be developed, and such a change is not possible except by yoga." (Sri Aurobindo, *Essays in Philosophy and Yoga* , p. 73) [1]

The change of consciousness that Sri Aurobindo speaks about here, the change aimed at by yoga, is precisely what the Mother describes as a reversal from the ordinary consciousness into the divine consciousness. As she says,

> ...the true consciousness is the divine Consciousness. If you cut yourself off from the divine Consciousness, you become absolutely unconscious; that is exactly what has happened. And so, everything there is, the world as it is, your consciousness as it is, things in the state they are in, are the result of this separation of the consciousness and its immediate obscuration.
>
> The minute the individual consciousness is separated from the divine Consciousness, it enters what we call the inconscience, and it is this inconscience that is the cause of all its miseries...
>
> And the conclusion is this, that the true transformation is the transformation of consciousness—all the rest will follow automatically. (The Mother, Questions and Answers 1956, p. 77)

One consequence of the psychological ignorance due to which our self-knowledge is limited to the superficial waking consciousness is that in our ordinary consciousness we live most of the time on the circumference rather than the centre of our being. As a result, the ordinary consciousness is what is described as a dispersed consciousness. Distinguishing the higher concentrated consciousness from the ordinary dispersed consciousness Sri Aurobindo writes:

> The higher consciousness is a concentrated consciousness, ...not dispersed and rushing about after this or that mental idea or vital desire or physical need as is the ordinary human consciousness—also not invaded by a hundred haphazard thoughts, feelings and impulses, but master of itself, centred and harmonious.(Sri Aurobindo, Letters on Yoga, p. 744)

The Mother gives a psychologically vivid description of the date of dispersion which characterises the ordinary consciousness.

> One throws oneself out all the time; all the time one lives, as it were, outside oneself, in such a superficial sensation that it is almost as though one were outside oneself. As soon as one wants even to observe oneself a little, control oneself a little, simply know what is happening, one is always obliged to draw back or pull towards oneself, to pull inwards something which is constantly like that, on the surface. And it is this surface thing which meets all external contacts, puts you in touch with similar vibrations coming from others. That happens almost outside you. That is the dispersal of the ordinary consciousness. (The Mother, Questions and Answers 1956, p. 193)

It is in connection with the dispersion which is characteristic of the ordinary consciousness that the Mother speaks on one occasion about the reversal of consciousness.

> ...to live the spiritual life is to open to another world within oneself. It is to reverse one's consciousness, as it were. The ordinary human consciousness, even in the most developed, even in men of great talent and great realisation, is a movement turned outwards—all the energies are directed outwards, the whole consciousness is spread outwards; and if anything is turned inwards, it is very little, very rare, very fragmentary, it happens only under the pressure of very special circumstances, violent shocks, the shocks life gives precisely with the intention of slightly reversing this movement of exteriorisation of the consciousness.
>
> But all who have lived a spiritual life have had the same experience: all of a sudden something in their being has been reversed, so to speak, has been turned suddenly and sometimes completely inwards, and also at the same time upwards, from within upwards—but it is not an external "above", it is within, deep, something other than the heights as they are physically conceived. Something has literally been turned over. There has been a decisive experience and the standpoint in life, the way of looking at life, the attitude one takes in relation to it, has suddenly changed, and in some cases quite definitively, irrevocably. (The Mother, Questions and Answers 1957-58, p. 415)

It was stated earlier that an egoless state can be attained only by a reversal of consciousness and the consequent identification with the Divine in oneself instead of the normal identification with the ego. Regarding identification with the Divine, the Mother once remarked that such identification can be swiftly obtained if one becomes master of the power of identification, and, alluding to Ramakrishna she said: "Ramakrishna used to say that the time could vary between three days for very slow people, three hours for those who were a little swifter, three minutes for those who are used to it." (The Mother, *Questions and Answers 1953* , p. 225) Perhaps referring to this remark, a disciple once commented that a radical change of consciousness in a few minutes would be a revolution. And the Mother replied: "Yes, but a revolution can occur in half a second; it can also take years, even centuries, and even many lives. It can be done in a second." (The Mother, *Questions and Answers 1955* , p. 195) She spoke in a similar vein on another occasion when someone asked her as to when and how one becomes an instrument of the Divine. The Mother replied:

> In each one, I believe, it happens in a different way. It may happen suddenly, in the space of a moment, by a kind of inner reversal; it may take years; it may take centuries; it may take several lives. For each one there is a moment when it happens: when he is ready.
>
> And I think he is ready when he is completely formed. The purpose of existence of the ego is the formation of the individual. When the individual is ready the ego can disappear. But before that it does not disappear because it has still some work to do. (The Mother, Questions and Answers 1955, p. 366)

The paradox that the reversal of consciousness can take many lives and can also be done in a second is due to the fact that on the spiritual path, changes first take place below the surface consciousness and, preceding any marked visible change in the outer consciousness, there is a more or less long period during which very little if anything seems to be happening. Referring to this fact, the Mother once made a striking statement when someone asked her what one should do when in spite of one's efforts one does not see any progress and feels discouraged. She said:

> ...the first thing to tell yourself is that you are almost entirely incapable of knowing whether you are making progress or not, for very often what seems to us to be a state of stagnation is a long—sometimes long, but in any case not endless—preparation for a leap forward. We sometimes seem to be marking time for weeks or months, and then suddenly something that was being prepared makes its appearance, and we see that there is quite a considerable change and on several points at a time.
>
> (The Mother, Questions and Answers 1957-58, p. 316)

This explains why the radical change which the Mother calls a reversal of consciousness is a long and gradual process. The sadhak may see many indications of progress on the spiritual path, such as a growth in one's aspiration, faith, devotion, calm, quietude and equanimity, and one may also have what are regarded as spiritual experiences, but before the radical phenomenon of a reversal of consciousness, there is no fundamental change in one's outer nature: one still feels imprisoned in the ordinary consciousness, tied with its knots of ego and desire, and submerged more or less totally in unconsciousness. The Mother states this by using the metaphor of the incubation of an egg. She says:

> This change of consciousness and its preparation have often been compared with the formation of the chicken in the egg: till the very last second the egg remains the same, there is no change, and it is only when the chicken is completely formed, absolutely alive, that it itself makes with its little beak a hole in the shell and comes out. Something similar takes place at the moment of the change of consciousness. For a long time you have the impression that nothing is happening, that your consciousness is the same as usual, and, if you have an intense aspiration, you even feel a resistance, as though you were knocking against a wall which does not yield. But when you are ready within, a last effort—the pecking in the shell of the being—and everything opens and you are projected into another consciousness.
>
> (The Mother, Questions and Answers 1950-51, pp. 18-19)

Though the more or less imperceptible changes before the reversal of consciousness occur gradually over a long period, the Mother has said on more than one occasion that the actual reversal of consciousness is always a sudden happening. “It is not,” she says, “like a convalescence after an illness: you must change worlds.” (The Mother, *Questions and Answers 1957-58* , p. 135) In other words, it is not a gradual passage

like that of recovering from an illness, slowly changing from a state of illness to a state of health. It is more like abruptly ceasing to live in one world and being born into an altogether different world. Using the same metaphor of the hatching of an egg, she says:

> ...one is shut up in a shell, and inside it something is happening, like the chick in the egg. It is getting ready in there. It is in there. One doesn't see it. Something is happening in the shell, but outside one sees nothing. And it is only when all is ready that there comes the capacity to pierce the shell and to be born into the light of day.
>
> It is not that one becomes more and more perceptible or visible: one is shut in —shut in—and for sensitive people there is even that terrible sensation of being compressed, of trying to pass through and then coming up against a wall. And then one knocks and knocks and knocks, and one can't go through.
>
> And so long as one is there, inside, one is in the falsehood.[2] And only on the day when by the Divine Grace one can break the shell and come out into the Light, is one free.
>
> This may happen suddenly, spontaneously, quite unexpectedly.
>
> I don't think one can go through gradually. I don't think it is something which slowly wears and wears away until one can see through it. I haven't had an instance of this so far. There is rather a kind of accumulation of power inside, an intensification of the need, and an endurance in the effort which becomes free from all fear, all anxiety, all calculation; a need so imperative that one no longer cares for the consequences.
>
> One is like an explosive that nothing can resist, and one bursts out from one's prison in a blaze of light.
>
> After that one can no longer fall back again.
>
> It is truly a new birth.
>
> (The Mother, Questions and Answers 1957-58, pp. 135-36)

In a passage quoted earlier from the Mother, she stated that Sri Aurobindo's yoga, implying the yoga of transformation, can begin only after the experience of the new birth. This is apt to make one view transformation as a rather bleak prospect in an unforseeable future. There is, however, an encouraging note in what the Mother has said about the preparatory work of transformation which is already imperceptibly taking place beneath the surface of things as a result of the supramental manifestation which has been witnessed on the earth. This preparatory work of transformation, the Mother has said, will have a sudden manifestation when the prerequisite condition—the new birth—has been attained. So after dissipating the illusion that one can have supramental experiences before the new birth, she says:

> To console you I may tell you that by the very fact that you live on earth at this time—whether you are conscious of it or not, even whether you want it or not—

> you are absorbing with the air you breathe this new supramental substance which is now spreading in the earth atmosphere. And it is preparing things in you which will manifest very suddenly, as soon as you have taken the decisive step.
>
> (The Mother, Questions and Answers 1957-58, p. 337)

The decisive step is a new birth through a reversal of consciousness.

Notes

[1] "But what precisely do we mean by the word Yoga? It is used here in the most general sense possible as a convenient name including all processes or results of processes that lead to the unveiling of a greater and inner knowledge, consciousness, experience." (Sri Aurobindo, *Essays Divine and Human* , p. 329).

[2] "Falsehood" here has a spiritual, not a moral connotation; the Mother defines "falsehood" as "a domain of what is not true, what is not at all the experience of the truth of a being, and yet it is of this that he is almost solely conscious." (The Mother, *Questions and Answers 1954* , p. 165.)

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Integral psychology
Metaphors and processes of personal integration

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Introduction

What is integral psychology?

Integral psychology is a psychological system concerned with exploring and understanding the totality of the human phenomenon. It is a framework that not only addresses the behavioural, affective and cognitive domains of the human experience within a singular system, but is concerned with the relationship among the above-mentioned domains in the context of human spiritual development. It is a system that, at its breadth, covers the entire body-mind-psyche-spirit spectrum, while at its depth dimension, encompasses the previously explored unconscious and the conscious dimensions of the psyche, as well as the supra-conscious dimension traditionally excluded from psychological inquiry.

As Western psychology is historically rooted in Western philosophy, so is integral psychology grounded in, and dependent upon, integral philosophy. At the philosophical level, integral psychology is devoted to addressing the essential issues of human spiritual, natural, social, and psychological alienation through a profound method of reconciliation of the ontological and the existential dimensions of being in the process of integral self-realization. It seeks to inspire, encourage, and assist humanity in the profound task of healing and evolution toward a future state of existence that is completely attuned to our state of embodied consciousness.

Integral psychology is inspired and informed by the great teachings of ancient wisdom traditions of the world, as well as the panorama of Western schools of psychological thought and practice. It takes into account the importance of self-knowledge, multidimensional nature of consciousness and human personality, as well as the multicultural world we live in.

One might expect that with thousands of years of living knowledge traditions, including hundreds of years of academic progress, such a psychological system would be well developed and advanced by now. Yet it is not an exaggeration to state that up until the present time no singular psychological system, Eastern, Western, or otherwise has been privileged to benefit from a vision of humanity so comprehensive as to be able to respond to the questions and challenges encountered in such a psychology.

The philosophical outlook required for such a complete vision of psychology is unlikely to be born out of the musings or discoveries of a single human being, or even a single thought system. As the human race proceeds on the path of evolution, new horizons of consciousness, new realities and new challenges arise. An integral approach to psychology, therefore, needs to have an inherent capability to absorb and benefit from the historical contributions, respond to contemporary issues, provide a vision for the foreseeable future and anticipate the upcoming challenges of each epoch of human evolution.

Fortunately, the dawn of the twenty-first century carries the promise of a new horizon of human experience and knowledge that, more than ever before, is capable of bringing together various strands of knowledge and other conditions necessary for an appropriate epistemology needed for a comprehensive vision of psychology. Some of the factors involved include the contributions of modern Western psychology, psychological dimensions of several Eastern spiritual traditions, and the rich cultural exchange between various parts of the world.

Foundations and sources

Psychology as an independent discipline is only a century and a quarter old. In this relatively short time numerous schools and systems have surfaced and developed. The second half of the twentieth century has been a time of tremendous growth and development for the field of psychology. Dominated by both scientific and psychodynamically oriented schools, psychology had previously been shut out of the influences of some of the most important schools of Western philosophy such as humanistic philosophy, existentialism and phenomenology on the one hand. On the other hand, Eastern spiritual traditions were yet to be further explored in depth by Western scholars.

After the second world war, an evolutionary explosion of philosophies and ideas seemed to influence the creation of new systems of psychology such as existential-phenomenological psychology, humanistic and transpersonal psychologies. In the 1960s and 1970s Eastern thought had either directly or indirectly through the works of early transpersonal psychologists such as Jung and Assagioli made its mark on psychological theory. There were suddenly dozens of schools of psychology like dozens of narrow spotlights aimed at a person on a stage, highlighting different parts of the person, yet failing to cover the entire person.

One of the ways in which the history of the development of Western psychology has been described is in terms of four "forces". The first force is the empirically based experimental-behavioural psychology which originally developed from the adaptation of the scientific methodology of late 19th century natural sciences to philosophy of mind, to form the then new discipline of psychology. This school of thought has been very influential since the beginning of psychology. From Wundt, the founder of the first scientific school of psychology in Germany to development of behaviourism through Watson and Skinner in the U.S. and well into the present time, scientific psychology has had a strong presence in academia as well as in the social arena.

Despite many contributions, unfortunately this orientation has only focused on the outward aspect of human existence, i.e., that which is observable objectively—in short, behaviour and speech. In this approach, human beings are at best objectified as bio-psycho-social organisms and are studied much in the same way other natural phenomena such as plants and animals are studied. In the second half of the twentieth century cognitive psychology, a recent school of scientific psychology, included in its subject matter cognitive processes inferred from behaviour and speech. As Valle, King, & Halling (1989) have noted, "although there continues to be a strong behaviouristic emphasis in some texts, more typically [since the 1970s] there has been a shift toward a cognitive perspective" (p. 3). Since the positivist methodology adopted by this approach to psychology allows only what is

observable, measurable (quantifiable), and testable, the “inner human being” and the subjective and experiential dimensions have been largely ignored or deemed unworthy of investigation due to methodological constraints.

Psychoanalysis comprises the second force in the history of psychology. From the discovery of the unconscious mind and the innovative contributions of Freud, to all the depth psychologists who in some way criticized and tried to improve Freud's work (Jung, Adler, Horney, Reich to name a few), this movement in psychology has been greatly influential in the development of both theoretical and clinical psychology. Part philosophical speculation and part clinical observation, the psychoanalytic movement and its later descendants have done much to reveal the dynamics of the human psyche in much of its complexity and to alleviate human suffering and to reveal the nature of psychopathology. Yet, this approach to psychology, being primarily concerned with the dynamics of the conscious and the unconscious mind, has not overtly dealt with the higher realms or super-conscious dimensions of the human psyche and the spiritual domains of human life in its theoretical framework.

The middle of the twentieth century witnessed radical and profound shifts in the direction of Western psychology. With scientific psychology disregarding the inner dimension of human life, and with psychodynamic models' over-emphasis on the importance of the unconscious forces, neither school in isolation nor in combination seemed to provide a satisfactory framework for understanding the whole human being. The third force, or humanistic psychology, grew in part in reaction to the shortcomings of the hitherto mentioned systems, as well as, a beginning response to the influence of Eastern psychospiritual traditions in the newly evolving interface between East and West in the United States. In the 1950s and 60s, Maslow and others began to shift the attention of psychology from a pathologistic and reductionistic focus to that of an exploration of the higher reaches of the human mind and the undiscovered human potentials and their actualization.

In the mid 1960s yet another force began to grow out of the Humanistic movement. This fourth force, or the transpersonal movement, was a direct result of the influence of Eastern spiritual traditions such as Buddhism, Taoism, Sufism, and Hinduism on the humanistic psychology movement. Although transpersonal psychology can be traced back to Carl Jung and Roberto Assagioli's work some three decades earlier, it was not until the late 1960s that this movement became popular in parts of the U.S. and Europe and slowly began to spread to certain other parts of the world. It should be noted that despite the popularity of the third and fourth forces among certain circles of psychologists, psychodynamic and experimental psychology still remain as dominant forces in most areas of the academic world. Transpersonal psychology has undergone substantial developments and changes since its earlier days, yet despite attempts on the part of Ken Wilber to create a comprehensive system (“master template”), it still remains as a body of diverse developments without a unified underlying philosophical vision.

The cardinal contribution of transpersonal psychology has been the inclusion of the spiritual dimension of human life into the larger picture of psychological inquiry primarily through importing and borrowing from mystical and spiritual traditions, both Eastern and Western as well as indigenous traditions around the world. Despite the emphasis on higher values and human potentials, and self-actualization process by humanistic psychologists, issues of ego-transcendence and higher states of

consciousness did not occupy as prominent a place in humanistic psychology as it has with transpersonal psychologists.

On the one hand, transpersonal psychology is rooted in the humanistic tradition and inspired by existential / phenomenological psychology, and to some extent depth psychologies such as analytical psychology and psychosynthesis. On the other hand, it derives inspirations and insights from Eastern spiritual traditions. Most transpersonal psychologists have adopted at least one Eastern tradition (mostly Buddhism) and have incorporated or fused their teachings with those of Western psychological disciplines in which they have been trained.

One important weakness of transpersonal psychology is its relative disregard for cross-cultural issues. Pedersen (1998) has suggested that cross-cultural psychology is so significant a factor in the future developments of psychology that it should have been called the fourth force. It must be noted here that transpersonal psychology despite its openness to Eastern esoteric teachings and international appeal still largely remains a Western phenomenon best suited to Westerners or others with a Western mindset. It is most appealing to Westerners alienated from other schools of psychology and interested in integrating psychology with one or more Eastern psychospiritual disciplines.

Integral psychology

Integral psychology is arguably the next, and if defined carefully, the final wave of development in the current history of psychology. Although it may not be simply possible to have a system of psychology that would be able to unveil all the mysteries of the human phenomenon at once, it is only common sense that psychology should cover all the known dimensions of the human phenomenon within a singular framework. This psychological framework for understanding the total human being is called integral psychology.

Herman (1983, p. 95) described integral psychology as

> .. an emergent East-West study of the human psyche. It draws upon the findings of both Western depth psychology, and ancient Eastern teachings and yogas, to express a whole, unfragmented view of human functions to resolve human conflicts and open the way toward activating high levels of potential.

According to Herman:

> Integral psychology concerns itself with all phases of human existence, in its multidimensional fullness, which includes physical, emotional, instinctual, mental, moral, social, and spiritual aspects. (op. cit., p. 97)
>
> Integral psychology seeks to be practical and applicable to the problems of daily life, yet at the same time to lead forward those individuals who are ready,

> to transpersonal dimensions of being where experiences of deep integration, meaningfulness, and fulfilment are possible. (op. cit., p. 98)

In short, integral psychology accepts the relative validity of other psychological systems, yet extends the general psychological scope of human development to encompass the full range of the psychospiritual continuum of human existence. Thus, integral psychology is concerned with the study of the human psyche in its potential fullness. Accordingly, integral psychology is inspired by and founded upon four general postulates essential to an integral world view *: non-duality, multidimensionality, holism, and evolution* . The principle of non-duality understands the human being as a continuum of body-mind-spirit; thus it avoids the traditional mind-body dilemma. It is in the integral view that human beings can be best understood in terms of a spectrum of qualities, rather than as a set of discrete constituents. Although the three domains of body, mind and spirit are essentially unified, they manifest as a multidimensional array of distinct qualities and characteristics.

In integral psychology the human psyche is a multidimensional whole, with consciousness comprising its essential structure. However, it must be stressed that although there is an essential wholeness to the psychic structure of body-mind-spirit, this wholeness exists only as a potential. While integral psychology recognizes the urge toward wholeness as the primary motive in the human being, its goal is to actualize this potential wholeness through a process of harmonious self-realization.

Finally, integral psychology recognizes the importance of the evolutionary perspective of life on earth. Sri Aurobindo's insights into the process of life revealed that the human individual is a transitional being, not a final product of creation or evolution. Understood in this light, the goal of spiritual development is not to arrive at a static final state; rather human spiritual growth is a dynamic process without any preconceived limits. Thus an integrally self-realized being is thought of as an active key participant involved in the ongoing process of collective transformation of consciousness.

Different methodological approaches to integral psychology

Different approaches to integral psychology may be distinguished on the basis of philosophical underpinnings and epistemological and methodological orientations. So far three different main approaches to integral psychology have been attempted by Indra Sen,[1] Ken Wilber and Haridas Chaudhuri. Here I will make a cursory reference to the work of Sen and Wilber since their main writings are already published. I will devote more space, however, to the integral psychology of Chaudhuri as his work in this area was never properly published due to his passing away.

The first approach taken by Indra Sen (1986) draws on the integral philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and extracts from it a psychological system that is implicit in his metaphysical teachings. Methodologically, this approach is similar to other attempts made by Western scholars to create a psychological system out of what is a much larger system of thought and practice not originally developed as an academic field.

Buddhism or Sufism for instance, may be studied from the point of view of several academic disciplines such as philosophy, religious studies, anthropology, cultural studies etc. Each discipline would sort out through its disciplinary lenses and filters, those aspects that befit its disciplinary scope and limit. In order to create strictly a Buddhist or Sufi psychology, one would have to cull out those aspects of Buddhist or Sufi teachings that are considered traditional subject matter of academic psychology. Examples would thus include topics such as self, ego, personality and states of consciousness.

Indra Sen's integral psychology is completely based on Sri Aurobindo's system. Sen has extracted from the larger metaphysical outlook of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, what is psychological subject matter. Paul Herman[2] has used the term perennial psychology to denote "the psychospiritual component of a great religious tradition which is an authentic path to enlightenment". In this sense integral psychology of Indra Sen is the perennial psychology inherent in integral yoga. One might also say that Sen's integral psychology is a form of yoga psychology, i.e., an integral yoga psychology.

According to Sen (1986),

> Sri Aurobindo has not propounded a psychological system, as a separate body of knowledge in the Western sense, but his writings on yoga and philosophy do contain one in an interconnected and a unified treatment of the issues of life and existence, growth and evolution, in the Indian way. It is, however, a complete view of mind and personality.

Sen describes the standpoint of Sri Aurobindo's psychology as empirical, evolutional, and personal growth-oriented, utilizing introspection (self-observation) as its primary method which allows immediate knowledge of psychological data. Sen presents integral psychology as an empirical approach based on direct experiential knowledge, but which unlike Western empiricism, does not confine itself to sensation, perception, and cognition.

Needless to say, the greatest advantage of this approach is its groundedness in one of the most comprehensive world views set forth hitherto. The main methodological disadvantage of this approach is that it has no special creative aspect beyond what Sri Aurobindo has contributed already. This version of integral psychology is limited to the terminology of Sri Aurobindo's integral yoga and would not necessarily be inclusive of insights from other systems of psychology.

More recently Ken Wilber (1997, 2000) has introduced another approach to integral psychology. In short, Wilber's approach may be summarized as an attempt to put together almost all relevant psychological (and related) systems to create an all-inclusive outline of psychology. Like Chaudhuri, Wilber does not limit his model to any one worldview, but he tends to complexify as opposed to simplify—which characterizes Chaudhuri's approach.

This author's main criticism of Ken Wilber's approach to integral psychology is that Wilber in essence tries to (often modify and) juxtapose numerous psychological maps

and models into one grand map—his own. The claim behind such a standpoint is that there is a place from which it is possible to see how various psychological theories as partial attempts at uncovering the reality of the human phenomenon are reconcilable into one grand scheme.

It is true that one might conceive of a state of consciousness from which all realities are visible as one interconnected reality. It is also conceivable that one might be able to develop a map inspired by such state of consciousness, that would translate that experience into a cognitive expression. However, this does not mean that such a map is derivable through superimposition of various psychological maps hitherto developed by various thinkers and practitioners. In a nutshell, Wilber's integral psychology is too complex to be useful in praxis. It remains, at best, a form of philosophical psychology.

Another approach to integral psychology is that of Haridas Chaudhuri which may be characterized as an attempt to build a system of psychology from the ground up using an integrative methodology that brings together some of the most powerful contributions of several systems of psychology both Eastern and Western. Chaudhuri's integral psychology consists of a triadic principle as well as the principal tenets of psychology, which will be discussed in further detail subsequently. Haridas Chaudhuri's system, like that of Wilber's, does not confine itself to the scope and terminology of Sri Aurobindo's integral yoga.

As an independent thinker, Chaudhuri was little interested in merely reiterating the insights and terminology of Sri Aurobindo; rather he began to develop a system that employed an integrative methodology using insights from various schools of Eastern and Western psychology. Chaudhuri (1973a, p. 1) maintains that

> ...integral psychology is based upon experiences and insights affirming the multidimensional richness and indivisible wholeness of human personality. It is founded upon the concept of man's total self as integral unity of uniqueness, relatedness, and transcendence—as the indivisible unity of the existential and the transcendental.

Chaudhuri's attempt at integral psychology may be summarized in terms of his proposed tenets for an integral psychology as well as the triadic principle of uniqueness, relatedness and transcendence. The following section will briefly introduce and elaborate on this system.

Chaudhuri's principal tenets of integral psychology

Chaudhuri's approach to integral psychology is not concerned with extrapolation of psychological insights from Sri Aurobindo's overall teachings. Instead, it directly applies an integrative methodology to the existing domain of psychological knowledge in order to construct a system of psychology that is phenomenologically oriented in its methodological outlook, and that holds psychospiritual development as its central objective.

In his effort to explore the basic concepts of integral psychology with a minimum of metaphysical assumptions, Chaudhuri (1973a) proposed a number of "principal

tenets" that form the basis for his approach to integral psychology. Unfortunately, his work in this area remained unfinished. The following is a brief list of selected principal tenets:

The wholeness of personality

The human being is an onto-psycho-somatic continuum, or a spirit-mind-body unity which in the ultimate analysis, is an indivisible whole.

Different levels of consciousness

Consciousness is the basic structure of the psyche according to integral psychology. Thus the various states below the waking consciousness, as well as higher meditative states are worthy of investigation as valid dimensions of human experience.

Importance of all phases and areas of experience

Not only is it important to make direct empirical observations of human experience, it is imperative that all areas of human experience be included in the process of inquiry. Not only wakeful, conscious experiences, but also dreams, non-dream sleep stages, altered states of consciousness, and creative imagination are important areas of research in integral psychology. Beside ordinary states of consciousness, pathological, paranormal, and peak experiences must be considered.

Need for personal integration

A full experience of wholeness presupposes the full integration of the diversified components and aspects of human personality. To this end it is essential to appreciate the role of understanding the self, because it is "only by following the inner light of one's own self that the human psyche can be comprehended in its fullness" (*op. cit.* , p. 24).

The concept of integral self-realization

Integral psychology holds that integral self-realization is the profoundest potential for the human being. This achievement requires a thorough integration and harmonization of the personal, the social and the transcendental; of the existential and the ontological dimensions of existence.

The doctrine of transformation

In integral psychology the doctrine of transformation replaces the kind of transcendence which results from withdrawal from, or negation of, the world. The lower spheres of consciousness (instincts, drives etc.) are not escaped from or suppressed, but are transformed into desirable qualities. Psychological transformation is achieved through a process of purification and psychoethical discipline.

The doctrine of ontomotivation

> "In the course of self-development ego drives are ultimately transcended and action becomes a spontaneous outpouring of the creative joy of union with Being as the ultimate ground of one's own existence". (op. cit., p. 3)

The methodology of integral experientialism

Integral psychology is comprehensive in its survey of human experience. Critical, experiential investigation and evaluation is encouraged in studying a vast range of states of consciousness and modes and phases of experience. External observations as well as introspective approaches are equally valued in this methodology.

While the above foundational principles are useful in understanding the overall parameters, scope and vision of Chaudhuri's integral psychology, his triadic principle of uniqueness, relatedness, and transcendence provide another set of guidelines for understanding the overall process of psychospiritual development and transformation. *Uniqueness* , *relatedness* and *transcendence* correspond to the three domains of *personal* , *interpersonal* and *transpersonal* psychological inquiry. According to Chaudhuri (1977a, p. 74) "Broadly speaking, there are three inseparable aspects of human personality: uniqueness, or individuality, universality or relatedness, and transcendence. In different schools of philosophy we find that there has been a tendency to over-emphasize one aspect or another. It has not occurred to many people that all these are very essential and interrelated aspects of our being".

The uniqueness principle may be best understood in terms of two ancient yogic principles of *Svabhava* and *Svadharma*. Svabhava refers to the fact that each individual human being is the resultant of a unique set of qualities and characteristics that are not replicable in their exact configuration. Indeed no two object or events are exactly the same in nature. Just as no two leaves of a tree or no two snowflakes are the same despite similarities, no two human beings can ever be identical in the exact configuration of genetic and physiological makeup, temperament, personality traits, cultural and historical conditions, context of personal experience and potential for spiritual development. In this author's view, the more one understands this profoundly meaningful fact, the harder it becomes to use psychological categories and typologies-including pathological categories.

Svadharma implies that there is a unique path of development, growth and unfoldment for each individual which must be understood in terms of that person's unique svabhava. Unlike some forms of perennial psychology, integral psychology, then, is extremely sensitive to issues of individuality and the path of individual psychological growth and psychospiritual evolution and embodiment. It is important to note here that most traditional spiritual disciplines, especially those of the East, have overlooked the individual and embodied dimensions of personal growth. Individuality has often been associated with egocentrism or selfishness, the antithesis of selflessness which is a basic tenet of spiritual practice.

Integral psychology recognizes the fact that misunderstanding of the uniqueness principle results in various forms of narcissistic personality disorders. Narcissistic

individuals are likely to believe in their own uniqueness (specialness), but would not grant others such a privilege. Narcissism is indeed a strong impediment to any kind of real psychological and spiritual growth. Integral psychology promotes the idea of a balanced and healthy ego development and affirms the role of strong ego-development in the initial stages of psychospiritual growth. But the self must first be understood as the *principle of embodiment* . According to Sri Aurobindo the ego is only a temporary formation in the outer nature, required during the early stages of individualisation. The real center of the embodied being is the soul, or Psychic Being, which resides deep behind the heart. This Psychic being is seen as a delegate of the Atman, or eternal Self, who remains, immutably, beyond manifestation. This is quite different from the common definitions of the terms ego and self as defined technically within various schools of Western psychology.

As important as individuality may be, it is not possible to understand the human being only in terms of individuality alone. Relatedness, or the interpersonal dimension, is of equal importance in the triadic equation. Obviously human beings are contextualized within numerous holistically organized systems such as the families, societies, nations and ultimately the earth and the entire cosmos. Integral psychology holds the assumption that individuals are microcosmic expressions of the greater macrocosm with infinite potential for spiritual realization. Just as an individual needs to maintain harmonious intrapsychic dynamics, she or he needs to also maintain balance and harmony with others and with nature. Integral psychology maintains that unhealthy and lopsided growth in the interpersonal realm is likely to lead to enmeshment, codependency and borderline personality disorders.

In integral psychology the human being is understood in terms of both the historical (temporal) and the transcendental, formless/timeless (non-temporal) dimensions. Hitherto Western psychology has been concerned with the historical dimension of the human being which includes: a) the genetic/biological characteristics or the physical and vital aspects; b) the emotional aspects, and c) the mental aspects of human existence. In short psychology until the present has been concerned with what may be referred to as the body-mind configuration, or personality.

However, the transcendental (non-temporal) dimension is of equal importance in integral psychology which recognizes the importance of the urge toward transcendence and wholeness. Historically the notion of transcendence has been the cornerstone of Eastern psychologies and Western mysticism. Being so, the terminology often characteristic of these systems has been categorically unacceptable to formal Western psychology. On the other hand, traditional mysticism has had little or no concern with the conventional psychological growth and development of the human being. Integral psychology recognizes and emphasizes both of these areas without neglecting either of them.

According to Chaudhuri (1977a)

> the essential significance of transcendence is that man in his inmost being is a child of immortality, an imperishable spark of the infinite. As a mode of manifestation of being, his ultimate goal is union with that ground of existence, transcending all other limitations.

The notion of transcendence, however, could be misleading if taken in an ultimate or absolute sense. In an article titled: *Psychology: Humanistic and Transpersonal* , Chaudhuri (1975) critiqued one of the early assumptions of transpersonal psychology —the notion of ultimate states, and that transpersonal psychology was concerned with recognition and realization of ultimate states.

Chaudhuri did not believe in characterization of mystical experiences in terms of ultimate states. Such characterization, he believed, creates the

> dichotomy of the ultimate and the preparatory, the transcendental and the phenomenal... the dichotomy of the lower self and the higher self, the flesh and the spirit, relative knowledge and absolute knowledge, conditioned existence and unconditioned perfection". (op. cit., p. 9)

This problem arises when the principle of transcendence is treated in isolation from the principles of uniqueness and relatedness.

Chaudhuri's integral psychology had anticipated the dilemma of spiritual by-passing, later introduced in the literature of transpersonal psychology. This tendency, especially common among individuals with schizoid personality traits, is characterized by a wish to transcend the physical and affective dimensions through suppression or denial of the body and emotions in order to attain transcendental states of consciousness. It is true that mystical *experiences* attained in this fashion may have their proper place in the process of psychospiritual development. But when taken to an extreme, asceticism and denial of the physical-vital energies problematically become the goal of spiritual practice.

It is by now well established that before attempting to reach higher transcendental states, one must first properly deal with issues of psychological growth and development as well as pathological tendencies and development of a relatively healthy ego and personality. Transcendence, in integral psychology, is replaced by the notion of psychospiritual transformation.

The process of personal integration

The concept of integral self-realization is a key concept in integral psychology which employs a number of key understandings unique to integral psychology. In order to explore the process of integral self-realization it is important to discuss the notion of self in integral psychology. The present author (1994) has previously developed a model for self which distinguishes three distinct spheres of self-consciousness. These are *egocentric* , *psychocentric* and *cosmocentric* spheres.

The egocentric sphere of consciousness has been the topic of traditional psychological study in the West. Three domains of behavioural, affective and cognitive comprise the basic dimensions of study in this sphere. Western psychology is particularly adept in this area with a vast number of theories and applications many of which are at odds with one another. Much of personality theory is concerned with day-to-day waking consciousness as well as what is termed the unconscious mind.

Recent development such as transpersonal theories have also included the study of the higher unconscious mind. Transpersonal psychology has extended the boundaries of traditional Western systems by including that which is beyond the immediate ego-based experiences of the self.

In this author's opinion, transpersonal psychologists have not adequately, or at all, dealt with what lies beyond the ego by failing to adequately distinguish between the psychocentric and cosmocentric spheres of consciousness. For example, the archetype of self as proposed by Jung may be viewed as a psychocentric principle (the soul), or a cosmocentric principle (cosmic Christ).

In integral psychology psychocentric consciousness is represented through Sri Aurobindo's "psychic being". It is quite important to understand the role of psychocentric consciousness in the overall process of integral self realization. Many traditional forms of spiritual practice have either overlooked or totally by-passed this area in favour of direct union with the cosmocentric ground of existence—a non spatio-temporal principle known as God or Brahman among numerous other terms. Often viewing the body and affects as a hindrance to spiritual practice, they have attempted various forms of self-denial in exchange for transcendental or cosmic consciousness.

Integral yoga compensates for this problem by involving the psychic being in the process of self-realization which facilitates the development of a healthy ego (embodiment principle) and balanced personality. Through the dynamic process of integral self-realization a gradual shift from ego-based to psychocentric consciousness takes place. Initially ego-based personality obscures the subliminal psychic being. This condition is due primarily to the fragmented nature of ego-based personality, which creates a dualistic division between the I and not-I, or subject and object of experience. With experiences of self-opening that result from integral yogic and meditative insights occasionally the locus of consciousness shifts away from the ego and becomes centered in the psychic being. *This transition is not possible without meditative and contemplative effort and is not necessarily a developmental consequence of healthy ego-development* .

From the psychocentric sphere of consciousness the ego is not necessarily hidden or absent. In fact, from this point of view a deeper observation of the ego-structure becomes possible. Repeated insights into the ego-structure may bring about transformation of the ego which results in the development of a unified and healthy center of conscious activity.

Continued psychospiritual development makes it possible for the ego to integrate further unconscious contents of the mind. As the ego becomes fully conscious, the locus of consciousness moves to the next sphere and becomes permanently centered in the psychic being. This entire process requires the application of the will and continued effort. It is highly contingent upon psychoethical development of the individual.

Further development toward integral consciousness may require what Sri Aurobindo called "a descent of the higher consciousness." This means that the self becomes receptive to the experience of Being, the cosmic ground of all existence. This is also a gradual process. Once the locus of consciousness becomes focused in the Self, occasional absorption in cosmic consciousness may occur. Eventually this experience

becomes possible at will. *Unlike traditional linear conceptualizations, this is not a final point in spiritual development* . A human being may continue to exist and operate as a unique individual, but without an ego/drive-based will. Rather, this individual is ontomotivated.

In short, three levels of integration are involved in the process of integral self-realization: integration of personality, integration of the psychic being into conscious personality, and integration of the existential and cosmic (ontological) dimensions of being. Sri Aurobindo termed the first transition psychic transformation, and the second transition spiritual transformation. These two transformations are not linearly or developmentally connected and happen differently in different individuals. The third transformation is what Sri Aurobindo called the supramental transformation in which every part of the being becomes supramentalized in the Divine consciousness. This would result in a complete transformation of mind, life, and body.

Metaphors of personal integration

Finally I would like to conclude this presentation by sharing some of my findings in working with individuals in their process of personal integration. Over the past several years I have conducted integrative seminars for counselling psychology students as part of the conclusion of their education in the Integral Counselling Psychology program at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco. This seminar encourages students to reflect upon and understand the processes of personal and academic integration by first identifying their key learnings. Then, personal significance of these learnings are explored in order to arrive at a creative integration of knowledge and experience. Students are asked to focus on the deeper meaning of their uniqueness as an individual and reflect on what integration means to them and what metaphors best represent their process. After studying about a couple of hundred responses I have been able to summarize the results in terms of the following themes and metaphors of personal psychospiritual integration:

Reconciliation of opposites

In line with Chaudhuri's classic definition of integration as reconciliation of what is seemingly dichotomous but truly complementary, many individuals have been able, through this work, to identify main dichotomies within their psyche or personality such as: spirit/body, rationality/intuition, unconsciousness/consciousness, femininity/masculinity etc.. Each person would search for the unique way in which such dichotomies manifest within him or her and find a way to facilitate the reconciliation of the dichotomy into a more harmonious union. Many have found classical psychospiritual disciplines such as yoga, meditation, T'ai chi and more to be useful tools. Others find writing journals, self narratives, and heuristic types of self-inquiry helpful, while still others find personal and group psychotherapy instrumental in this work.

For instance, an individual with tendency toward extremes might benefit from the practice of the middle-path, or use Chaudhuri's integral dialectics (Chaudhuri, 1977a) as a principal guideline. Yet others inspired by the principle of unity-in-diversity might use psychosynthesis as a way of bringing the various subpersonalities into harmony with one another by the unifying self.

Fragmentation to wholeness

This metaphor is also quite commonly used to describe the process of the integration of the psyche or personality from disparate parts and experiences into a more unified sense of self.

Unification of mind-body-spirit

This theme which is one the principal tenets of integral psychology is by now a quintessential theme used in various ways in transpersonal psychology as well as in new-age psychology. It is often described as opening to the spiritual experiences and using them to unify the mind-body which in most Western people's experience is initially seen as a duality.

Journey from unconsciousness to self-consciousness to superconsciousness

This theme is used often in a developmental sense and is described in many different ways. Many use Jungian terminology to describe their growth process of integration of shadow into the ego to describe the first part of the journey. Many use meditative disciplines and other forms of psychospiritual practice to open up to the possibilities of the higher self and supraconsciousness.

Embodied spirituality

This is a favourite theme for many, especially those aware of the importance of the role of the body as well as feminine energies and qualities in the process of personal integration. This theme is a unique contribution of the integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother and is consciously used by those practising integral yoga. This theme or metaphor, in one form or another, surfaces in many individuals' process of psychospiritual integration.

Synthesis

Many use the term synthesis to describe their process of integration. It simply means bringing together various pieces and elements of the psyche or personality in a unique way to discover and actualize one's svadharma. Some use a more sophisticated form that includes both processes of synthesis and analysis, or breaking down into components, as well as putting pieces together, in a analytico-synthetic spiral of development.

Assimilation/Accommodation

Many use various ways to describe their growth and integration process in terms of gradual but continuous cycles of letting go/deconditioning and reconditioning into more adaptive ways.

Self

The self as a psychological metaphor is also used often. Self-discovery, self-knowledge, creative self-fulfilment and creative self-unfoldment and becoming oneself are major themes in this metaphor by which the integration process is described.

Honouring all spiritual traditions

Some individuals describe their process using metaphors and terminology of selected world spiritual traditions such as Buddhism, Sufism, Taoism and Shamanism to name a few. The distinctive feature here, however, is that such individuals honour all authentic spiritual traditions while being grounded in one or more specific practices.

Inner alchemy

Alchemy is sometimes used by those familiar with Jung's work or alchemy in general. Though rarely used, this orientation provides some of the richest metaphors I have encountered.

Eclectic collage

Eclecticism is often used to describe the personal integration process. Often integration is tacitly confused with some kind of eclectic configuration of pieces from the vast array of psychospiritual practices available today.

These metaphors, as well as others not mentioned here, are extremely helpful in shaping the individual self-inquiry and articulation of the ultimately unique process of personal integration. Integral psychology recognizes the divine nature of the human being and the different ways in which this divine potential is actualized in every single human being. It has been a most pleasurable opportunity for this author to be a witness and facilitator in this process.

Appendix: Literature in integral psychology

Herman (1983) noted that the term integral psychology was first used in a seminar given by Indra Sen at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry, India in the 1950s. Without prior knowledge of this usage, Herman broadly defined and introduced this area in his classes at The California Institute of Asian (presently Integral) Studies in 1970. Perhaps the earliest published reference to the term integral psychology appeared in a brief chapter in *The Integral Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo* (Chaudhuri, H. & Spiegelberg, F., 1960, pp. 184-191) "The Indian Approach to Psychology" by Indra Sen. In that chapter arguing that psychological interest essentially determined the standpoint of philosophy and religion in India, Sen concluded by stating that "... integration is thus characteristic of all Indian psychology. However, at the hands of Sri Aurobindo, it receives an elaborate treatment, which enables Indian psychology to take the form of a well-developed integral psychology" (p. 191). Sen who called his treatment no more than a broad characterization of the background of the psychological system of Sri Aurobindo, later published a more complete account of the psychological insights of Sri Aurobindo's writing (Sen, *Integral Psychology* , 1986).

Another Aurobindonian scholar, Reddy (1973), while making several references to Sen's 1960 essay on Indian psychology, re-emphasized the need for a system of integral psychology. In a brief but substantive critical evaluation of the psychoanalytic school he asserted that "modern psychology is on trial; it has no vision of the future. Its field of activity is confined only to man's conscious and the subconscious; it tries to

explain the former in terms of the latter" (p. 157). While arguing that the most fundamental urge of human nature cannot be sexual drive, reflex action, will to power, or purposiveness as postulated by some Western schools of thought, Reddy praises the work of C.G. Jung for emphasizing the spiritual elements of human development. Reddy asserts that while instinctual forces or will toward greater power are powerful forces in the human psyche, the urge toward wholeness plays a far more important role in the overall psychospiritual development of human beings. Accordingly, Reddy favours a psychological system that pays attention not only to the unconscious, subconscious, and the conscious mind, but keeps perspective of the future potentialities of mental development, e.g. superconscious mental experiences such as those explored by Sri Aurobindo.

During the same year Chaudhuri (1973a), wrote an unpublished paper titled "Integral Psychology; Its Outlook, Scope and Methodology". An abridged version of this paper was later published in Chaudhuri's posthumous work, *The Evolution of Integral Consciousness* , as a chapter titled "Psychology".

Paul E. Herman's article (1983), as well as unpublished course outlines and reading materials, have been essential to the present investigation. Herman (1983, p. 95) described integral psychology as "... an emergent East-West study of the human psyche. It draws upon the findings of both Western depth psychology, and ancient Eastern teachings and yogas, to express a whole, unfragmented view of human functions to resolve human conflicts and open the way toward activating high levels of potential".

According to Herman: "integral psychology concerns itself with all phases of human existence, in its multidimensional fullness, which includes physical, emotional, instinctual, mental, moral, social, and spiritual aspects" (p. 97). "Integral psychology seeks to be practical and applicable to the problems of daily life, yet at the same time to lead forward those individuals who are ready, to transpersonal dimensions of being where experiences of deep integration, meaningfulness, and fulfillment are possible" (p. 98). Herman emphasizes the importance of the fact that as human beings "we are always in relationship to the whole of reality" and that " the spirit of the whole is dynamically present at the center of our being". By harmonizing the diverse elements of our nature within ourselves, with others, and ultimately with the greater whole we can experience our embeddedness in the greater whole of cosmic reality. The dawn of cosmic or integral consciousness transforms the egocentricity and identification with one's body or mind, social roles and established patterns of psychosocial conditioning that result from the ego experience of separateness. Herman brings to attention the importance of self-knowledge as a key element in this transformative process. "By gaining self-knowledge human beings can come to direct experience of all levels of their consciousness, or being. Such self-knowledge can be accumulated along many lines: through self-observation, meditation, practice of spiritual disciplines, participation in facilitative relationships such as counseling and psychotherapy" (p. 101).

In 1994 the present author published the first doctoral dissertation in the field of integral psychology titled: *Self In Integral Psychology* . The primary goal of this investigation was to explore the concepts of self and ego, and their relationship in the context of integral psychology. Inspired by Haridas Chaudhuri's triadic principles of uniqueness, relatedness, and transcendence in integral psychology, an extensive review of literature of the concept of self in Western psychology and several Eastern

psychospiritual traditions was undertaken to establish universal, cross-cultural support for the experience of self in three distinct spheres of consciousness: egocentric, psychocentric and cosmocentric.

After establishing support for a tri-spheric understanding of self, the investigator proceeded to construct a parsimonious model for self in *integral psychology* . According to this model, the process of integral self-realization consists of a harmonious experience of self in all three spheres of consciousness, necessitating a balanced personality. This model stresses the uniqueness of individual constitution and an individualized approach to the process of *integral self-realization* , a dynamic and evolutionary interpretation of spiritual development and self-realization which advocates healthy ego development and reconciliation of the ego-Self dichotomy.

More recently Ken Wilber has shown active interest in the field of integral psychology. In *The Eye of Spirit* (Wilber, 1997) he included a chapter titled: The Spectrum of Consciousness: Integral Psychology and the Perennial Philosophy. Here Wilber begins with a reference to the "human consciousness project" involving a "series of multidisciplinary, multicultural, multimodal approaches that together promise an exhaustive mapping of the entire range of consciousness..." (p. 37). Wilber believes that it is becoming increasingly possible to create a "master template of the various stages, structures, and states of consciousness..." (p. 38). Wilber describes the goal of the integral approach as a "judicious blend of ancient wisdom and modern knowledge..." and thus grounds his integral psychology in a perennial philosophy emphasizing the universal, cross-cultural and ageless wisdom at the heart of the world's great spiritual traditions.

Wilber, however, offers very little new information here. After setting perennial philosophy's Great Chain of Being as the stage on which he constructs his integral psychology, he basically draws on the Vedantic notion of the five koshas (which has already been expounded in much further detail by Sri Aurobindo) and various states of consciousness (waking, dream, dreamless sleep and absolute consciousness—Turiya) as the foundation for his spectrum of consciousness. Wilber ends this chapter by referring to his earlier works: The Atman Project and Up From Eden and his theory of human development which he later modified in his later work: Integral Psychology (Wilber, 2000).

Wilber (2000) defines psychology as "the study of human consciousness and its manifestations in behavior" (p. 1) and proceeds to include functions (perception, will, desire, action, etc.), structures (body, mind, soul, spirit), states (normal: waking, dream, etc. / altered: non-ordinary, meditative, hypnosis etc.), and modes (aesthetic, moral etc.) of consciousness as part of the larger scope of his spectrum of development of consciousness from pre-personal to personal to transpersonal or from subconscious to self-conscious to super-conscious, contextualized in his famous four quadrant model. In this philosophical work Wilber covers various topics such as the self, modernism/post-modernism, spirit, developmental streams and lots of charts comprising his "master template". Wilber's latest work has brought a new level of attention to integral psychology and has invoked new controversies about his approach in general and specifically to psychology.

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Savitri
A key to Sri Aurobindo's "psycho-cosmology"

Shraddhavan

It had been intended to hold this afternoon's session in the garden of Savitri Bhavan, the institution I am associated with. But unexpected blessings from the Rain Gods have made us shift here to a more sheltered position. The building we are sitting in is the Sri Aurobindo World Centre for Human Unity. It was built with funds received from the Indian Government in connection with the 125th Birth Anniversary celebrations for Sri Aurobindo. It is intended to serve as the seed of a centre for Higher Studies and Research in the light of the vision and teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. So it is very appropriate that we should be here together this afternoon, and I would like to add my own thanks to the appreciation that has already been expressed to the organisers and participants of this Conference. I have found all the presentations stimulating and valuable, and in what I have to say you are likely to hear some echoes of topics that have been raised by various speakers over the last days.

As you perhaps know, one aspect of the Mother's vision of Auroville was that of a "Universe-City", a township essentially devoted to unending education, constant progress, both individual and collective. So far we have been able to build up a number of schools of different kinds, serving different target groups of children and youngsters; and there have been a wide variety of opportunities for informal adult education. But a need is now being felt for more established resources and structures to support on-going education, to interconnect the many researchers who are working independently here, and to enable constructive networking with other researchers and research institutions around the world who would be interested in knowing more about our experiences and in sharing their own with us. So a proposal is now being prepared for submission to the Government of India, to request support for setting up such an institution here. Within the context of that organisation, Savitri Bhavan will serve as the base for the faculty of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother Studies, focusing especially on the core-areas of the teachings which lie at the basis of Auroville: the philosophy, psychology and yoga-practice of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

The Savitri Bhavan project has grown up over the last six years, out of the deep interest that many Aurovilians feel in Sri Aurobindo's epic poem *Savitri.* Amongst all his many writings, the Mother has given a special place to this work, which she has characterised as "The supreme revelation of Sri Aurobindo's vision". As such, *Savitri* has been read in Auroville from the very earliest days, both individually and in groups. But in 1994, it was decided to start a *Savitri* Study Circle, which would meet not only to read but also to discuss and explore *Savitri* together. And to some of the people in the Circle there came the inspiration that there should be a place in Auroville which could become an inspiring centre of *Savitri* studies, housing all kinds of materials and activities to enrich our understanding and enjoyment of Sri Aurobindo's revelatory epic, and above all, to have a very special atmosphere. For learning and research in Auroville is meant to be not purely academic and intellectual. Intellectual learning has its place and value, but here we would like to place even more emphasis on experiential learning and research—experiences that

can really lead to a change of consciousness. That is the aim of Savitri Bhavan—it means "The Abode of Savitri"—which is open not only to Aurovilians but to everyone, from wherever they come, who has an interest in *Savitri* and the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. And we are fortunate that this project has won the blessings and support of some of those most closely associated with them—for example Dr. Nirodbaran, Sri Aurobindo's scribe for Savitri; Amal Kiran, the poet-disciple to whom Sri Aurobindo wrote a number of letters explaining his intentions and methods in creating *Savitri* ; and Huta, the young woman whom the Mother trained to work with her on illustrating *Savitri* , and who has allowed us access to uniquely illuminating materials connected with their 18-year long collaboration.

As coordinator for the educational activities of the Bhavan, I have been invited to make a presentation to you. I am not a psychologist, but a lay-person with a long-standing interest in psychology, which, as we have been reminded in the last days, Sri Aurobindo defined as "the science of consciousness". And I speak to you today as a follower of Sri Aurobindo and a child of the Mother. I shall be using their terminology and speaking from that standpoint because I am not competent to do anything else—and because I feel this is really the most useful thing I can do. I shall try to give you a small taste of some of the unique materials that have been entrusted to our care.

The title of my presentation perhaps requires a little explanation: *Savitri as a Key to Sri Aurobindo's psycho-cosmology*. "Psycho-cosmology" is my own coinage—a kind of shorthand term for what forms the conceptual basis of our research here—a basis which to Sri Aurobindo himself was of course not "conceptual", but experienced. This coinage evokes two aspects that are of cardinal importance in Sri Aurobindo's message. While he has explored and revealed the complexities of individual psychology with unprecedented completeness, he has at the same time linked our individual psychology with an explanation of the workings of the universe, giving the human individual a meaningful position in the cosmos.

At the beginning of Book Two of *Savitri* the protagonist, King Aswapati, the father of Savitri, has a vision of the many planes of consciousness rising like one of the temple towers that we see here in South India, with many levels, each peopled with their own beings, animals and houses, rising one above the other up into the sky.

> There, walled apart by its own innerness
>
> In a mystical barrage of dynamic light
>
> He saw a lone immense high-curved world-pile
>
> Erect like a mountain-chariot of the Gods
>
> Motionless under an inscrutable sky.
>
> As if from matter's plinth and viewless base
>
> To a top as viewless, a carved sea of worlds
>
> Climbing with foam-maned waves to the Supreme
>
> Ascended towards breadths immeasureable;

It hoped to soar into the Ineffable's reign:
A hundred levels raised it to the Unknown.
So it towered up to heights intangible
And disappeared in the hushed conscious Vast
As climbs a storeyed temple-tower to heaven
Built by the aspiring soul of man to live
Near to his dream of the Invisible.
Infinity calls to it as it dreams and climbs;
Its spire touches the apex of the world;
Mounting into great voiceless stillnesses
It marries the earth to screened eternities.
Amid the many systems of the One
Made by an interpreting creative joy
Alone it points us to our journey back
Out of our long self-loss in Nature's deeps;
Planted on earth it holds in it all realms:
It is a brief compendium of the Vast.
This was the single stair to being's goal.
A summary of the stages of the spirit
Its copy of the cosmic hierarchies
Refashioned in our secret air of self
A subtle pattern of the universe.

This Canto is entitled “The World-Stair”.

Its steps are paces of the soul's return
From the deep adventure of material birth,
A ladder of delivering ascent
And rungs that Nature climbs to deity.

This refers to the evolutionary process up out of Matter to higher levels of consciousness. But before this process began, there was an involution, of consciousness into the Inconscient:

> Once in the vigil of a deathless gaze
> These grades had marked her giant downward plunge,
> The wide a prone leap of a godhead's fall.

Elsewhere, this cosmic hierarchy of planes is described similarly:

> Ascending and descending twixt life's poles
> The seried kingdoms of the graded Law
> Plunged from the Everlasting into Time,
> Then glad of a glory of multitudinous mind
> And rich with life's adventure and delight
> And packed with the beauty of Matter's shapes and hues
> Climbed back from Time into undying Self,
> Up a golden ladder carying the soul,
> Tying with diamond threads the Spirit's extremes.
> In this drop from consciousness to consciousness
> Each leaned on the occult Inconscient's power,
> The fountain of its needed Ignorance,
> Archmason of the limits by which it lives.
> In this soar from consciousness to consciousness
> Each lifted tops to That from which it came,
> Origin of all that it had ever been
> And home of all that it could still become. (p. 88-89)

We can see something of this in one of the many illustrations which the Mother prepared for *Savitri* . This drawing was made around 1964 or 65, when the Mother was working with a young woman in the Ashram, Huta, on a project of illustrating selected passages from *Savitri*. The Mother herself was a very accomplished artist.

She studied art in Paris in the 1880s. Her first husband was a painter, and she personally knew many of the famous names of that time, including Monet, Rodin, and Rouault. She encouraged many artists in the Ashram, and she told Huta that she was training her for a new kind of painting that would be able to express subtler levels of consciousness. The Mother herself has explained how they worked, saying:

Savitri, this prophetic vision of the world's history, including the announcement of the earth's future,—Who can ever dare to put it in pictures?

Yet, the Mother and Huta have tried it, this way. "We simply meditate together on the lines chosen, and when the image becomes clear, I describe it with the help of a few strokes, then Huta goes to her studio and brushes the painting."

It is in a meditative mood that these "meditations" must be looked at to find the feeling they contain behind their appearance.

This particular picture is a diagram of twelve different planes of consciousness, from the Inconscient at the bottom, up through the body, life and mind planes, followed by the four planes of what Sri Aurobindo calls Higher Mind, then Overmind, the plane of the Gods, and above that the planes of Ananda, Chit-Tapas, and Sat, which mark the limit of the Manifestation. Beyond is the Unmanifest. When preparing this drawing as an aid to Huta the Mother explained to her that those who have intuited the Unmanifest have often spoken of it as "the Void", and thought of it as empty. But, she said, it is not empty. It is in fact packed with potentiality. What Sri Aurobindo has done, she explained, is to go into that realm of unmanifest potentialities, to seize and bring down into the manifestation a completely new possibility—the Supermind, the principle of a New Creation.

The Mother explained too that she perceived these successive planes of existence as qualities of light, each with its distinctive colour. But expressing these qualities of light in pigment, in paint was not easy. Huta had to make many successive attempts before the Mother pronounced herself reasonably satisfied with the result.

These planes are levels of universal manifestation. But in the passage from *Savitri* which we have noted, Sri Aurobindo tells us that, through the involution, all of them have contributed to and become part of the earth we live on, and that they are accessible to human experience. Individually we can experience them in our innermost self, if we become aware enough; and eventually, through the process of evolution, the whole creation has to climb back up the stair of existence and recover its origin. So far we have attained only the Mind level. The best is all to come.

We may note several important points which follow from this vision of man's place in the cosmos:

– In Sri Aurobindo's world-view consciousness is primary. He has referred to Matter as "sense created mould of Spirit". In fact each of these planes corresponds to a mode of consciousness, and a relation between what Indian philosophy refers to as Purusha and Prakriti, or Chit and Shakti ... conscious awareness, and the expressive force of that consciousness.

– The complementary relation of involution and evolution implies that evolution has direction and purpose. It is not just a chance configuration of original plasma that has somehow accidentally given rise to the anomalous appearance of organised Matter,

burgeoning Life, and inexplicable Mind. These are the external signs of an inner drive towards ever more complex and delightful forms in which Spirit or Consciousness may express itself, experience itself, recognise and enjoy itself.

– Each individuality is a projection, a partial expression of some divine uniqueness, which in the involution becomes "ego". Dr. George Matthew showed us the other day that as individuals we can be considered to be constantly co-existent on all planes from the Supreme to unconscious matter, and that the process of self-realisation means recovering identity with the Origin and Source of which we are projections. But Sri Aurobindo tells us that we do not have to lose our individuality when we re-attain the level of original consciousness. To do so we have to lose our distorted ego sense; but since our true Source is some quality of divine potentiality, we can choose to retain a true individuality for action in the world, even when united in consciousness with the Source.

– Evolution takes place, starting from the Inconscient, both individually, with the development of the psychic being, and generally in Nature, which manifests new forms, species, corresponding to the levels of consciousness generally attained; and both individual and group and Nature in general are equally expressions of the involved Divine. Everything in Nature, including inconscient Matter and every life-movement, is essentially divine, and can, when the process of evolution is complete, express the divine Will and Delight.

These points give Sri Aurobindo's world-vision its special dynamic and optimistic character. This "psycho-cosmology" is the consistent basis of all Sri Aurobindo's major writings. In his different books he has dealt with various areas of interest: English literature, Indian culture, world history, human society, and so on. In most of them he has spoken the language of the intellect, and set out to answer the human mind's need for rational conviction. This is because, from the individual point of view, any means which helps us to come into contact with our true individuality is helpful, and progressive from the evolutionary standpoint; in human beings, since the human race is representative of Mind in this evolutionary process, the intelligent will is "the priest of the sacrifice".

But for most of us the intelligent will is driven not merely, not even primarily, by reason and intellect. All the other planes of being act on us too. Very dominant in our ordinary psychology are the vital or life planes. Their principle, though in us often distorted by ego and desire, is Delight. And the response to and quest for Beauty is one of the very powerful motives which can help to carry us beyond our limited ego-selves towards a wider and higher identification. In one of his aphorisms, Sri Aurobindo says,

> If mankind could but see though in a glimpse of fleeting experience what infinite enjoyments, what perfect forces, what luminous reaches of spontaneous knowledge, what wide calms of our being lie waiting for us in the tracts which our animal evolution has not yet conquered, they would leave all and never rest till they had gained these treasures.
>
> Sri Aurobindo, Essays Divine and Human, p. 423

Art and Beauty in all forms can be, and have been, ways of linking our ordinary human mentality with higher, intensified states.

While the Mother was a painter and musician, Sri Aurobindo was a poet. In the *Essays on the Gita* , he has contrasted the language of the Gita, which is designed to satisfy, he says, an intellectual difficulty, to that of the Upanishads with

> ... its free resort to image and symbol, its intuitive form of speech in which the hard limiting definiteness of intellectual utterance is broken down and the implications of words are allowed to roll out in an illimitable wave of suggestion ...
>
> Sri Aurobindo, Essays on the Gita, p. 264

in an attempt to evoke the highest spiritual truth, which can be lived, can be seen, but can only be partially suggested.

We can make a similar comparison between The Life Divine, which for many years was Sri Aurobindo's "best-seller", and Savitri, which has overtaken it in popularity over the last decade or so. One gentleman expressed what many have confirmed, when he explained that while both works present intellectual difficulties, he found that the music and suggestive images of Savitri had a very remarkable effect on him, even though he felt that he was not understanding them. In fact they gave some glimpse of those future states lying ahead of us.

Sri Aurobindo in fact was aiming, as he has explained in *The Future Poetry,* for a level of linguistic expression that could be termed "mantric". Since this theme was touched upon in an earlier session, I would like to conclude by adding a few reflections of my own on this topic.

That sound-waves have physical effects is now generally accepted and scientifically demonstrated. A moment's reflection will convince us that sound waves in the form of words can have powerful mental and emotional effects on human beings—and that these may lead to consequent physical effects. This applies whether the words are heard physically through the ear, or only subtly in the mind.

It therefore does not seem irrational to accept that sound waves in the form of *mantra* —words uttered with a conscious intent by a being who is in a heightened state of consciousness and possesses a capacity of powerful mental formation—may have effects on a hearer that extend to several different levels of consciousness—mental, vital, physical and "spiritual".

For mantra-japa to have a lasting effect on the physical consciousness and the body, constant repetition over a long period may be needed. But many sensitive people can attest that simply hearing the Mother's voice reciting lines from *Savitri* can have a remarkable effect, that is at the very least both delightful and uplifting. So let us close by hearing a recording of her reading of a few of the lines quoted above, from Canto

One of Book Two, accompanied by some music of the Ashram composer, Sunil Bhattacharya.

Integral psychotherapy as existential Vedanta

(Infinity Foundation Lecture on Sri Aurobindo's Work)

Brant Cortright

I would first of all like to thank the Sri Aurobindo Ashram for organizing this wonderful conference. I would also like to thank the Infinity Foundation for sponsoring my presentation. This is an extraordinarily important topic, and I am grateful to be participating.

It seems that we are all coming at this topic from different angles. Some come to integral psychology from the perspective of preserving the original teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, some are looking at parallels to what psychology has discovered, others are adapting these teachings to psychology or psychology to these teachings. All of these perspectives are important, all of them are valid, and all have their place in an integral approach.

My direction is to see integral yoga and integral philosophy as an integrating framework for psychology. I believe it has the potential to fundamentally shift psychology into a new paradigm, providing a new context and meaning to psychology and a new way for psychology to organize itself. There are profound implications in applying this to psychotherapy for both theory and practice, though with the time we have we can only deal with this in a general way and just scratch the tip of the surface of some of the issues this raises. As a clinical psychologist who has been studying, practising, and teaching depth psychotherapy for over 25 years now, my special interest in this area is in psychotherapy, in how human beings actually change—how they heal, develop, grow. What is the process of psycho-spiritual change and transformation? What are its possibilities?

In some ways I think of Sri Aurobindo as the greatest psychologist the world has ever known, for he penetrated the mystery of human consciousness more deeply than any other person I am aware of. In so doing he has laid out some exciting discoveries for psychology that only now are we in a position to appreciate. When we bring psychology and depth psychotherapy into these teachings, we have integral psychology and integral psychotherapy. Integral psychotherapy works with every level of our being—physical, vital, mental, spiritual, but I want to focus this presentation on the vital and physical dimensions.

In giving a spiritual meaning and purpose to psychotherapy, an integral approach has a different goal than traditional psychotherapy, not just the integration of the surface self but the discovery of the central being, the atman and psychic being, and the transformation of our outer nature. To do this we need to bring a sense of calm and peace and harmony to the surface self, and this is where psychotherapy comes in. One observation that Sri Aurobindo made in several places is that the vital ego is the biggest obstacle to sadhana and transformation. He also observed that generally people live in the vital ego, that even artists and intellectuals who lived in their minds were also subject to the vital ego in their ordinary movements. Now as it turns out this is precisely what psychology has come to. In fact we can see psychology as a kind of rigorous research into the vital self. Most depth psychological approaches to the self now see that affects and affect regulation are the central processes that organize the

self. Contemporary psychoanalysis speaks of the affective core of the self as the center of psychological life.

One of the most important discoveries that depth psychology has made about the vital self is the universality of emotional wounding. To take a human incarnation on this earth is to be emotionally hurt and scarred growing up. We are all wounded. And the human psyche protects itself by developing defences against this emotional pain. In our family of origin there are failures to attune to the emotional state of the infant and young child, there are accidents, there are traumas, there is inevitable emotional pain growing up. The parents, due to their emotional wounding, can only respond empathically to some of the child's emotions and self and tune out the rest. Many different feelings of the child are emotionally threatening to the parents. To cope with this and to maintain the vital bond with the mother and/or father, the child holds down this pain, represses certain impulses, disavows certain feelings, and after a period of time this all becomes automatic and unconscious. The child internalizes the parental prohibitions and develops a coping strategy that pleases the family system, but in so doing adopts a false self that is estranged from the authentic self that lies buried within. Large portions of the self become unconscious, large areas of feeling and impulse become unconscious, and we dissociate from the body when we repress feelings, so areas of our physical being also fade out of consciousness. All this is fairly well known by now and probably not news to you.

When psychology first came up with diagnostic categories, it used to be that there was psychotic, neurotic, and normal. However, as psychology learned more about the ubiquity of wounding, now we have psychotic, borderline, and normal neurotic. Neurosis is the norm. A few per cent of the population is psychotic or borderline, and 90-95% of the population is neurotic. There is also a stage that psychoanalysis calls “mature” beyond neurosis, but this does not generally occur without a good deal of inner psychological work through psychotherapy.

Though neurosis is often seen in a negative way, it is actually a very positive thing, a significant developmental achievement. In psychosis there is a lack of reality testing, inner psychological states and outer reality intermingle. With a borderline personality organization, there is much better reality testing, but there is a failure in identity formation, a failure to synthesize good self and bad self into a unitary whole, as well as a failure in object formation, a failure to synthesize good object and bad object into a single whole. So although the person may be able to function well in a career, in their personal relationships they are forever swinging between loving and hating, feeling great or terrible, abandonment or engulfment, hope and despair.

Now with neurosis we get to a much better way of functioning in the world. In neurosis we have a fairly stable sense of self that has good and bad aspects to it, and we have object constancy where we are able to see that other people have both good and bad parts to them but they are one whole person. We don't divide them into good one day and bad the next. This is a big step emotionally in our relationships. We also have the capacity to operate from the reality principle, which is to be able to delay gratification in the present for the sake of greater reward in the future, to discipline ourselves, to set our sights on a goal and work to achieve it. Neurosis allows us to operate at quite a high level of functioning.

However, as you are all aware, neurosis also has some major drawbacks. Neurosis is a contracted state of defensive functioning. In neurosis we lose awareness of many of

our feelings and impulses, large portions of the self become unconscious, there are deficits in the structure of the self, we lose awareness of significant parts of our physical existence, we become tied to repetitive patterns in our relationships, and the self's natural growth process is blocked.

There are also cultural variations on this process. Psychoanalytically informed cross-cultural research has shown that although neurosis is the norm in all cultures throughout the world, there are differences between East and West in the neurotic configurations of self and other. There are large individual differences, but in general neurosis in the West is tied to a self that feels isolated from others with a pervasive sense of insufficiency and defect, whereas neurotic configurations in Eastern cultures seem more related to enmeshment in the family, a lack of individuation and differentiation that results from fusion of self with the family and culture. The sense of self is different, not better or worse, but the basic neurotic pattern remains the same. That is, the power of unconscious processes, of defences like disavowal and repression, of deficits in the structural integrity of the self and the defensive structures that result from neurotic attempts at repair, of large areas of feeling, impulses, and self that remain outside of consciousness remain the same.

Depth psychotherapy is the first methodical investigation into all of this in human history and the only process that is designed to work through and heal these wounds and contractions of the self. Nothing else can do it. Other things can help the self grow here or there, but nothing can replace a full psychotherapeutic working through. Spiritual practice is not designed for this and cannot do it. Ignoring it does not make it go away. There is nothing else aside from depth psychotherapy that has been invented that can work through and heal the early wounds, bring the healthy self back into the growth process, resume the developmental process that has gotten derailed through the neurotic coping strategy, and promote the growth of the authentic self to its greater potentials. As therapy has expanded it has become clear that it is too good just to be limited to sick people. It is with normal, healthy neurotics like thee and me where it has its greatest potential. I recognize that as yet there is not a context in India for this. It took many decades of psychological culture in the U. S. for this growth context to develop. In Japan it is just starting.

The first impression by the spiritual community, that psychotherapy works against spiritual growth because it makes the ego stronger whereas spiritual practice is designed to reduce and eliminate the ego, has by now been shown to be untrue. Actually the opposite is the case. A weak self, a self that is neurotic, contracted, undeveloped is tied into very rigid defences and has very little room to move. Sri Aurobindo always stressed the importance of being open flexible, plastic, fluid in our spiritual practice and openness to the Divine. But if large portions of the self are off limits, tied in to rigid defences, fragmentation-prone, operating from different unconscious motivations, spiritual practice will progress very slowly, for we will be moving in many directions at once without even realizing it. A fragmented self can hardly move at all, for it is so focused on restoring its own cohesion, pulling itself together, managing its self-image and concerned about how other people see it and caught up in interpersonal issues that its main activities are restricted to the surface. Neurosis makes for far greater rigidity and contraction and for a spiritual practice that becomes routinized, mechanized, repetitious, for it is always unconsciously defending against the new.

The mature self that emerges from psychotherapeutic work is stronger, yet this strength allows for greater flexibility, fluidity, the capacity to let go of control and to surrender to the deeper self (and ultimately perhaps to the Divine, for surrender to the deeper, authentic self may serve as a kind of practice for surrender to the Divine.) The vital self needs to be in awareness, open, integrated, cohesive, unified. This surface integration makes for much more energy, a more unified will and aspiration, a more coherent surface vehicle for the psychic being to transform.

There are clear hazards if we ignore this. In my experience, spiritual practice becomes blocked or slowed down for most people without significant psychological work. Certainly not everyone needs it. There are the rare spiritual geniuses like Sri Aurobindo and the Mother whose highly developed psychic being allowed them to cut through the ego and connect directly to the spiritual depths. But for most everyone else in this modern era, some psychological awareness appears to be helpful and important. We ignore the power of psychotherapy at our own peril. For then it becomes difficult to avoid spiritual bypassing. Spiritual bypassing is using spiritual ideas and practices to avoid our own neurotic conflicts and feelings, and the result is usually simply a new version of our old neurosis rather than real spiritual growth.

Spiritual practice can become a new form of repression when we take spiritual ideals and try to enforce them on our self. The super-ego or inner judge very easily takes our spiritual aspirations and twists them into new and improved spiritual shoulds (or introjects) that are just as psychologically destructive as the original shoulds (introjects) were that we got from our family of origin. Some form of spiritual bypassing is no doubt inevitable in our aspiration for a higher life, for our defences and neurosis will wrap themselves around anything we encounter, including our spiritual practice. There are many people who are drawn to spirituality with the hope they can just transcend their psychological issues and use spiritual practice as a way to avoid their psychological work. But what happens of course is that we all take our psychological baggage with us. It's hard to get around our psychology. We go beyond by going through.

Neurosis is avoidance, an escape from reality, a defence against what is. All of us have this split within us, one part that seeks reality, truth, while the other part is an escapist, trying to avoid reality with our defences and unconscious blocking. Until we resolve this split within ourselves psychologically, we will carry it into everything we do. Since spiritual work will not dismantle our psychological defences, unless we have some way of working psychologically with this it can easily undermine our practice.

The longer I have been in this psycho-spiritual field, the more I am convinced that psychotherapy and spiritual practice are aiming toward a similar goal, that is, both are trying to *open the heart*. In a way, psychotherapy can be seen as a kind of bhakti yoga, though its methods are very different from the traditional bhakti methods. For even though both psychotherapy and spiritual practice are trying to open the heart, they go about it very differently.

Spiritual practice tries to open the heart directly. Through love, devotion, adoration, bhakti, surrender, the aspirant focuses upon positive, loving feelings in a call to the Divine for union. Negative feelings are rejected, not identified with, and the stress is on the heart's aspiration, the soul's movement of bhakti for the Divine.

Psychotherapy, on the other hand, tries to open the heart by going into how the heart is closed. Psychotherapy brings awareness of our blocks, our contractions, and defences against feeling. Even though a person doesn't usually feel blocked because it all happens unconsciously, the neurotic organization of personality means that there are many feelings, many dimensions of the heart that are out of awareness. There is a dissociation to feeling and the body that inevitably accompanies neurotic defences. What psychotherapy does is to heal this dissociation and to bring the heart's feelings into awareness. It does this in two ways.

First it works to bring attention to the defences against feeling. Repression and disavowal are two of the major defences we use to protect ourselves from deeper feelings and affects that cause us anxiety, shame, or guilt. Our defences work so well that before we even realize a feeling is arising, we push it down. Freud's discovery of signal anxiety explains how our defences work automatically and unconsciously to move our consciousness away from a threatening feeling onto something else. In depth psychotherapy we have a chance to become aware of and work through our major defensive strategies and then to bring awareness to the feelings underneath them.

The second way psychotherapy works is to increase love and positive feelings by going into hate and negative feelings. One thing psychology has discovered is that you can't go higher than you can go low. That is, you can't feel intensely good without also having the capacity to feel intensely bad. The capacity to feel is more or less open or more or less closed for most *all* feelings. We let in a certain degree of intensity of feeling, whether this is positive or negative. When we are wounded and form our neurotic contractions against the pain of those feelings, we shut off the flow of *all* feeling, the positive as well as the negative. So to expand our feeling capacity, we need to open up our ability to tolerate high intensities of feeling. And to do that we need to first be willing to feel what we have been blocking out our whole life, which generally is negative feelings, such as hurt, shame, pain, anger, guilt, anxiety, fear, deficiency, sadness and depression, low self-esteem, and so on. To feel these feelings originally threatened a vital bond with our parents, and to preserve that bond we stayed away from those feelings, to the point where we no longer even know we feel them. Psychotherapy is the process of reclaiming these feelings, which cannot be done in isolation. These wounds were originally inflicted in relationship, and generally need a relationship to be resolved. The therapeutic relationship is designed to do just this.

So we increase the positive feelings by delving into the negative feelings. When we do this, we expand the person's ability to love. But what do we mean by this and how do we do it? As it turns out psychology has learned a great deal about love over the past century. Now I realize that I am talking about what Sri Aurobindo would refer to as vital love, but even if love is ultimately a spiritual energy with a divine source, we experience it through our psychological nature. How does our psychological nature change it, and how can we transform the surface psychological nature so that it can reflect more purely this divine energy, so it doesn't distort it by stepping it down, squeezing it, shaping it into its own narrow terms? What are the optimal psychological conditions for loving? Unless we open up our surface nature, our psychological contractions will severely limit and deform love, be unable to hold it in its pure, genuine, real essence. And if we can't love another person, can we really love the Divine?

Psychotherapy has discovered some important things about the ability to love. Perhaps the most important is that love has a strong narcissistic dimension to it. Freud originally thought that love changed from narcissistic love in the infant to object love in the adult. It was a U-tube for Freud, where we started out only loving ourselves and as we matured our narcissistic love evolved into object love. We either had one or the other, the more narcissistic love we had the less object love we had, and the more object love we had the less narcissistic love we had. But recent developments in narcissism over the past 30 years or so have reversed this. It is not a U-tube but rather both kinds of love are important and interrelated. The capacity for self-love is essential in order to truly love others. Rather than being the antithesis of object love, self-love is as important as object love. Indeed, our ability to love all of our full self is necessary for us to be able to prize and love the whole self of the other. This means no splitting, no dividing the other into good and bad parts, and having the capacity to hold positive feelings for the other person together with negative feelings.

We first learn about love in our family of origin, yet this also limits us, for loving means a good deal of freedom from our early object relations matrix, not seeing the other person in terms of our internalized images based upon our early family experiences or looking for love in fixed ways, the repetition compulsion. Love is an authentic expression of the healthy self, from the genuine being of the self to the genuine being of the other. In this there is the capacity to be vulnerable, open and exposed at a deep level, no longer hiding behind the walls around the heart but fully sharing ourselves in a way that is truly intimate. Now all this places narcissism at the center of psychological and spiritual growth.

The term narcissism in depth psychotherapy is not used pejoratively. It simply refers to the self, to the growth and development of the self, and narcissistic wounding simply means wounds to the self. The particular kind of narcissistic wounding we each experience shapes the direction our self grows in and the kind of defensive structures we use to cope with this wounding. When the self experiences different kinds of narcissistic wounding, that wounding is both an area of unresolved emotional hurt and a deficit in the structure of the self. As we grow up with these deficits in our self structure, we look to others to fill in these deficits. We especially look to those we love to take over those functions of the self we are missing in our own self structure. So love retains this narcissistic dimension, where we feel love for the person but actually we are in love with the self functions they perform for us. We hardly even see the other person as a separate person, for in effect they become an extension of our self.

A very similar thing happens in spiritual practice. We look to the Divine or to our spiritual teachers for what we didn't get as children growing up. The way we look for love is inextricably tied in to how we looked for love in our family or origin, and love is seen in the terms of how it fills in the missing functions of the self. Two of the most important poles of the self are the mirroring pole and the idealizing pole. We need our parents to mirror us as children, to love and affirm and support our unique, growing self. Note that it's not what our parents say that's important, it's the feeling and energy they say it with. We need at least one parent to look at us as a child with a gleam in their eye that says, “You are the fairest of them all.” If we don't get enough of this, we have problems with self-esteem, with feeling enough ambition and energy, with needing reassurance and love, and we have an inordinate fear of failure, shame, and a preoccupation with how others see us, so we are constantly concerned with

managing our self-image in the world, which is what occupies a great many people today.

The other important pole of the self is the idealizing pole. We need one or both parents to be wise, calm, soothing, powerful guides for our developing self. If we don't have enough of this we have difficulties with affect regulation, with such things as self-soothing and self-calming, and we have a hunger for people we can look up to and idealize. Having people we can look up to is important throughout our life-span, but when we have deficits in this area, our needs have this early, infantile loading that is out of proportion to the needs of a healthy, mature adult.

We look to people to get our narcissistic needs met, and in a very similar way we look to spiritual practice to meet our narcissistic needs. When we open to the Divine, does our bhakti and surrender have a narcissistic quality to it? Are we looking for affirmation, for confirmation of our specialness, to be filled with a love we never fully got from our own mother or father? The two founders of integral yoga, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, can be wonderful projection screens for our own psychological material. Our early needs to idealize could hardly find better targets to fasten onto than Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Even the name, the Mother, is so evocative of our earliest and most archaic needs that naturally our unconscious feelings are going to be stirred. How much of our idealization of these two is fuelled by our early narcissistic needs for figures of perfection, wisdom, and calmness? Or how much of our criticalness for one or both of them parallels our criticism and disappointment with our own parents?

When Sri Aurobindo warned about the problem with bringing in vital demand and impatience to our sadhana, he was using ordinary language to express the quality of narcissistic entitlement most everyone feels at some level from not having these early needs met adequately. What is behind our own narcissistic entitlement and how does it feed our vital self's impatience, demand, revolt, despair, and all the other emotional upheavals our sadhana is subject to? When our early needs distort our perception and motivation, ours can become a form of spiritual bypassing, where our egoic needs wrap themselves around our spiritual aspirations and use them for their own purposes. At that point are we doing spiritual practice or simply acting out our own psychology? These are important questions to ask. If we can't ask questions like these, we are in trouble.

When spiritual experiences do come, when we open to a greater consciousness within or experience a descent from above, here again our narcissistic strivings easily come into play. Our sense of our own specialness, our yogic potential, our advanced spiritual evolution is nothing but our own archaic grandiosity being stirred by these exalted experiences. *Letters on Yoga* contains many examples of Sri Aurobindo pointing out the grandiosity and ego inflation that spiritual experiences generated in disciples, and he writes of losing several to this vital weakness. Indeed, spiritual experiences can be so thrilling, so uplifting and blissful that whatever unconscious narcissism is present is likely to become activated in the sadhak. This is why Sri Aurobindo always stressed purification and the establishment of peace first, so that the person, "does not swell in exultation", or to put this in psychological language, does not inflate with narcissistic grandiosity.

Until we are beyond the self, the self organizes our perception, our motivation, our action in the world. Because these psychological patterns are unconscious we are not

aware of them. What psychotherapy does is, "to make the unconscious conscious," as Freud once said. And as Sri Aurobindo has said, yoga is the process of becoming conscious on every plane of our being. Both psychotherapy and spiritual practice direct us to turn within. But when we turn within we do not immediately see the psychic being or atman. What we see is the self, the ego, and our psychology is the first plane of our inner being we must make conscious in order to penetrate beyond. Since the power of our unconscious defences is so strong, without some kind of therapeutic working through our neurotic and narcissistic distortions become our biggest impediments to our psychological as well as spiritual growth.

Integral yoga seeks to open and purify the nature so it can express the deeper spirit within. Psychotherapy can be seen as a form of purification, one kind of vital discipline that can be of great help in opening and widening the vital self. It is a type of vital discipline that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother did not have access to, because it is only in the past 20 or 30 years that psychotherapy has come of age as a mature and effective discipline. It is not as thoroughgoing as spiritual purification, but it does make the vital level of our being more clear, more harmonious, more peaceful, more fluid and able to navigate the inner spaces that spiritual experience opens into. Nor can psychotherapy replace spiritual practice or substitute for it, otherwise clients who have completed a great deal of therapy would be candidates for sainthood and this is clearly not the case. But if the self is leaky with holes or deficits in its structure, not cohesive or coherent, what peace or love or power we receive from within will likely flow right through and spill out. Psychotherapy can work to bring the heart back on-line and to make our full vital energy more available for sadhana rather than keeping it off-line and retarding our inner opening.

An integral approach to psychotherapy must take into account Sri Aurobindo's focus on the body in transformation and his observation that the vital is rooted in the physical. This has enormous implications for psychotherapy, and it is very much in line with the humanistic and existential schools of psychology, such as gestalt therapy, bioenergetics and other Reichian influenced somatic therapies, as well as existential approaches. What Wilhelm Reich discovered about the psyche is that our feeling life is embedded in the body. It is not just that the body is the foundation for our emotions, but our psychological defences are expressed in the body in terms of our chronically contracted musculature or body armour. When we originally defended ourselves against our early wounding in our family of origin, we contracted our muscles and stifled our breathing, in order to diminish the pain of our feelings.

When we want to stop feeling, we stop breathing. Feeling is an energetically alive process that requires oxygen to support it. Without the energy of oxygen to support the power of feelings, decrease. As children, we squelched our aliveness in order to protect ourselves from hurt since this was the only strategy open to us at the time. And this process generally continues throughout our lives, unless we do some sort of psychological work. What the humanistic and existential therapies have learned is that the process of working through our blocks to feeling involves developing an awareness of how feeling lives in our body and the ways we cut it off through holding it down and contracting against it while we simultaneously stifle our breathing.

Most all of the humanistic and existential therapies involve bodily awareness practices that include breathing awareness. A few of these involve deep breathing or fast breathing as a way to increase the intensity of feelings. Parenthetically this is why pranayama, yogic breathing practice, uses an opposite strategy that involves very

slow, measured breathing. Pranayama brings a calm to the vital and body by gradually teaching the body to use oxygen more efficiently through slow, steady, long breaths. Having had a daily pranayama practice for many years I realize pranayama is very complex and that there are a wide variety of breathing rhythms, but this is generally what pranayama brings about, calm and peace to the vital and physical system, whereas the breathwork therapies involve hyperventilating as a way to flood the system with energy and excitement and feeling.

Besides breath awareness, the humanistic and existential therapies involved a good deal of bodily awareness, for they have recognized just how much our feeling life is grounded in the body. One of the most encompassing approaches to this whole issue is focusing, which is a practice that brings attention to how the feeling sense emerges from the center of the body, generally the torso. The felt sense is the physical-vital interface where emotion emerges in its own right from the organism.

If you take just a minute to tune into the felt sense right now in your body, you can get a sense of what this is. Take a few moments to let your awareness drop down into the center of your body, perhaps taking a few breaths with your belly to help you tune in down there. Now think of someone who you really dislike or hate. Now check in with your body and experience what that feels like. Now think of someone who you really love and feel good about. Again check in with your body to experience what *that* feels like. Can you sense the difference? That is the felt sense, and one way of looking at therapy is that it is the progressive unfolding of the felt sense as it emerges from deeper and deeper levels of the unconscious, for the felt sense is the border between the conscious and the unconscious, between what is explicit and what is implicit and ready to emerge.

It has never been understood in the humanistic and existential therapies why feelings are generally situated in the torso, but if we look to the knowledge of tantra I believe it sheds some light on this. As Sri Aurobindo has written, the *chakras* that are concerned with the vital level are *chakras* 2, 3, and 4. The first *chakra* is primarily concerned with the physical body, and the upper *chakras* of 5, 6, and 7 are mind and spiritual mind levels. So from the base of the spine to the throat is the area of the subtle body that is occupied with the vital level of our being. As the physical body resonates with this energetic flow from the subtle body, we find that this is exactly the area of the body where we find the felt sense. Sometimes we express a feeling elsewhere, for example tears of sadness in the eyes, but the actual feeling of sadness itself tends to be experienced in the center of the body, often as a heaviness and sorrow in the chest area. One thing spiritual practice tries to do is get us out of our heads with our nonstop thinking. One good way to get out of your head is to get into your body. So knowing that feelings occur between the base of the spine and the throat helps us to focus in on them, to identify and feel them more fully, and to see what else they are connected to or what else is implicit within them.

By bringing the body into psychotherapy we not only begin to heal the dissociation between feeling and the body, we also bring the here and now into therapy, for the body lives in the present. When we come into the body with all of its sensory aliveness, we come more fully into what the existentialists call the “lived moment”. It is in this movement of tuning into our actual lived experience that we begin to wake up from the trance of ordinary consciousness.

Spiritual practice is an inner discipline to awaken us from our semi-conscious state, and psychotherapy is also an inner discipline to awaken us, although what we awaken to differs in these two practices. Spiritual practice seeks to awaken us to our spiritual nature, the atman or psychic being, whereas psychotherapy tries to awaken us to our deeper, more authentic self. But the self, even our authentic self, hides the atman and psychic being. As we focus on the self through sustained, psychotherapeutic attention and work through our characterological defences, we wake up from the unconsciousness we have created by our neurotic avoidances. By exploring our lived experience, we come more fully into our physical existence, our vital existence, our mental existence, which can be a great help with our spiritual practice.

Since the affective core of the self is the primary organizing principle of the psyche, we need to make this part of our being as clear, as energetic, as powerful, as steady and calm as possible. After all, if our body is hurt, we try to heal it. If a bone is broken we repair it. So the structural defects in the self need to be healed and repaired, for the ego is our vehicle in the world until the psychic comes in front or the Self descends from above. It is better to have a well functioning vehicle than a broken down one. This means opening the heart to all of the pain and hurt and wounds and defences that distort or cloud or obscure our vital nature. In integral psychotherapy we also work to bring awareness to the bodily roots of our vital nature as we bring the heart back on-line.

Integral psychotherapy then becomes an exploration of is-ness, which when we have a spiritual aspiration, allows us to penetrate more deeply within in our journey to awaken to the psychic being and atman. It is a movement that begins with the existential surface of our empirical self and ends with the essential spiritual experience of our central being. In this way integral psychotherapy can be thought of as existential vedanta, a psycho-spiritual practice that involves exploring our lived experience so that our physical, vital, and mental self is the most coherent, vibrant, fit vehicle for our inner being, more purified and therefore more capable of a whole-hearted surrender, more calm and therefore able to hold the peace from above and within, more integrated and unified and so more capable of a greater single-minded aspiration for the Mother, for the Divine.

Practical aspects of integral psychotherapy

Alok Pandey

Introduction

I've been asked to speak about integral psychotherapy and to avoid philosophy—people can read *The Life Divine* for that. I'm supposed to talk about some practical aspects of psychotherapy. Sri Aurobindo has said psychology is a subtle science. And when we talk about subtle sciences, however much we may try to avoid it, even concrete practices become subtle. So I may have to get into philosophy time and again, but I'll try to keep myself on ground level. Actually, if we look at it from an integral point of view, at least as I have understood and try to practice psychotherapy, we can approach the human problem—not the problem of man, but the *problem that is man* —from two angles. We can touch the central point or start changing things from there and we can start solving the puzzle called man by entering from the periphery. I think a lot of psychologies are touching the periphery but are not touching the central problem. In the spiritual view, circumstances are not causes but results of our inner state. The cause of difficulty is within us, which nevertheless attracts problems from outside. Our personality is a formation thrown out by the inmost soul in us for a certain type of experience. The experience indeed is determined by the level of consciousness at which the soul stands in an ascending ladder of growth and ascent. The soul at each level gathers certain elements of nature around it and relates with the world through these till it is ready for climbing the next rung. It is the need of the growing soul in us that determines our inner personality and outer circumstances. These two act upon each other to provide the experience necessary for gradually shedding the teguments that encase the soul. This is the real armour, the armour of our ego and ignorance. That is the source of our felt suffering. Our pains are the birth-pangs of the soul waiting to be delivered from the shell of the ego. The armour prevents too rapid an ascent, which may be precipitous for world purposes. It is like a protective shell around the seed that prevents it from being burnt and wasted by too early an exposure to the light. The casing of the seed interacts with the darkness of the earth and is nourished by the waste. It splits open and is delivered to the light when ready. The law of growth is universal and is the same at all levels.

I'm reminded of a small story about someone who went to visit a psychiatric hospital. It's not a real story but in a certain sense it is a real story. It is what happens. It seems a person was ill and was constantly repeating a single word: "Nunu, Nunu, Nunu". So the visiting person asked the doctor,

"What's his problem?" The doctor said, "Well, Nunu is his problem."

"What does that mean?"

"This man, he was in love with Nunu, couldn't get married to her and here he is."

Well, it happens. He moved forward. After a few months, a new patient—"Nunu, Nunu, Nunu."

"Is Nunu his problem too?"

“Yes, of course, he got married to Nunu.”

So essentially, if we look at it, there are only two sources of psychological suffering. One is in not getting what we want. The other is in getting it. And there is a logic in this. There's a logic in Nature's arbitrary steps.

The source of psychological suffering

We can look at life like a game of hide-and-seek. We do not know what we are seeking or where to find it. All the same there is a seeking, a vaguely felt need which propels us to move. In the beginning this seeking wears the mask of desire and ambition, later of various forms of need and attachment and emotions and sentiments. We are seeking for something and in this process of seeking we play this game of hide-and-seek. We seek it here and the mask is ripped off. There is pain. We go another level, seek it there. And the mask is ripped off. There is pain. And so on and so forth until the final masks are stripped off and we discover that which we are here to discover. Now the beauty of this is that the mask is not something external. This mask is within us—-the mask of ego, the mask of ignorance. There is a beautiful prayer of the Mother—I think it's in June 1913 or thereabouts—where she speaks about how miserable is human ignorance, how miserable that obscurity which keeps men away from the very thing which gives them peace, joy, harmony. It is the ignorance and obscurity, it is the ego which is the source of all suffering. But, frankly, when a person comes to us in acute distress, many of our psychiatric colleagues will agree, we are not in a position to straightaway hit upon the central point. It's not easy. So we'll approach the same problem in another way. In fact Sri Aurobindo very beautifully says, talking about the human problem, "*All problems of existence are essentially problems of harmony*". And he goes on to say that the greater the discord of the apparent materials offered to us, the greater the richness of the harmony to be realised. So if you look at it like that, one would definitely agree one hundred percent with what Brant Cortright said and of course with what Jung at one point said, “Thank god I am a neurotic.” This sense of imperfection that haunts man, is what Sri Aurobindo has spoken of as the "*divine discontent*". It is precisely because of this that there is in him a possibility of change. And the psychotherapist is at best a catalyst for this awareness and change, especially an integral psychotherapist.

Consciousness based integral approach

In fact I really don't know whether “integral” is the right word, because the word integral can only be used accurately when we have the integral vision. At the human mental level where we all stand, the word integral has no meaning. We use the word integral as this plus this plus this, life plus mind plus body plus soul or spirit plus whatever. But that is not what is meant by integral. Integral means that truth from which all is born. Knowing that, having known that, all else is known. That is integral. So at our level we can use a much more simple term, and at this point perhaps a more meaningful one, a consciousness approach to psychotherapy. So if we look at what happens to a person who enters into a state of psychological distress, we see that there is a previous level of adaptation from which he goes to a point of conflict. Now conflicts are there; they are a part of human nature. But this particular conflict, either because of apparent external stimulus or for various other reasons, leads one into a state of crisis. And this crisis as we have seen is a call for change where the

psychotherapist intervenes. Till now, if I understand correctly, the change has not necessarily been seen in an evolutionary direction but in the direction of more or less an adaptation to the same level from where the crisis took off, from where the conflict started. But a consciousness based approach, as I understand it, should lead to *a change in the direction of evolution* , towards a greater widening, towards a greater freedom, towards a greater deepening of consciousness, towards a heightening of consciousness—it should bring us a few more steps closer towards our soul.

The universal dimension of conflict

Now another point which we see often in psychiatric practice is that, as Sri Aurobindo has said, *man is an abnormal seeking after his own normalcy* . So the problem is, if everyone has within him difficulties of nature, why do some people go to a point where they have a psychological breakdown? Here Sri Aurobindo brings out something which we have somehow not been talking about. And I think it is very necessary to understand the role of forces, universal forces which use these weak spots to magnify their image. They are like a projector which magnifies. And this magnification is not without a purpose. The conflict is like a subtle unease, if not a disease, which indicates to us that something is wrong. It cries "Take care of it, take care of it." But we ignore it. Or we choose to live with it. So these forces press upon and magnify the whole conflict. It gets blown out of proportion. And it's an ancient knowledge of yoga, Sri Aurobindo has talked abundantly about it, that these forces are of two kinds. There are difficulties of nature and there are forces which magnify these difficulties and there are two of these forces. The first are the *adverse forces* . All illness, whether physical or psychological, is essentially an attack of the adverse forces that breach through a disequilibrium that comes through some imperfection; they hang around a weak spot, press upon it and magnify it. The other ones are the *hostile forces* . The ancient words used to be *asuric maya* and *rakshasic maya* .

The adverse ones basically create what I could call a kind of *quantitative illusion* . So what kind of illusion do they create? They use a small difficulty and they make it appear so big, so big as if it is insolvable. All of us here who have obviously been doing some sort of a yoga or other, know that there are periods when things within us appear as insurmountable. And then there is an excessive focusing on the negative side. There is, as we have heard, the good mother and the bad mother. And ideally the two should be not only integrated but one transformed by the other. But we have this focusing excessively on the bad mother, on the dark side of things, on the fallen nature, on ignorance, on all of our defects. We all know what happens clinically when a person is depressed. He feels useless and worthless and no good. There is a small problem and it appears out of proportion. It's a quantitative illusion.

The hostile forces create a *qualitative illusion* . They falsify the sense. There's an onrush on the sense of the lower vital worlds. We use the word schizophrenia. There is a falsification of speech. I had one particular instance where a person was initiated into a particular method of yoga and he was given some five sacred names. And this man would literally come and tell me that there are the five sacred names which I am supposed to utter but these beings who harass me, they come and I just forget it. I have another girl who says, "Well, each time I sit for my prayers to Lord Jesus, I just forget my prayer. They just make me forget my prayers." We remember that story of the Tower of Babel, how the tower was to be built to heaven and how these forces

come and interlocute and spoil the speech. They falsify the sense, they falsify the speech. They destroy it, they distort it. They falsify the heart and emotions. There is terror where there should be love. The person starts feeling suspicion where there is no such intent. The person begins to feel that he is the king of the world—in megalomania—whereas the person is just like any of us. They falsify the emotions. The hostile forces falsify the will. There is an excess of appetite. Or there is an utter absence of appetite. They destroy faith. And something very interesting which happens is that they not only falsify the will over a period of time, *they destroy the will* . We know what happens in the natural history of a schizophrenic. Over a period of time the will is so shattered that the person becomes almost like a stone. And really, when the will is shattered to that point I suppose Grace alone can help—of course, I suppose that at all points it is really the Grace that helps. This is a shattering which takes place and there is a stonelike condition where the heart becomes cold, the thoughts become perverse, and sometimes, very often in fact, one sees either a perverted form of religiosity or a *destruction of all faith* . There is a hostility against the Divine. There is a sense of desecration, love for uncleanliness or lack of self-care—as we call it in modern terms. So we see that there are a lot of things which we are already seeing every day. But the way we understand them are very, very different from the way someone looking at it from a consciousness perspective might understand it. We just use the term schizophrenia without knowing anything about it. We talk about biological pathways but what are these biological pathways? They are tracks in matter which are destroyed because there is from the point of view of consciousness an interpenetration. These forces, as indeed all forces, can penetrate everywhere. They enter into the very physical constitution of our being and use it to give a different sense to world and to self.

So essentially psychological problems are about the false relation between the self and the world. And the central falsehood is: "I am the centre and everything must move around me." And then—this is almost a universal problem—the "I" becomes too important, as in the case of an introvert who is all the time focused on his own ego, turned within, and probably has a concealed vanity and ambition. These forces want to project themselves into the physical world, use this weak spot and create a disorder. But this disorder is not without a purpose. Its aim is to project to us that which we are unable to see for ourselves. And sometimes it is because we have to return back. There is a balance between the forces of progression and retrogression. And when retrogression takes place, it is because we need to turn back to something which was left undone. There is something we have to handle which we have not done. And the task of the psychotherapist is to look into that part and help in the process of evolutionary change.

Principles of psychotherapeutic approach

How does change happen? There are three principles and three methods. The three principles are derived basically from Sri Aurobindo's essays on education. One is that basically *nothing can be taught* . I use it in this way, that all change must begin from within and spread outwards. Merely bringing an external change like the behaviourist would talk about doing, is of little gain.

Next, *the mind has to be consulted in its own growth* . So the whole complexity of human nature has to be taken into account. One cannot just give a label that this is

this illness or that is that and start intervening.

— The third is to go *from the near to the far* . I have heard of people who were in serious states of depression. They had gone to some place which advocated spiritual therapy. They were taught a technique of meditation. And you know how difficult meditation is even for those who are doing *sadhana* —we close our eyes and our mind wanders. So how much more difficult would it be for a depressed person to just sit and meditate using these techniques. Very often they enter into a state of inertia, the depression becomes worse and they may even enter into psychotic states. So one must go from the near to the far. When the patient is a person who is in a state of utter *tamas* , who has fallen—a case of chronic schizophrenia who has no will for anything and there is utter apathy—one doesn't teach him to meditate. One tells him, "Get up, do some physical work, start helping the household." It may sound very practical but this approach is essentially spiritual. You start from step one. "Go and play a game." Even that is spiritual. Swami Vivekananda once said "I would prefer the youth of India to go and play football rather than read the Gita." So essentially it is this that if there is this utter *tamas* , shake it with *rajas* . And if there is excessive *rajas* , advise moderation. It's a progression. One cannot say here spiritual therapy begins and here it ends. So these are the three principles.

The instruments and process of change

And what are the instruments? We'll just rush through the whole thing. Essentially three again: *words, example and influence* . It is very interesting that while we say that the psychotherapeutic process is an interaction between the psychiatrist and the client, a whole lot of books are written about clients and their problems, but very little is written about what a psychiatrist should be. Because if the psychotherapist's words have to be the catalyst of change, the psychotherapist needs to change himself first. Otherwise he will be like the teacher who tells the students, "Don't shout" and shouts. That doesn't help. He should have gone through, experienced these difficulties in some measure, worked them out in his own nature. Then only he qualifies for being a psychiatrist from the consciousness point of view. You can't be like an armchair psychiatrist talking about things which are very abstract. And words—there are two sides to words—*-the sound and the substance* . I've seen so often in my experience that the sound of the patient's words changes. And if you really observe the sound and not the content of what the patient is speaking, just the sound, you can understand a lot about the level from which he is operating. I've not systematized it but it's easy to observe it. One can make an observation. One observes the sound when we are in a particular mood and the sound when we are in another mood—and then of course the substance.

There are a few techniques which we can talk about when we talk about using words to help a patient. First, *reflection* . Reflection is cutting the adverse forces to their size. What are they doing? They are exaggerating things, real or unreal difficulties. Put it to the right size. A person comes and says, "Oh, I am a failure." A small reflection, "Are you a failure, or are you failing your exams?" Now this is putting the problem to the right size. "I am not a failure just because I fail in these particular exams." Next is *introspection* . "Is it that I have failed in my exams?" One goes still deeper. "What am I really looking for? Success in exams?" And from introspection we move on to *insight* . "Is success the goal of life? Is that the parameter?" So gradually from the outer

difficulty we are approaching the within, the root of the difficulty. “I want success. Unless I succeed I cannot be happy.” So sometimes I do remind this person,

“Look, when you were five years old were you happy?”

“Yes, I was happy.”

“What did you have?”

“Nothing.” Yet joy entered through every gate of sense.

So why can't one be like that? Why are there these barriers between me and joy, between me and peace? So it's like entering those barricades which have closed us inside.

Next *illumination* . From insight we move on to illumination. What would be that? Well, let us say somebody talks about Nunu, someone who failed in love. Well, what is love about? Not just about attachment. True love is a process of self-giving. Realising that is illumination.

And then there is *guidance* . Guidance in psychotherapeutic parlance is not spiritual guidance. Spiritual guidance carries you like a babe in the arms. A psychiatrist can't do that. He can simply point the way, “Look, here is the way towards discovering your own deeper self.”

Next is *example* . Example creates a problem. People talk about dependency and transference. But even dependency can be used. Essentially *the psychotherapist is like an image of the self that the client is looking for* . And if there is no hypocrisy and if there is sincerity, the being and the conduct and everything of the psychotherapist can be a catalyst for change, not just the words he speaks or the guidance he imparts through instruction. And gradually through a number of techniques through which he can work out the release of mind, heart, life, physical self, even working on the subconscient he can probably make the patient himself become an example unto himself.

And, finally, the *influence* , which I feel is the most important. As The Mother has said, “A person who is in touch with his own psychic brings into play the forces which heal, the forces which harmonise, the forces of peace, the forces of joy, of love.” And I think if the process of transformation is going on within the psychiatrist then spontaneously, not just by words not just by example but just by his mere presence, his silence, he communicates something which cannot be seen, cannot be described, cannot be spoken of, and yet that heals.

Conclusion

So I think we can close here. And probably this is just the beginning of the journey because there is a whole lot more to it.

Let us end here with a few lines from Sri Aurobindo which are like a key to the whole thing:

There is a need within the soul of man

The splendours of the surface never sate

For life and mind and the glory of debate

Are the slow prelude to a vaster theme

A sketch confused of a supernal plan,

A preface to the epic supreme.

– Sri Aurobindo, *Collected Poems*, p. 137

Psychotherapy is the process of reading the script called life whose symbol key has been lost by the client. The psychotherapist aids the client in finding this inner key which can open to him the doors of a higher, greater and truer consciousness.

Integral psychotherapy: personal encounters

Soumitra Basu

A thief walked into my clinic one day.

“You know, I have such a lot of professional stress that my performance suffers. The very thought of burglar alarms or barking Alsatians builds up a lot of anxiety even before I embark to rob.”

Clearly, he was having a lot of anticipatory anxiety. Still the moralist in me tried to avoid him: “Every job has its own stressors. Why not pick up more expertise? Nowadays, one needs to be a technocrat to be a good thief!”

“No sir”, he replied, “I have more reasons for my stress. I have a pretty daughter and I am in search of a suitable match for her marriage while camouflaging my profession.”

I wondered what was the difference between him and a client with a type-A personality profile suffering from executive stress. As a therapist, I was bound to treat him. I taught him stress-management and helped him to relax. He was happy and relieved to think that from now onwards he would be able to execute his professional skills with calm and equipoise.

But the incident set me thinking. Why was I teaching my clients to relax and cope with their stresses? If the end-result of my endeavour is that one client can now steal without fears tormenting him or another client can become a more confident swindler at the stock market and if yet another client can feel no anxiety in designing tax evasions, then what do I gain by my expertise? My colleague warns me that my scope is limited and I am no better than the grocer who need not bother about the identity of his customer. He reminds me that my clients do not come to me for sadhana.

The actual problem is with myself. I want to practise counselling as my sadhana. This changes my approach to even a simple problem like anxiety. I cannot be satisfied by merely applying a stress-management program for I feel that pari passu techniques which help in the growth of consciousness are also needed. Of course, it is common sense that such a program of psychological growth is not every client's cup of tea. A great number of clients would be satisfied with conventional relaxation techniques and may panic at the idea of a growth in consciousness unless they are prepared for it. A premature enforcement of such a concept could have a destructive effect triggering off a fresh stress. However, there will also be a group of clients who might be seeking for a meaning in a life threatened by the inevitability of death. There will be some who will suffer from stress because they struggle to live courageously in a world ruled by doom and fate. There will be others whose suffering might rise from the laborious endeavour to find a way out of the perceived meaninglessness of the world. Their existential crisis is best portrayed in Tolstoy's anguish, “Why should I live? Why should I wish for anything? Why should I do anything?”

A client's presenting complaint is an index of a greater existential problem that might be acknowledged, unknown or rejected or subconscient but nevertheless exists. My problem is that my training as an analyst does not suffice to unlock the riddle of

existence. While I believe that the Freudian subconscious is the source of our atavistic and biological drives, I cannot also ignore the mystic's description of the superconscious as the source of our highly evolved impulses. This means that one suffers not only from repression of one's biological drives but also can suffer from suppression of the sublime. (Reddy, 1988) This also means that to increase my repertory of counselling skills, I need a framework of reference where the subconscious and the superconscious are both accommodated in their proper places. This pursuit leads me to a search for a model of Integral Psychotherapy.

Integral psychology

A model of integral psychotherapy needs to be preceded by a model of integral psychology which is a paradigm of psychology that emerges from a consciousness perspective. The seer-wisdom of ancient India considered consciousness to be the essence of all existence—a concept to which Sri Aurobindo, in recent times, has given an evolutionary perspective. He states that consciousness is essentially the same throughout but variable in status, condition and operation (Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga* , p. 235) and formulates different planes of existence at different points of a graded universe. Thus, at one plane, consciousness formulates the material base of existence the physical plane). At a higher level, consciousness formulates the life-base (the vital plane) and at a yet higher level, manifests the mind the mental plane). This is not the culmination of evolution. Sri Aurobindo postulates that higher than models of man can still evolve, surpassing the mental plane of consciousness if an inner evolution in consciousness can be zealously followed.

In Sri Aurobindo's thought, consciousness is a pluridimensional reality. The individual who is a particular formation of consciousness can be studied along several perspectives. Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga* , p. 220) One such perspective is to view the individual as a series of concentric rings in sheaths arranged as the outer being, inner being and inmost being. Another way is to view the individual along a vertical hierarchy which ranges from the “superconscience” to the “subconscious” which in turn sinks into an “inconscience”. (See Fig. 1.)

The superconscious is the source of higher inspirations which impels man to exceed his limitations. While the subconscious supports our ordinary nature, the superconscious supports our spiritual possibilities and nature. The “inconscience” is not an absence of consciousness but the nethermost level where consciousness is fully involved and suppressed and from which evolution starts with the manifestation of matter.

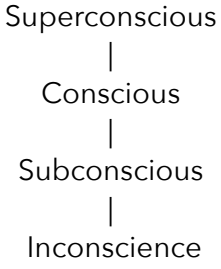

Fig. 1. The Individual: Vertical Perspective

The “outer being” is what is known as “personality” in psychology and is made up of the physical, vital and mental planes of consciousness intermingled with each other in spite of having distinctive characteristics. The outer being revolves around the ego. The ego or “I” is a temporary construction drawn up from components of our nature—mind, life-energy vital) and body (physical). Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga* , p. 279) The inner being cannot be organised around the ego but needs the support of a “beyond ego” principle.

The inner or subliminal being is actually an intermediary plane of consciousness that stands behind the surface personality and consists of an inner mental, inner vital and inner physical. The inner mind can directly know things by suprarational faculties like intuition. Unlike the ordinary memory which knows the past in fragments and has no inkling of the future, this mind has a memory which holds an active and involved past as well as a future that is ready to evolve. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* , p. 513) The inner vital can hold the life-energy free from the habitual clutches of the body and mind. This can utilise the body for dynamic action by making the will of the mind effective. It can also work on the organs of the body and make their actions more supple and subtle. Sri Aurobindo, *Essays in Philosophy and Yoga* , p. 529) The inner physical has subtle senses Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* , pp. 425-26) that lead mystics and yogis to have “visions”, hear “inner voices” and feel “auras”. The inner being is the meeting ground of the individual and universal consciousness. Though only a little of it enters the outer being, that little is the best part of ourselves and is responsible for art, poetry, philosophy, ideals and high aspirations.

The inner being is supported by the inmost being. The inmost being or true being is represented by the true mental being at the mental plane, the true vital being at the vital plane, the true physical being at the physical plane and supporting all these is the psychic being. In Sri Aurobindo's parlance, the real individuality emerges when the ego is replaced by the psychic being or soul-element. One then starts living at a deeper level of consciousness and experiences a sense of wholeness, integrality, peace, unity, collaboration and unalloyed joy. See Fig.2)

The psychic being in turn is a projection of the Jivatman—the unevolving self that stands above the manifested being. It is superior to birth and death and is the eternal true being of the individual. The psychic being is the Jivatman in its evolving form while the ego is only a dark shadow of this true integrating principle. The psychic being grows through life-experiences from birth to birth. If it comes forward, it governs the instincts and can transform the nature. Usually, one is ruled by the outer personality of the physical, vital and mental consciousness held loosely together by the false soul of ego and desire. Ordinarily, we are not aware of the psychic being except at certain moments of life when it does influence us strongly and we spontaneously feel an inner happiness, wholeness, joy and goodwill. The state is not dependent on outer conditions and may even appear in unfavourable conditions. Such a psychic consciousness is free from psychological disturbances and helps one build up an integrated personality. It is also free from the subconscient and egocentric disturbances. The realization of the Psychic Being brings bhakti, self-giving, surrender, turning of all movements Godward, discrimination and choice of all that belongs to the Divine: Truth, Good, Beauty, rejection of all that is false, evil, ugly,

discordant, union through love and sympathy with all existence, openness to the truths of the Self and the Divine. The realization of the Jivatman brings silence, freedom, wideness, mastery, purity, a sense of universality in the individual as one centre of this Divine universality. (Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga* , p. 272)

	Inmost Being	**Inner Being**	**Outer Being**[1]	
	True Mental Being	Inner Mind	Outer Mind	
Psychic Being[2]	True Vital Being	Inner Vital	Outer Vital	Ego[3]
	True Physical Being	Inner Physical	Outer Physical	

[1] Known as "personality" in psychology.

[2] The psychic being is a projection of the *jivatman*. It is the soul-element in evolution.

[3] The ego is a formation of the outer being and is known as the "self" in psychology.

Figure 2. The Individual: The Perspective of Beings

Integral psychotherapy

To develop a model of Integral Psychotherapy based on Integral Psychology, one needs to understand the origin of different psychopathologies at different planes of consciousness viz. physical, vital, mental, subconscious. I personally use such a private classification along with the conventional public classificatory systems like the ICD-10 and DSM IV. Individuals who have the same diagnosis according to conventional ICD or DSM classifications might have important differences when assessed along the consciousness perspective necessitating different therapeutic approaches. Thus a person in whom the capacity to contact his psychic being is more spontaneous needs a very sensitive handling if he is depressed. Such a person responds to a low dose of medication and counselling in such a situation need only be an encouragement to look inwards—the rest follows automatically. In contrast, a depressed subject with a dominant vital needs a different type of handling as he has more chance for a swing towards a manic state. A depressed client with a strong intellectual ego can pose a queer resistance to therapeutic intervention which needs to be worked through at the level of the ego.

When psychologists talk about the "self", they are usually referring to a formation of the outer being which again needs to be examined in the context of one's socio-cultural gestalt. While the outer self is more individualised in the Western world, it is more in the nature of an extended social self in the Indian subcontinent and can include not only one's immediate social group but also one's Istadevata. While

dealing with such subjects, one has to be sensitive not only to the client's individual needs but also to the sensitivities, desires and resistances of the client's immediate social group.

While planning a therapeutic program, it is also necessary to consider whether parts of the inner being are developed in an individual. Even if such a person suffers from a psychotic episode, he still can produce works of art that are beyond the psychoanalyst's canvas (of course, the state of the outer mind will colour and distort the influences of the inner mind but this is true not only for the psychotic but also for the "normal" individual!) If an individual has a developed inner being expressing through creativity, spontaneity or a vitality that is not stifled by constraints of the body and mind, then we need an innovative therapeutic approach that allows the outer being to withstand the pressure of the inner being. In fact, in certain geniuses who develop psychiatric problems, it might be that the outer being, improperly integrated around the ego, could not withstand the pressure of the inner being. In individuals practising spirituality, the inner being can progress much faster than the outer being and the resulting mismatch may precipitate imbalance, diseases and may even facilitate death.

Counselling programs have also to be sensitive to the presence in the individual of the inmost being, the psychic being. The psychic being can radiate peace, joy and spontaneity even in the most adverse situations. In our clinical practice we often come across people who, in spite of being chronically ill or demented or in terminal states awaiting death, can yet retain a poise of calm and equanimity and can radiate peace and joy. They still can progress spiritually despite their physical suffering. This is possible because the psychic being is unaffected by external conditions and if given a chance to flower, will still enliven an individual suffering from a chronic degenerative disease. (Basu, 2000) The quintessence of Integral Psychotherapy lies in a shift to this inner essence of an individual. The possibility of such a shift is a valid reason why a counselling program is even necessary for people who seem to be "lost" because they are either chronically or terminally ill.

The consciousness paradigm cannot ignore the myriad approaches to mental health that have been in use in different cultures. This brings us to the interesting phenomenon of possession states. What can be the thing that "possesses"? Well, it might be negative formations arising from one's own mind that can become so powerful that an individual can be possessed by his or her own psychological forces. This reminds me of a lady doctor who was suffering from depression, pessimism and meaninglessness in life for a long time. One day she turned up and told me, "I am constantly visualising my own corpse hanging over my head." After I relieved her by giving her an ECT electro-convulsive therapy), she told me, "If you had not done such a drastic intervention, I would have been driven to commit suicide." In this case, her negative thoughts, nurtured over a period of years, had become an organised formation which in turn was "possessing" her. Basu, 1995a) However psychological forces emanating from external sources can also affect susceptible subjects. These are the "classical possession states" which are "exorcised" by occultists. A few weeks back I had to examine a lady who was brought to me because she had jumped into a pond to commit suicide. She has an 8 months old baby and had shown no evidence of post partum depression before her misventure. Her relatives revealed that a ceiling fan which was hung in her room very recently had an interesting anecdote. A 12 years old boy (a nephew of the patient's husband) had committed suicide by hanging

himself from that fan some months back (This incident had occurred in a separate house). Whether it was her own psychological fears (she knew about the incident associated with the fan and had disapproved of her father-in-law placing it in her room) or whether it was a vital fragment of the dead boy that led to the suicide attempt is another matter, but what is important to note is that one who is vulnerable can get influenced or "possessed" by psychological forces primarily emanating from outside oneself.

The scope of integral psychotherapy

An emergent psychology and psychotherapy that bases itself on a perspective of consciousness which is simultaneously "integral" and "pluridimensional" can be used in two ways:

a) It can be pursued as a framework for psychological growth, personality development and psychotherapy, and b) it can be used to enlarge the repertoire of any existing psychotherapeutic system by allowing different partial truths represented in different systems to fall along a continuum of consciousness. Thus the psychoanalyst can enlarge the scope of therapy by extending from the unconscious to the superconscious. Jungian analysis can enrich itself by acknowledging the psychic being as the centre of integration of personality and by supplementing the concept of the collective unconscious by the concept of the inner being which is in communion with the universal consciousness. The gestalt therapists can acknowledge that an integral vision accommodates both the "wholes" and the "parts". Behaviour therapy can supplement relaxation techniques by exercises that help in widening one's consciousness. Basu, 1995b) Subjects suffering from stress can be taught to match their outer dynamism with an inner poise of stability and equanimity. Basu, 1997) In this way, any school of psychology or psychotherapy can widen its scope of action by enriching itself from the truths inherent in Integral Psychology. The human mind likes variations and will always opt for different therapeutic approaches. A consciousness paradigm can permit diverse therapeutic modalities at different planes of consciousness and can also simultaneously provide an integral framework that can be independently used in psychotherapy, counselling, personality development and psychological growth.

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Towards a spiritual psychology
Bridging psychodynamic psychotherapy with integral yoga

Michael Miovic

> My friends, the whole world is a lunatic asylum. Some are mad after worldly love, some after name, some after fame, some after money, some after salvation and going to heaven. In this big lunatic asylum I am also mad, I am mad after God. If you are mad after money, I am mad after God. You are mad; so am I. I think my madness is after all the best."
>
> *Sri Ramakrishna*[1]

> "I cannot discover this 'oceanic' feeling in myself... But this gives me no right to deny that it does in fact occur in other people. The only question is whether it is being correctly interpreted and whether it ought to be regarded as the fons et origo of the whole need of religion." Sigmund Freud[2]

Introduction

Is there a God? Is there a non-material reality? Do we have souls that persist in an afterlife (or next life or everlife if you prefer)? These sorts of basic existential questions are rarely considered in the day to day practice of clinical psychology and psychiatry, and yet they should be. If the answer to any of them is Yes, then evidently our current theories of mental health need to be enlarged in order to take account of these essential facts of existence and to understand how they relate to the human psyche. For, in the most pragmatic sense, how can we help people better "adjust" to life if we misapprehend what the nature and aim of life is?

This paper will argue that the fundamental questions of metaphysics are not trivial, because the answers we select for them determine the framework of metapsychology, and that in turn influences clinical practice. For example, consider the following brief scenarios: 1) a Christian woman with a history of hypomania in remission reveals that she feels God's presence in her life and that she is being guided by Him; 2) an avowed atheist struggling with grief reveals that months prior to his sister's sudden passing in a car accident, he had a dream about the crash. How do we hear these reports as clinicians? Do we increase the woman's mood stabilizer, or support her religious faith because it connects her to a community, or explore her beliefs because they reveal the intrapsychic structure of her object relations, or learn how God is in fact present in her life? Do we dismiss the man's dream as coincidence or a rationalization, hear it as a clue to unconscious guilt vis a vis a conflict with the sister, or accept it as a precognitive intuition? The answers to these questions depend largely upon what we believe to be the ultimate nature of reality—a subject, unfortunately, upon which there is no general consensus now, nor perhaps ever will be.

In his classic work on religious experience, William James eloquently outlined the debate between spiritualism and medical materialism, which views the cause of spiritual experience as either neurosis or a neurophysiological event.[3] Today, our knowledge of psychodynamics and neurobiology is much richer than in James's time, but the essential dilemma of how to understand spirituality remains the same. This state of affairs is vividly illustrated by Newberg's recent use of SPECT scanning to show consistent patterns of prefrontal activation with superio-parietal deactivation in Buddhist meditators and Franciscan nuns absorbed in unitive states of awareness.[4] Although this emerging field of "neurotheology" is certainly fascinating, and does demonstrate clearly that the brains of healthy mystics are *not* like those of schizophrenics, it does not answer the conundrum of whether spiritual experience is an illusion created by the brain, or the brain's perception of an actual reality. James presciently addressed this impasse one century ago when he suggested that we take a phenomenological and pragmatic stance towards spiritual experience, that is, that we explore its subjective qualities and judge these by their fruits for life.

From the perspective of psychotherapy, this means we need to build a conceptual bridge from an empirically derived spiritual metapsychology, *a la* James, to modern psychodynamic and behavioural models of mind. That is, we should form a working conception of the *experiential* (as opposed to dogmatic or scriptural) wisdom contained within the world's major religious/spiritual traditions, and then integrate this with the wisdom of psychotherapy. The purpose in attempting this is not to convert the reader to any particular theological orientation, but simply to facilitate the transmission of insight among the various and venerable traditions of psychological inquiry, secular, scientific, and spiritual.

The aim of this study, then, will be to tackle part of that task: to review the key insights of Eastern spiritual psychology and synthesize these with the theoretical foundations of Western psychotherapy. Particular emphasis will be placed upon the yoga psychology of Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950), one of India's most respected philosophers and spiritual teachers of the 20th century. This is not to deny the importance of Buddhism, other branches of Hinduism, Christianity, Judaism, Islam, or any other religious tradition, but to provide a focus given limitations of space. Both James and Sri Aurobindo believed that the fundamental truths of spiritual experience, when approached as psychological phenomena, are more similar across religious traditions than dissimilar. To the extent they are right, this study will have pluralistic relevance.

Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of ancient yoga psychology represents the most sophisticated expression of the movement towards syncretism animating the teaching of his major predecessors and contemporaries, Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, Ramana Maharshi, and Paramahamsa Yogananda. These figures were central in modernizing the timeless message of Indian spiritual philosophy and sending it westward. The lesser figures of Krishnamurti, the Mahesh Yogi (founder of the transcendental meditation movement) and Deepak Chopra—as well as even lesser vehicles (the Hare Krishnas) and the lowest of all (Rajneesh)—are smaller characters who have traversed a stage built by great architects. And among this high circle of spiritual masters, Sri Aurobindo was the only one educated in the West (England), and the only one to attempt a complete intellectual synthesis of Eastern and Western worldviews. His yoga psychology is also particularly relevant to psychotherapy because he emphasized that the aim of spiritual practice is not to escape from the

world or merely to relieve "stress," but to change the troublesome patterns in one's character structure and behavior. Indeed, many of his letters to students discuss a variety of neurotic (and, at times, psychotic) symptoms that today fall under the purview of general psychiatry.[5] Interested readers are referred to Dalal for detailed comparisons of Sri Aurobindo's psychological thought with that of the major figures and schools in Western psychology, [6] and to Basu for a variety of clinical observations and applications.[7]

For those who are unfamiliar with the Indian notion of *yoga* , the term refers not only to hatha yoga exercises–which have become a popular form of physical fitness in the West–but to any devotional, contemplative, philosophical, humanitarian, psychological, or artistic endeavour that is pursued with the specific intention of becoming aware of the Divine and cultivating that presence in oneself and others. The word "yoga" derives from the root *yug* (to yoke), and the connotation of "yoking" the human back to the Divine is quite similar to "religion," which derives from the Latin *religere* (to tie back). All religions find a relationship between human life and the Divine will, however, in his major works on yoga[8] and social psychology,[9] Sri Aurobindo further argued that the aim of individual, social *and* biological evolution is to manifest a higher spiritual consciousness on earth, under the conditions of matter. This core idea, that the teleological goal of matter is to manifest spirit in a progressive fashion, is the keystone of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and is echoed from a Christian perspective in the work of Teilhard de Chardin,[10] to whom Sri Aurobindo has been compared.

Historical background

Spirituality in psychology is not new, but it is currently experiencing a wave of re-emergence that is reflected in a range of disciplines and developments. The literature in this area has grown so quickly in the last decade that it is not possible to review it completely here. Following is a brief outline that highlights several branches of development.

On the socio-historical front, Taylor has documented the history of spiritual psychology in the United States dating back to the 1600s. He argues that spirituality has always played a role in the development of American culture, as evidenced in the influence of the Shakers, Quakers, Transcendentalists, Christian scientists, James, humanistic/transpersonal psychology, and now the "new age".[11] The hold spiritual psychology continues to exert on the popular mind was amply evident in a recent issue of *Newsweek* [12] that reviewed the birth of "neurotheology." In addition, the establishment of Sir John Templeton's "Prize for Progress in Religion" in 1972, and later the Templeton Foundation, has greatly promoted (and funded) the study of religion and spirituality. For instance, in 1996 the National Institute for Healthcare Research, with support from the Templeton Foundation, developed a model curriculum[13] for teaching spiritual issues to psychiatric residents, which numerous programs in the United States have since adopted, including at Harvard.[14] Publications have also emerged that focus on interdisciplinary studies in science and theology.[15]

In the psychology and psychiatry literature, the latest edition of the DSM[16] now allows for a diagnosis of a "religious or spiritual problem" (V62.89), and the journal *Psychiatric Annals* has devoted an entire issue to spirituality in clinical practice for two

years running.[17] Parsons has studied the original correspondence between Freud and Rolland on the subject of the "oceanic feeling," providing a scholarly study of the relationship between psychoanalysis and mysticism.[18] Karasu has written cogently about core principles of spiritual psychotherapy that can help both patient and therapist move towards soulfulness and a turning to the spirit.[19] There are now two textbooks on spirituality and psychology, one by Richards and Bergin,[20] who write from a Christian (Mormon) perspective, the other edited by Shafranske.[21] Boehnlein has also edited a compendium of reviews on the topic of psychiatry and religion,[22] while Sperry has described three levels of incorporating spirituality into psychiatric practice, depending on the clinician's capacities and the patient's needs.[23]

In medicine, these trends are visible in the rise of "mind-body" and "complementary-alternative" medicine (CAM). Benson's pioneering work on the relaxation response[24] has become so well established that his institute at Harvard has spun off highly attended conferences on CAM and spirituality in healing for mainstream medical professionals. A rigorous, peer-reviewed journal for CAM research now exists,[25] and there is a strong and growing influence of Buddhist theory applied to problems of both physical and mental health. For instance, Kabat-Zinn has used mind-body awareness training to help both patients and healthcare professionals cope better with chronic illness.[26] Epstein has written about using Buddhist psychology in his psychoanalytic practice.[27] Linehan, who trained in Zen, combined *vipassana* notions of "mindfulness" with cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) to craft DBT (dialectical behavior therapy),[28] the first therapy experimentally proven to reduce self-destructive behavior in borderline personality disorder.[29] Austin, a neurologist, has thoroughly reviewed the neurobiology of spiritual awakening from the perspective of Zen philosophy,[30] and institutes are cropping up with distinguished faculty who are interested in exploring the interface between meditation and psychotherapy.[31]

Lastly, in the arena of parapsychology, there is a growing body of experimental evidence to support the claim that consciousness has "non-local" dimensions. This sort of research is naturally suspect to mainstream academic audiences, because it treads the border of pseudo-science, but it merits mention nonetheless because the quality of these investigations has increased since the 19th century. Dossey, who coined the term "non-local phenomenon," has catalogued and summarized a large body of research in this area in a series of books[32] and essays.[33] Byrd reported positive effects for intercessory prayer conducted in a double-blind fashion in a coronary care unit[34], and his study—which was criticized on methodological grounds—was recently replicated in a more rigorously designed trial reported in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*. [35] Finally, Braud recently reviewed the literature on direct mental influence (mind-over-matter effects), reporting a series of well-designed experiments that demonstrated time-displaced retroactive effects, i.e., that human intention can affect past probability fields.[36] Although none of these studies proves conclusively the existence of a non-material reality, they do, at the minimum, remind us that the fundamental assumptions of scientific materialism remain open to question as we enter the 21st century.

Faith as a developmental milestone

With that overview, we now turn to the work of framing a spiritual psychology. The first and most important step is to recognize that the consolidation of genuine faith in

the Divine is a major developmental achievement. In a recent essay on the relationship between psychoanalysis and religion, Meissner has summarized his own and others' efforts to bridge the realms of psychoanalysis and theology.[37] He explains how Winnicott's notions of transitional objects and transitional phenomenon allowed for what Freud called the "illusion" of religion to be reinterpreted as a developmentally necessary need for humans to find meaning and creative connections in the world around them.

Rizzuto advanced this line of thinking by showing how the development of people's intrapsychic God-representation essentially parallels the development of other object relations and may complete an integrated sense of self.[38] The limitation of her formulation, however, was that it stopped short of exploring the relationship between the transitional phenomenon of the God-representation and its supposed external referent, God. Meissner took the next step along this trajectory by exploring how the psychology of a person's faith can be understood simultaneously both in psychodynamic terms and as referring to a real Christ, a real God, and a real sacrament. Still, he remains cautious about the following step in the sequence, Spero's introduction of an objectively real God as a factor both in the God-representation and in the therapy process.[39] Meissner wants to keep the dialogue in the range of transitional understanding, because he argues that this preserves the integrity of the two different realms of discourse, psychoanalysis and theology. He seems to feel that to confuse these two realms would be deleterious to both.

Although one can certainly understand Meissner's hesitation about the difficulties of apprehending God's presence in the patient's psychological processes and the therapeutic encounter, it is important here to separate for a moment the problems of practice and the problems of theory. On the theoretical level, in the end Meissner's transitionalism cannot be right, for it suffers the same fate as agnosticism: just because the human mind may never know whether or not God exists in an absolutely final sense, does not alter the fact that, in the end, it either does or does not. Atoms existed long before humans knew them to be pervasive, and likewise God, if She does in fact exist, does so independently of our current judgments—and is equally pervasive as atoms. That is, She must be present in every aspect of the patient, the therapist, and the therapeutic relationship, for there can be nothing that exists outside of God. So, theoretically, Spero's proposition, or what Richards and Bergin refer to as their doctrine of "spiritual realism,"[40] is more correct.

Admittedly, this poses a huge practical problem for human consciousness, which is by definition limited. The real value of Meissner's approach, then, is that it does not require clinicians to believe in the existence of a soul or God, nor, if they do believe, to hold the same theological beliefs as their patients do. Thus a therapist could be agnostic or even atheist, and still treat his or her patient's faith as a psychological reality worthy of the same careful exploration given to the rest of a patient's developmental history. However, for those who do believe in the Divine, there is still a utility to further articulating a doctrine of spiritual realism. For if there truly *is* a spiritual reality, then the development of faith must represent a major developmental milestone, because it signifies at a minimum the crystallization of an intrapsychic capacity to have a conscious relationship with that reality. To see it as anything less—or worse, as a defence—would be a mistake.

Perhaps an analogy may better illustrate this point: as Mahler showed, the development of object permanence around months 18-24 of a child's life is a major

developmental milestone that allows the infant to separate from its mother, because it now has the capacity to maintain an internal image of her in her physical absence. If the child did not develop this capacity, it could not individuate, could not grow from a state of illusory symbiosis to having a real relationship with a real mother who is in fact separate. It would be stuck in a Winnicottian transitional limbo forever. If we fail to recognize this developmental milestone—or worse, call object permanence a defence against separation anxiety—then we fail to appreciate a critical step in normal psychological growth.

The development of faith is analogous, though not entirely the same because the separation-individuation process that Mahler described is part of the solidification of the normal ego, while the development of true faith is a spiritual process that leads beyond the ego. While normal psychological growth proceeds from a pre-egoic, illusory symbiosis with a human mother, to separation from her and the establishment of an independent ego; supranormal growth proceeds from illusory separation between the ego and God, to the real symbiosis of supra- or trans-egoic unity between the soul and God.

This simple idea, the foundation of transpersonal/spiritual psychology, has been stated and restated by many authors, but one of the most vivid discussions of it remains Watts's easy yet insightful exploration of the interface between Eastern religion and Western psychology (1961).[41] Maslow catalyzed the formation of transpersonal psychology with his study of "peak experiences", or ecstatic/unitive states of consciousness akin to mystical experiences, which he found to characterize psychological health in "self-actualizers."[42] Subsequently, Wilber refuted yet again claims that such mystical/spiritual experiences are due to fusion-fantasies of returning to the womb, as Freud suggested when he deemed the "oceanic feeling" as deriving from the primary narcissistic union between mother and infant. [43] Wilber attempted to show that major differences exist between pathological states of ego dissolution, which are regressive, and progressive, trans-egoic states in which the individual can transcend the subject-object dichotomy while remaining psychologically stable and aware of conventional reality.[44] Scientifically, it would seem that the issue of regressive vs. progressive, at least, could be answered definitively with future neuroimaging studies, if indeed Newberg's research cited previously has not already done so.

The dynamics of faith

But what exactly is faith, and how is it psychologically active? Although beautiful things are written about faith in every language, and every religious tradition has its own insights to add to the multidimensional phenomenon of faith, here we will focus on the Aurobindonian model of faith-practice, because it is psychologically-minded. He sees the core of spiritual praxis as a movement of three complementary and interdependent intrapsychic processes which, together, both depend on faith and express it as a living relationship with a living God. These he names aspiration, surrender, and rejection. *Aspiration* he defines an inner invocation of and yearning to feel the presence of the Divine in one's life. By *surrender* he means to open oneself entirely to that higher power and to it alone, and to let oneself be a vehicle for its dictates. And *rejection* he defines as to actively evaluate the quality, purity, and source of one's inner inspirations and to throw away all that is inferior, egoistic,

divisive, regressive, and false. A deficiency in any of these psychological movements, or an imbalance among them, leads to an incomplete or imperfect practice of faith.

The utility of Sri Aurobindo's formulation for our purposes is that it neither requires nor rejects adherence to any particular religious theology, i.e., it is theology-neutral, like the 12-step programs, which we shall discuss later. He is also careful to approach faith not as a passive or naive state, but as a wilful and dynamic process that improves with practice. Note that *dynamic* in this context connotes "evolving" and is oriented to the present and future, whereas in the term *psychodynamic* it refers to what one has learned, or failed to learn, in the past. Psychodynamic theory has much to say about character pathology, but little about how will and volition contribute to continuing psychological growth across the life-span (for notable exceptions to this trend, see Frankl's compelling essays on meaning[45] and Fromm's work on the art of loving[46]).

Sri Aurobindo's model of faith-practice of course depends upon the existence of a soul that is conscious of God and engenders the psychological movements of aspiration, surrender, and rejection. He calls this soul the "psychic being," coining his term from the Greek root *psyche* , and defines it as the true and eternal entity within us that reincarnates from life to life and thus develops an ever-increasing capacity to be conscious of and manifest the Divine in life. Aurobindo takes for given the Hindu idea of reincarnation, but places a new emphasis on the evolutionary aim of this process and on the transformational goal in the Divine plan. That is, he argues that the aim of spiritual praxis is not to transcend the cycle of karma and rebirth, but to perfect life on earth. He accepts the classical Buddhist notion of *nirvana* , and the Vedantic notion of the transcendent Self, as real psychological experiences of major importance, only he views these realizations not as the end of spiritual evolution, but rather as the beginning of a radical transformational praxis.

Sri Aurobindo does concur with the monotheistic traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam that the Divine is ultimately single and unitary, and that It represents itself in humans as immortal souls. However, he prefers the Hindu metaphysic of polymorphous monotheism, according to which the one God can differentiate itself into in a plethora of attenuated forms, vehicles, creations, forces, and beings. So, in summary, Sri Aurobindo believes that God made all, all is God, God is in all and also beyond all, the All is all growing, God is growing in all, and we are all growing into God.

The relevance of this perspective to psychology is that it offers the largest possible rationale for psychotherapy. In this view, since the entire aim of human life is to become aware of the soul and use the consciousness thereof to *transform the outer being* (i.e., personality with its structure of cognition, affect, and behavior), then by definition psychotherapy is annexed as a province of spiritual praxis. Furthermore, this spiritual perspective holds true whether or not one accepts the Eastern notion of reincarnation. As long as one accepts that there is a soul within human beings that is seeking to emerge, then the same argument holds whether that soul has one life or many to manifest itself in thought, feeling, and action.

This proposition—e.g. that spirituality, health, and personal transformation are in some way linked—is sensed but still imperfectly grasped in the burgeoning "mind-body" literature. What is missing is a clearer focus on the role that affect plays in the mind-body axis, as well as an articulation of the relationship between the true soul (or inner being) and the outer triad of mind, emotion, and body. This is where Sri Aurobindo's

metapsychology can help, because he clearly distinguishes these four broad "parts" of the human being and studies the influence each has on the full personality. These parts he names the *psychic* (spiritual or soul) being, the *mental* (cognitive and ideational) being, the *vital* (emotional and desire) being, and the *physical* (biological) being. All coexist in the human being, yet each has its own ontological and phenomenological reality; and the relative balance of influence among these four parts determines the nature and meaning of behavior.

Given this metapsychological framework, our next task is to understand how these various aspects of the human being relate to each other, and how psychodynamic and behavioral models of mind relate to this framework. (For further reflections on the neurobiology of spirituality, readers are referred to Austin and Newberg, previously cited.)

Defence mechanisms vs. transformational processes

A good place to start is with the notion of defence mechanisms, one of the enduring pearls of wisdom gleaned from psychoanalysis. Much credit for the articulation of defence mechanisms goes not to Sigmund Freud, but to his daughter, Anna Freud. It was her brilliant work with children that lead to the characterization of many of the best known defence mechanisms (Table 1).[47] More recently, Vaillant, in his research following a cohort of Harvard graduates over several decades, has shown as best as can be done from the data available, that the basic defence mechanisms cluster into three groups: immature, intermediate (neurotic), and mature.[48] In general, people tend to grow from using more immature clusters of defences towards more mature clusters as they move across the life span, and those who stay stuck behind are unhappy and fare poorly. Vaillant elegantly studies the interaction between defensive styles and Eriksonian stages of adult development, and the beauty of his research is that it captures in meaningful data a very human process that clinicians viscerally "know" from sitting with people over time.[49]

I. Psychotic
- Delusional projection
- Denial
- Distortion

II. Immature
- Projection
- Fantasy
- Hypochondriasis
- Passive aggression
- Acting out
- Dissociation

III. Intermediate (Neurotic)
- Displacement
- Isolation/Intellectualization
- Repression
- Reaction formation

IV. Mature
- Altruism
- Sublimation
- Suppression
- Anticipation

Table 1. Style of Defence

Now it is here that we may begin to build the backbone of a spiritual psychology, grafting larger ideas onto the existing latticework. Vaillant has essentially demonstrated, on a limited scale, what could be called an evolution of consciousness, a growth out of the darkness and turbulence of the inchoate ego, to the relative stability and self-mastery of the well formed ego. In the terminology of yoga philosophy, this represents growth from a *tamasic* character structure (primitive/immature), through *rajasic* (immature/intermediate), to a *sattwic* (mature) personality, from chaos and inertia to a state of some organization and light. People who know only how to deny and project live in raw misery, while those who can sublimate and deploy humour are much freer to find passion, meaning, and spots of joy in life—or as Freud said succinctly, "to work and to love" despite the burden of normal human suffering. Mature defences may not be sufficient to catch happiness, but they are definitely needed to pursue it. It is impossible to imagine an inveterate somatizer or paranoid psychotic achieving the fullness of his or her inner potential.

But how does one grow from personal to spiritual/transpersonal consciousness? This is the crux of the matter. If you grant that there is a soul and a spiritual reality, then it follows that above and beyond defence mechanisms, there must be transformational processes. That is, there must be intrapsychic (and interpersonal and social) processes that make it possible to grow from a mode of consciousness in which the individual is defending against painful experience (anger, sadness, fear, envy, sexual arousal, etc.), to a true living in the genuine qualities of the soul (sincerity, honesty, compassion, purity, peace, joy, love, harmony, forgiveness, goodwill, patience, endurance, integrity, and so on). The latter cannot be simply defended derivatives of the former, for then transformation is really an illusion. The soul must generate its own primary affects, too, which either transform or replace the former.

Once we grasp this, then suddenly the wisdom of spiritual practice emerges. Take for example the teaching of the current Dalai Lama, a Nobel laureate. In a recent work on ancient Buddhist teachings,[50] the Dalai Lama begins by saying that "the whole point of transforming our heart and mind is to find happiness." He then highlights that negative thoughts and emotions make people feel unhappy, and finally suggests that the antidote is to consciously develop positive thoughts and feelings of love and compassion because "the nature of human thoughts and emotion is such that the more you engage them, and the more you develop them, the more powerful they become."[51] On that basis, he proceeds to expound a series of meditations and psychological exercises to increase feelings of love, compassion, and altruism, and to decrease envy, greed, and anger. Without recounting the details here, let us simply note that his basic prescription—to reduce negative thoughts and feelings by practising positive ones—is a cognitive-behavioral approach to changing affect. Christ recommended the same two millennia ago, and today CBT specialists have elaborated the method in a secular fashion. This is not rocket science, and yet it seems like a space shot to psychodynamic theory. E.g., how often do analysts tell depressed people to go feed the homeless or forgive their mean parents?

The problem lies in a dispute between two equally valid yet separate models of mind, and the solution therefore lies in a synthesis. To use a prosaic metaphor, when it comes to driving the car of human happiness, spiritual traditions have emphasized the need to step on the gas (practice positive thoughts and feelings), while psychoanalysis has highlighted the need to step off the brakes (by analyzing away neurotic conflicts and deficits). May we therefore deduce that the way to advance most rapidly in our Jeffersonian "pursuit of happiness," is *both* to step off the brakes *and* to step on the gas? Are we finally ready to declare an interdependence of East and West, of spirituality and science, and on that basis draft a new constitution for mental health? In practice, many seasoned therapists already call themselves "eclectic," by which they mean they use elements of both CBT and psychodynamics in their work, as needed. Theoretically, sophisticated treatment regimens have been described in family work in which CBT methods are used to modify dynamically imbued behavior to stimulate both insight and behavior modification simultaneously[52]. Thus the mortar has already been mixed. A spiritual psychology provides the foundation and framework in which to apply it.

We can begin by simply naming some transformational processes. Now as with defence mechanisms, in describing these one could go to exhaustive detail in cataloging minute inflections and shades of meaning. For the sake of practicality, I will use only a few straightforward terms and arbitrarily group them into two large categories (Table 2).

First and most obviously, come four widely used processes that are so common they are taken for granted, and thus not recognized: witnessing, listening, going into, and understanding. To "go into" a difficult affect or painful experience means to allow oneself to feel it as much as is consciously possible. It is the whole aim of psychodynamic therapy to do this, and to progressively roll back the curtain of unconsciousness so as to make more and deeper pains conscious, and to bear them.

Transitional
- — Witnessing
- — Listening
- — Going into
- — Understanding (Mindfulness)

Spiritual
- — Aspiration (or Invocation or Remembering)
- — Surrender (or Offering or Sacrifice)
- — Rejection (or Purification or Discrimination)

Transcendent
- — Detachment (from the ego)
- — Identification (with the Divine)

Table 2. Transformational Processes

Witnessing, on the other hand, means to detach, stand back, observe the flow of thoughts and feelings without interfering, containing, controlling, altering them.

Witnessing is taught formally in Zen, *vipassana* , and other meditation techniques, and is used extensively in CBT to monitor one's flow of thoughts and identify negative automatic thoughts and cascades of catastrophic thinking. Ironically, witnessing was also sought by Freud in his method of free-association, in which he enjoined the patient to "say whatever comes to mind, without holding anything back." The point where the flow of thought blocks, where the patient is no longer able to witness with detachment, marks the fall from transformative potential to defence. In Buddhist terms, this is where the *samskaras* , or conditioned patterns, of the mind emerge.

Listening is a poise half way between witnessing and going into. In pure witnessing, such as is sought in meditation, one aims to detach from the stream of conscious content until the mind (or conscious mind at least) falls silent—not blocked or dull, but vast, open, calm, like a still sea. In listening, on the other hand, the attention is turned towards what arises out of that stillness, with an attitude of open-ended inquiry. There is no haste or pressure to arrive at any fixed conclusion, and in that sense attention remains detached from the contents of awareness, but there is a relationship akin to "what can be learned from this?"

Witnessing, listening, and going into interact with each other to yield understanding, the empathic synthesis arrived at by thinking and feeling deeply about the content and process of the former three. Understanding—or what the Buddhists call "mindfulness"—is, of course, the very water in which successful psychotherapy swims. Prototypically, brief flashes of witnessing allow painful content to arise, which can then be listened to and finally gone into to activate the process of working through. This cycle is repeated in miniature within each therapeutic visit, and on a larger scale over time across visits. Note, too, that it can occur both within an individual alone, or, in the situation of therapy, some of these higher functions are initially delegated to the therapist. Thus it becomes the therapist's role to use witnessing and listening to help the patient go into painful experiences from the past and present, and gradually increase the patient's intrinsic capacity to witness and listen to himself. Traditional psychodynamic lore speaks of how the therapist lends her ego-functions to help fortify the patient's "observing ego". From a spiritual perspective, this process is seen as larger and almost hyper-real: by tapping the contagious power of consciousness to transmute consciousness, the therapist is drawing on the strength of his or her own transformational processes to activate psychological evolution in the patient. Thus, much psychotherapy already employs transformational mechanisms, although this has not been sufficiently appreciated to date, probably because our medical materialism has compressed our metapsychology and thus led to misunderstanding.

Beyond the transitional processes of transformation (Table 2), lie the truly spiritual and finally transcendent operations. Aspiration, surrender, and rejection have already been described, and of course can be practised using whatever nomenclature is most suited to the individual (e.g., invocation, offering, and purification, or any other comparable terms). Note that transformative faith-practice is simultaneously dynamic and behavioral, because the aim is to consciously apply the power of the soul—which greatly exceeds that of the mental/emotional ego—to the hard labour of resolving the behavioral patterns and neurotic conflicts and deficits that constrict the outer personality. Spiritual praxis does not obviate or negate any of the problems studied in general psychiatry, it simply offers the possibility of bringing a higher power to bear on resolving these problems.

As for the transcendent operations, these consist of ascending cycles of identification (with the Divine) and detachment (from the outer being) through which the ego is progressively reconstituted as an increasingly free and pure expression of a supra-personal spiritual consciousness. These advanced dynamics pass beyond the realm of psychology into the province of spiritual discipline proper.

Practical implications

Although there is not space here for case material to illustrate the theoretical constructs outlined above, a few general comments can be made regarding practical implications.

The first concerns Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and other 12-step programs. Founded in 1935, the lay organization of AA has become a worldwide movement and, despite all the efforts of psychopharmacology and psychotherapy, 12-step programs remain probably still the single most effective treatment for alcoholism and substance abuse.[53] Why? There are essentially only two possible explanations. One is to postulate that the structure of 12-step programs fortuitously hits upon an effective amalgam of therapeutic principles disguised in spiritual language and embedded in a context of group dynamics, the other is that God actually helps those who sincerely practice the 12 steps.

Vaillant has written cogently about why AA should be called a spiritual organization, not a church or a cult; and how altruistic and spiritual practices enhance maturity by diminishing primary narcissism.[54] Here we may briefly extend this line of argument by noting that the 12 steps[55] are a good expression of Aurobindonian faith-practice: aspire to feel the Divine's presence in one's life, surrender to that Higher Power for guidance and healing, and reject all in oneself that is dishonest, weak, regressive, and false. This simple schema is applied first intrapsychically, then interpersonally, in a progressive fashion, and to the degree that it works, it does so because a touch of genuine spirituality is turned to the task of transforming thought, feeling, and behavior. AA is certainly no magic bullet, and the method is difficult to practice sincerely and therefore sometimes fails, but in the big picture it is still a small miracle. For, in a world dominated by the economic motive, it has succeeded in propagating itself widely and helping people as much or more than the so-called mental health "experts," and that without charging a penny.

A second key issue is that of differential diagnosis. Clinically, the challenge is to distinguish the relative influences of psychic (soul), mental, emotional, and physical/biological processes, and to understand how these different parts of a person's being are interacting with each other both intrapsychically and interpersonally. For instance, does the patient have real faith, or is her proclaimed faith merely a mental-emotional construct that is being used defensively? Is his illness undermining his faith, or is his faith preventing appropriate treatment of his illness (perhaps with an antidepressant, antipsychotic, or DBT)? Are her altruistic strivings motivated by guilt (reaction formation), a true soul impulse, or a mix? Is he repressing an unwanted wish, having trouble tolerating a semi-conscious affect, or is he fully conscious of a defect in his character that his soul wishes to reject? In short, is it transformation or defence, or complex mix of both? With spiritual assessment, as in all branches of medicine, we should expect that sound clinical judgment must be acquired through a combination of talent, training, practice, and further research.

The third comment regards the relationship between counter-transference, projective identification, and telepathy. Aurobindo's unified field theory of consciousness would suggest that these are not unrelated phenomenon, but in fact different manifestations of a single, underlying process of communication that can occur at varying levels of abstraction from observable behavior, and degrees of therapist involvement. That is, counter-transference can be viewed as emotional intuition that, at times, is so intuitive it becomes telepathic; or, more commonly, is so unconscious that it is enacted in the dyadic process of projective identification. Jung grasped some of this possibility in his work with synchronicity and his concept of the "shadow," which is essentially the part of the patient that he or she unconsciously "disowns" in projective identification.[56] Along this line of thinking, Wilson has explored synchronous dreams and events in the therapeutic dyad [57], and Mayer is bringing out a posthumous record of one psychoanalyst's telepathic experiences with patients that he never dared to publish during his lifetime due to fear of professional ridicule.[58] However, Buddhist and Yoga psychologies have much to add to this picture in terms of cultivating the varieties of intuitive experience.

That is a short overview of a large territory. Other issues that deserve further exploration include the use of prayer and meditation in psychotherapy; reincarnation, karma, and near-death experiences; possession, hostile influence, black magic, and evil; the spontaneous spirituality of children, and how and why they lose it as they grow up; and EMDR, energy therapies and bodywork, to name but a few.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to show how Eastern and Western psychologies can be integrated using a spiritual metapsychology, and how this would affect the theoretical basis of psychotherapy. Certainly, it is not the office of psychotherapy to produce a swelling population of Mother Teresas, nor do therapists have to become saints in order to be helpful to patients. But to the degree that therapists of whatever persuasion can open themselves to spiritual growth, to that degree they can draw upon transformational processes to inform their clinical work. Yet whatever is done, it should be emphasized that the aim is not to convert the patient to the therapist's beliefs, but to convert the patient more fully to his own higher Self, to help her draw on the strength, wisdom, and beauty of God *as she understands Her* . It is a tall order —but it shrinks when we remember that we do not cure the patient, the Divine does. Both client and clinician are souls in evolution seeking to transform our humanity into something a little closer to God.

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Sri Aurobindo's metaphysical psychology
A brief introduction

Arabinda Basu

Sri Aurobindo was a yogi and a mystic. He has said that the materials of his spiritual philosophy were provided by experiences obtained by practice of yoga. This is equally, if not more, true of the system of his metaphysical psychology. Some people who have no or little idea of yoga may wonder what yoga has to do with psychology or at the most they may think that breath control, sitting or lying in particular ways or trying to make the mind quiet by meditation or other means is yoga. In fact these are specialised methods of yoga but not its essence.

According to Sri Aurobindo, yoga has the same relation with the inner being and nature of man as science has with the forces of external nature like steam or electricity. Yoga, he says, is scientific in that its methods are observation of and experiment with the states, forces, functions of our subjective, that is, inner being and nature. Yoga is both science and art. It is a science because it knows by experience what man is inwardly and it is an art because it can apply that knowledge to change man's inner being and nature. Yoga is known as a means of attaining spiritual liberation, *mukti* or *moksha* . While that is true, it must be clearly understood that by the practice of yoga, it is possible to know the essential nature of our being, our true self. And yoga discovers the nature of our real self as consciousness. And this is where yoga and psychology meet. Indeed yoga is according to Sri Aurobindo practical psychology.

In expounding his experience-concept of Consciousness, Sri Aurobindo in a letter first states what it is not. On this fundamental point of his psychological system, I would like to quote his own words because they are precise and yet carry a wealth of suggestions and their nuances are difficult to convey in other terms. “Consciousness”, he writes, is not to my experience, a phenomenon dependent on the reactions of personality to the forces of Nature and amounting to no more than a seeing or interpretation of these reactions. If that were so, then when the personality becomes silent and immobile and gives no reactions, as there would be no seeing or interpretative action, there would therefore be no consciousness. That contradicts some of the fundamental experiences of yoga, e.g. a silent and immobile consciousness infinitely spread out, not dependent on the personality but impersonal and universal, not seeing and interpreting contacts but motionlessly self-aware, not dependent on the reactions, but persistent in itself even when no reactions take place. The subjective personality itself is only a formation of consciousness which is a power inherent, not in the activity of the temporary manifested personality, but in the being, the Self or Purusha. (Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga* , pp. 233-34)

Several things stand out in this passage which need to be understood clearly. There is no time to give any elaborate explanation of them. But I would like to mention a few salient points which it is essential to grasp for the understanding of Sri Aurobindo's metaphysical psychology. First, consciousness is not a phenomenon; it does not depend on the reactions of the personality to stimulus from outside or on mental

activities. When the mind falls silent and ceases to function, consciousness abides. It is true that ordinary people cannot silence their minds. On the other hand, its experience is not very uncommon. Many people have the experience of a still mind though they do not fall into the state of unconsciousness. Secondly, consciousness is immobile, i.e., not in its essence activity. In the same letter from which a paragraph has been quoted above, Sri Aurobindo says that consciousness is not only a power of knowledge of self and things, it is or has a dynamic and creative energy. It is free to act or not to act and free in action and inaction. Thirdly, it is universal, spread throughout the cosmos. It is difficult for ordinary people to conceive or imagine the nature of consciousness because it is mistakenly identified with the individual, which is only a formation of consciousness. Fourthly, consciousness is the Self, Atman, the Purusha, the cosmic Soul. Those who are familiar with Vedantic thought may wonder that the Self and the Soul are being mentioned in terms of consciousness. Sri Aurobindo has even said that God is a manifestation of Consciousness. To elaborate on this aspect of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual philosophy will take us into deep metaphysics. Suffice it to say now that consciousness, though indeterminable, has the power of self-determination, and its primary self-determinations are the Self, the Soul, God or the Lord. Thus consciousness is the ultimate Reality, it is inherent in existence, it is Existence or sat. Finally, consciousness is self-luminous, *sva-prakasa* . It is not revealed by anything other than itself; indeed it is in the Light of Consciousness that everything is revealed and known. Consciousness is Consciousness-Force. The Conscious Force hierarchically arranges itself on many levels, on each of which it appears progressively less conscious and less forceful. According to Sri Aurobindo, there are seven principal levels of which Matter is the lowest. He speaks of the Inconscient from which Matter is formed by the completely involved and hidden and to all intents and purposes lost conscious force in it. In Matter consciousness is physical which is the base of the vital and mental consciousness. Mind itself has more than one layer of which the subconscious is now recognised in psychology. The subliminal mind is another level of mind (of consciousness also). The difference between the subconscious and the subliminal is this that the former while conscious in essence is not actually so and hovers between the unconscious and the physical consciousness, the latter is conscious though not fully so. Though the subliminal has a good deal of knowledge in it, it is capable of errors and mistakes.

Sri Aurobindo cites a most remarkable example of the “subconscious consciousness”. I use this paradoxical phrase advisedly for the subconscious is also a formation of consciousness though below our surface mind. An uneducated maidservant was employed in the household of a professor of Hebrew of which language she knew not a word. But as she went on doing her daily chores, she used to hear willy-nilly the ringing tones of the professor's recitation of Hebrew poetry. And the servant could repeat the verses verbatim. How could she do it? Her conscious mind did not understand or remember a word of what she used to hear, besides, she was using her conscious mind to do her job as best as she could.

The purpose of writing about the subconscious and the subliminal is to show that they are levels of consciousness. The fact that consciousness is not apparently present in the former and though the latter is conscious in itself, our mind does not know it is so, owing to one of the fundamental principles of the metaphysical psychology, viz., consciousness has the power to self-limit itself and appear as less conscious than it is in its essence.

What is metaphysics and what is psychology? "Metaphysics", writes Sri Aurobindo, "deals with the ultimate cause of things and all that is behind the world of phenomena. As regards mind and consciousness, it asks what they are and how they come into existence, what is their relation to Matter, Life etc. Psychology deals with mind and consciousness and tries to find out not so much their ultimate nature and relations as their actual workings and the rule and law of these workings." (Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga*, p. 1281) Further he says, "Psychology is the science of consciousness and its status and operations in Nature and, if that can be glimpsed or experienced, its status and operations beyond what we know as Nature." (Sri Aurobindo, *Essays Divine and Human*, p. 316) This latter idea of psychology will push it to the borders of metaphysical or Vedantic or Yogic psychology. Sri Aurobindo quite clearly reserves the term psychology to the levels of mind and vital in contrast with what pertains to the spiritual soul for which he employs the term psychic. In *The Human Cycle* he has written that there is the beginning of a perception that there are behind the economic motives and causes of social and historical development profound psychological, even perhaps soul factors, where also he distinguishes the psychological from the psychic. (Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle*, p. 5)

It will be a mistake to think that because Sri Aurobindo has such a metaphysical experience-concept of consciousness, he has neglected to deal with the phenomenal aspect of consciousness. He has dealt with human psychology in great detail. Not only that, the material theory of consciousness has engaged his close attention and he has given an objective, dispassionate critique of it. He has described that theory accurately, accepted what is true in it, but also shown where it falls short of accounting for the appearance of intelligence from non-intelligent matter. Needless to say, he rejects the identification of mind and brain which is the thesis of "physiological psychology", a phrase he has employed in his writings on psychology. Incidentally, it is both interesting and instructive to note that he acknowledges that if the brain is damaged, the operations of consciousness are hampered which uses the brain as an instrument. He says consciousness is involved in the brain and that is why conscious activities are accompanied by activities of the brain cells.

The materialist hypothesis as regards consciousness, says Sri Aurobindo, is it must be a result of energy in Matter; Matter's reaction or reflex to itself in itself, consciousness is only a response of organised chemical substance which is itself inconscient. There is some sensitiveness of cell and nerve which becomes aware. But this awareness, according to Sri Aurobindo is inexplicable. "But such an explanation", he says, may account,—if we admit this impossible magic, of the conscious response of an inconscient to the inconscient,—for sense and reflex action become absurd if we try to explain by it thought and will, the imagination of the poet, the attention of the scientist, the reasoning of the philosopher. Call it mechanical cerebration, if you will, but no mere mechanism of grey stuff of brain can explain these things; a gland cannot write Hamlet or pulp of brain work out a system of metaphysics. There is no parity, kinship or visible equation between the alleged cause or agent on the one side and on the other the effect and its observable process. There is a gulf here that cannot be bridged by any stress of forcible affirmation or crossed by any stride of inference or violent leap or argumentative reason. (Sri Aurobindo, *Essays Divine and Human* , p. 275)

Sri Aurobindo further says that there may be connection of consciousness and an inconscient substance, there may be mutual interpretation, they may act on each

other, “but they are and remain things opposite, incommensurate with each other, fundamentally diverse.” (*ibid.*) To say that an observing and active consciousness emerges as a character of an eternal Inconscience is to indulge in a self-contradictory affirmation.

As far as I know, Sri Aurobindo has not described his system of psychology as “integral psychology”. He has employed the very suggestive phrase “complete psychology”, which he says “must be a complex of the science of mind, its operations and its relations to life and body with intuitive and experimental knowledge of the nature of mind and its relations to supermind and spirit.” (Sri Aurobindo, *Essays Divine and Human* , p. 305) We have said before that “consciousness is itself found to be not essentially a process,—although in mind it appears as a process, but the very nature of the self-existent being. Being or the Self of things can only be known by metaphysical—not necessarily intellectual—knowledge. This self-knowledge has two inseparable aspects, a psychological knowledge of the process of Being, a metaphysical knowledge of its principles and essentiality.” (Sri Aurobindo, *Essays Divine and Human* , p. 306)

“Vedantic psychology explores the idea and intuition of a higher reality than mind.” (Sri Aurobindo, *Essays Divine and Human* , p. 311) “Yogic psychology”, he says, is “an examination of the nature and movements of consciousness as they are revealed to us by the processes and results of Yoga”. (Sri Aurobindo, *Essays Divine and Human* , p. 322)

The metaphysical reality is not the subject matter of psychology. Let us be very clear that yoga is practised by something in our nature as human beings. It may discover in us unknown means of knowledge, action and enjoyment and instrument of the direct knowledge of the Self. Thus Vedantic psychology and yogic psychology are significant descriptions of Sri Aurobindo's psychological system in one aspect. But it is not clear what integral psychology is meant to integrate.

Sri Aurobindo has said as pointed out above, that metaphysics deals with the fundamental principles of existence and life and in the final analysis it aims at knowing the ultimate Reality. Since yoga is applied psychology aiming at connecting psychological truths with metaphysical principles, its final goal is the Divine. Sri Aurobindo never tires of pointing out that the Divine is the object of the yoga. It is not to be a superman or a great yogi. These aims may be realised in the course of yoga's progress towards the Divine. But what is to be noted especially is that Sri Aurobindo's view, shall we say vision, of the Divine is much more complex than is found in the earlier yogas. The reason why is that these other visions are partial and the consequent realisations of God according to them are of one or more than one aspects of God but they do not have the integral experience of the Supreme. Sri Aurobindo is definitely of the view that the realisations of the Divine obtained by the partial yogas are not integral owing to the fact that they are achieved by levels of consciousness which do not harbour the integral knowledge. This is why he insists that the seeker must arise to the level of vijnana, the Supermind in his English terminology because it is that level of consciousness which has inherent in it the integral knowledge.

A brief review of the different yogas current in India for thousands of years can demonstrate the truth of Sri Aurobindo's contention regarding the partial character of those spiritual disciplines. Without trying to trace the history of yoga right from the

time of the Veda, I will only refer to the five disciplines still current in India and widely practised. It is also noted that these yogas select one or the other of the principles of Nature instead of taking the whole of life which is the instrument of the integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo.

Hatha yoga for example takes the principle of life in the nervous system as its means. It may arrive at the knowledge of God but, in point of fact, its practices are so complicated and take such a long time and at the same time have to be disconnected with life in general, that it cannot be of any use directly to the goal of the yoga of Sri Aurobindo which is the radical transformation of all Nature down to the physical as a means of integral union with the Divine on all planes of existence.

Raja yoga takes mind as the instrument of its discipline. It is a very effective practice and is consummated by the separation of unconscious Prakriti which evolves as the world and all that is in it from Purusha, the pure conscious Soul. Raja yoga does not know of an overall reality like Brahman of the Vedanta.

Karma yoga takes the Will as its chief instrument of spiritual discipline. It starts with giving up the desire of fruits of action followed by the perception that the egoistic self is not the doer at all, combined with the perception that universal Nature is the real actor. It ends with surrender of fruits, actions, the ego, all of this to the Supreme Master of Will which brings about the closest possible union with the Divine, the Purushottama, *visate tadanantaram* .

Jnana yoga utilises the purified intelligence as the chief means for realisation of identity with Brahman which results in reducing the world into an utter unreality. This again is another great yoga the fruit of which, identity with Brahman, is one of the results that can be achieved by the integral yoga. Though Sri Aurobindo believes in the world as a self-manifestation of the dynamic Absolute, it is to be noted that he emphatically says that it is necessary for an integral yogin to have knowledge at a certain stage of the progress of yoga that the world is unreal. Otherwise, he says, there is great possibility that there would be some attachment to something in the world.

Bhakti yoga's chief instrument is the heart, the emotional being, and it aims at turning all human emotions towards the Divine who is most prominently looked upon and experienced as the Beloved to whom complete adoration is due.

There is another great spiritual tradition in India, namely the Tantra. Though it has monistic and dualistic schools, and is also practically divided into Shaiva and Shakta ways of sadhana, all these schools and disciplines within its fold stress Shakti, Conscious Force. Like Sri Aurobindo's philosophy Tantric schools believe in the descent and ascent of consciousness. The former is the process of Shiva or Shakti manifesting Himself or Herself as the world through thirty six tattvas or levels of consciousness down to the physical, and the latter is the process of the return of consciousness involved in matter back to its original self-existent, free status. Both Shaiva and Shakta Tantra hold that the ultimate experience is Shiva's or Shakti's self-knowledge as identical with everything including the physical body. However it abandons the body as untransformed and does not envisage the transformation of Nature in all its levels including the physical. Kshenaraja is the author of an introductory monograph on Pratyabhijna philosophy which is Shaiva Tantrik and has many features in common with Sri Aurobindo's doctrine of the integral Brahman.

Kshenaraja concludes his book by saying that one who knows the true essence of the universal categories which is Shiva is liberated-while-alive but "truly becomes Parama-Shiva the supreme Reality only on the fall of the body."

The integral yoga is integral because it has seen the possibility of a new self-discovery of the Divine in and as completely spiritualised Matter by the supramental Knowledge-Will. And Sri Aurobindo is emphatic that the actualisation of this possibility is inevitable. It is the express purpose "to make Matter aware of God" and to enable it "to remember God."

The transformation of consciousness

Chote Narayan Sharma

In a certain passage in the Mahabharat, the well-known Sanskrit epic, a yaksha puts the question to Yudhisthir, the eldest Pandava, "*Kah Pantha* ? " "What is the way?" Ordinarily this question can only be answered after the questioner explains where he intends to go. But the mysterious question has a universal context and Yudisthir is wise enough to anticipate that. Sri Aurobindo has most beautifully articulated that as:

> The ascent to the divine life is the human journey, the Work of works, the acceptable Sacrifice; this alone is man's real business in the world and the justification of his existence, without which he would be only an insect crawling among other ephemeral insects on a speck of surface mud and water which has managed to form itself amid the appalling immensities of the physical universe. Sri Aurobindo, The Life Divine, p. 42

Sri Aurobindo thus hints at the evolutionary progression in earthly life. In human life it registers itself as a conscious and willed seeking for a more satisfying form of life or a condition of existence that will give him an all-around perfection. Man cannot be satisfied by outward acquisitions. His hunger for more wealth or power is like the fire that burns. The more that is fed into it the more it increases– *na witten tarpnivo manusvah* . The path is laid out within. An outward improvement can make him an improved man. But what he needs is a change. This can only be affected by an inward ascension, by the transformation of consciousness, by climbing the heights beyond the mental ranges into the supermind.

Here the journey acquires a twofold aspect. Man bound by the limitations of his nature can only move in the limits set around him. And for breaking out into another dimension he has to prepare himself through the ages realising the maximum possibility of development in his present status. He feels suffocated. He tries to break the bounds. And it is in such an hour of helplessness felt in the pioneering spirit of the evolutionary process that a response comes from the unmanifest. This is the Hour of God. The world moves through this hour towards a new manifestation. We are exactly in such an hour of earthly life. It is an hour of a "Big Change". We are passing through a period of dreadful upheavals. But it is also a decisive moment for the greatest glory to manifest. Human consciousness is breaking the bounds in various directions. Within the last century we have discovered many more mysteries of physical nature than in the entire course of human history. It can very well be seen that the miracle has very well been possible by the pressure of a new force in action. This is exactly the Hour of God that is helping man to emerge out of his present human consciousness into the omnipotence and omniscience of the divine consciousness which Sri Aurobindo calls the "Supramental Consciousness". The hour is here and now.

It was a similar hour at the time of the advent of Krishna when people were suffering under the iron rule of Kansa, the tyrannical and wicked king who had imprisoned his own father and so sat on the throne of Mathura. It was at such a moment that the sage Durvasa appeared on Goverdhan hill. People having learned of his appearance flocked to him—all having one concern uppermost in mind and that was, "Durvasaji, when will the rule of Kansa end? When shall we be able to live in peace, free from the tyranny of Kansa?''

Now it so happens that Sri Krishna the Deliverer was already born and Durvasa knew of it. He knew that Sri Krishna was the Divine Incarnation and that it was he who would give a new turn to the tendency of life of abject suffering under the tyrant Kansa.

It also happens that Yashoda, the mother of Sri Krishna, was seated in front of Durvasa with baby Krishna in her lap, chuckling as he threw his hands and feet in the air. Durvasa, looking into Krishna's eye, asked him whether he should announce his avatarhood and explode the mystery right then. Sri Krishna also looked into his eye and said, "You may announce with whatever clarity your speech may command or carry, but I have my hold over their understanding. They will not understand more than they deserve.''

Durvasa was a great sage but was also highly irritable, almost explosive. He took Sri Krishna's words as a challenge and he addressed the people in a harsh tone and told them something which was nothing short of an enigma. He announced that in the assembly there was present at that moment a naughty child who, when he lifts up the Goverdhan hill on his little finger, will indicate the time when Kansa's rule will end and people will be free from all tyranny.

Announcing this he thundered, "Now all of you go.'' Everybody, afraid of him lest he be irritated and curse them, left the place. One of them, bewildered by the announcement, asked his companion what Durvasa meant by his announcement. The companion, with a total confidence in his understanding of Durvasa's words, told him that it was very simple. What he meant by his utterance is as plain as a pike-staff. Durvasa meant that even the heavyweight champions do not find it possible to lift beyond a hundred or two of kilograms. How can it be possible for a child to lift a hillock on his little finger? This is just impossible. Moreover, Kansa is the king of Mathura and he acts just like a king. He keeps all those happy who obey him and keep him in good humour. Look at his wrestlers. How happy and healthy they are. So the fault lies with those who do not obey him and seek always to defy him.

All the materialistic philosophies are nothing but variations upon this theme. They weave their arguments around this central concept.

But there are others moving with the crowd. One overhearing the argument joins the issue. He says Durvasa's words carry a totally different meaning. As is well known to the world Durvasa is a great rishi and his movements are not restricted to this world only. He is equally known in both heaven and hell. He has equal access to the worlds of the gods and titans. And the words he uttered were nothing short of an exhortation for a religious life. He said that life on earth is like that; no one can get beyond suffering here. But by following a religious life one goes to heaven where he enjoys bliss and realises all the fulfilments of his dreams in earthly life. Here little, hereafter bliss—is the motto of religious life, that all the religions on earth promise.

But there were children also in the assembly. One such child was sleeping late the following morning and on being asked by his mother to leave his bed and prepare for going to the school, shows his unwillingness and retorts, "Did you not hear what Durvasa said last evening?'' His mother asked him, "What did he say? From tomorrow all schools will remain closed?'' The child replied, "Durvasa said that there is a naughty child in the assembly, and that that boy will one day lift up the Goverdhana on his little finger and that will be the day when the rule of Kansa will end.'' He continued, "You call me naughty at least a dozen times every day, so my one condition is already fulfilled. Now the only condition I have to fulfil is that I should be strong enough to lift up the hillock on my

fingertip. So I will from now on drink all your cream and milk and go to the wrestling pit, do exercises, become strong and one day lift up the hill and kill Kansa.''

Now this attitude of the child is because of the fact that he is the eternal playmate of Krishna.

There is an eternal seed principle of Sri Krishna in each one of us. It is this principle which is never tired of aspiring for God, Light, Freedom and Immortality. Hundreds of times of death have not been able to dampen or defeat this aspiration and it is this urge that that has kept this basic dream of humanity not only intact but ever-increasing. This is the immortal flame burning in man's heart called the Psychic Being—the immortal among the mortal—this is the *marthyamritam,* as it is called by the Upanishads .

To realise this and express this realisation in life, manifest its glory in a divinised life upon earth is the journey towards which Sri Aurobindo points when he says that the ascent towards divine life is the human journey. This indeed is one thing that fulfils the manhood in man and makes him grow towards the divine life.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as the pioneering figures of this movement have taken human aspiration to the doors of divine fulfilment. They are one divine consciousness in two bodies and as divine incarnations they represent the sanction of the Supreme for this change in the manifestation. But we too have our share of responsibility in the total work. We should be conscious and not deny the Light when it comes. It is a fact that all cannot be awakened at the same time. But the section that is awakened and perceives and yet keeps the eyes closed and neglects the opportunity can do it only at its own cost which is nothing short of a great destruction.

But, as we know, humanity is not of one piece. Each individual differs from the others in his or her degree of development. Also the lines of interest are different. And the new advent acts as the sunshine which awakens the world but leaves the individual to fulfil himself independently of the others.

At the present Hour of God man's attention is generally towards understanding the mysteries of physical nature and knowing through verifiable means the how and why of creation. But the mind or intellect is not the authority on which an absolute reliance can be reposed. There are other instruments waiting to be developed to their full measure and are already offering signs, even in their undeveloped state, to carry humanity with surer steps to their objectives in its various fields of enquiry. The world outside is not so much away and beyond us and it is beginning to show itself as an extension of our own inner being. Time and Space have contracted and our hidebound figure is more like an antenna sensing the distant distances increasing with each passing day. That man is not mortal, man is not limited, is slowly settling with increasing firmness in the values of his being. Physics is now becoming metaphysics.

It was in the year 1956 that the Mother announced, “A new light breaks upon the earth. A new world is born.” And since then we find that man has broken beyond the earthly atmosphere into outer space and his capacity to communicate has increased manyfold. The new force in action has awakened, as it were, the very material substance of the physical creation. Until now we were mostly depending upon the mental and vital powers. We had known only one fire fed by fuel easily available to us picked from materials surrounding us. It is in recent years that we have crossed over to the use of solar energy

and the use of electricity. In the old formula of wisdom the three fires are the reduced images of that one Supreme Fire, *tamevabhantam anubhat sarvey* –it is because of that that all are illuminated. So physically, too, we have reached the doors of the Supreme and the power that is not just omniscient but also omnipotent is helping our evolution into another dimension. "There are in the history of the earth" says the Mother,

> ...moments of transition when things that have existed for thousands of years must give way to those that are about to manifest.... We are at precisely such a turning point in the world's history. Just as Nature has already created upon earth a mental being, man, so too there is now a concentrated activity in this mentality to bring forth a supramental consciousness and individuality. — The Mother, On Education, p. 72

And now in this province of concentrated activity in mental man falls precisely the responsibility he has to bear and manage. He has already received the Divine sanction. But the world is a mixed field. There are forces that are settled and do not want to be dislodged and these forces offer resistance. Human life is this vast field of battle. It is here that we are to make a choice at every moment. It is at once a war and a civil strife. Every moment we are required to be vigilant against the forces who are fighting in their home, as it were, supported and helped by the elements that largely constitute our present being. The way is dangerous and difficult. But the victory belongs to those who stick to the divine guidance.

We already know that the majority of the human mass is not conscious of the vast significance of this transition. But the work is universal and they too are caught in it. The new power in action is like the air that pervades us and, knowingly or unknowingly, all are caught in its whirl. Also the forces governing earthly life are increasingly registering its action. Just as the divine consciousness incarnated in the Mother and Sri Aurobindo represent the sanction from the Supreme, the growing awareness of the pioneers in humanity registers its increasing effect in earthly life. They are applying their awareness in their various fields of research. It is in this area that human psychology occupies an important, almost a decisive position. The expanding human psychology is at present hardly satisfied with keeping itself limited to the individual. It expands and including other's states of being acts upon them. A whole science of psychotherapy is establishing itself on this basis.

Thus we see that the present movement of transition, while aiming far beyond, is taking us rapidly towards the truth embodied in the old formula of wisdom *sarvabhutasthmatmanan* –our one spirit in all. To discover this spirit is a major decisive step towards integral transformation. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have endeavoured to bring down through their united effort the supramental consciousness on earth. This has made the transformation of earthly life possible. We have seen how our consciousness is increasing and its increased application to our life has changed it so much. We have augmented our sense perceptions and increased our speed but there is hardly any change in our form and features or even in our subjective nature. Man wears his increased capacities as an instrument in the hands of his animal nature and utilises them for his egoistic self-fulfilment.

But the transformation to increased power or capacities, as long as it remains bound to the old form or body, can hardly be called integral, for it cannot manifest the divine glory of the new manifestation. The body of man is hard and rigid, constituted of the five material principles namely: earth, fire, water, air and ether. These are principles emerging out of the

inconscient. So the very foundation and form of our present status is dark and insensitive. We are a spark of light lodged in a material form. And to transform the form into a luminous foothold of the glory and consciousness of the spirit requires a tapasya that is beyond the power of man. It is because of this that the Divine has to incarnate. This also explains the tremendous suffering of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo while they bore earthly nature on the path of transformation. They have carried it to its conclusive stage. But human nature, as we have already stated, is a field of battle and according to our tendencies we lean towards one side or the other. We are not conscious in a large part of our being. And working there is extremely difficult and blind.

Working in the body is like working in the submerged part of our being. We see neither our effort nor its results. Our meditations and contemplation of peace can fill our inner being with a repose but leave our body as it is with its inertia and ill-health and diseases. The Mother has found *japa* to be an effective instrument for work in the body. We can understand it in this way. While we keep uttering the mantra, the vibrations of its sound sink into the body vibrating the subtlest physical principle, the ether. And with this it permeates the various layers of the body. How the mantra works for our integral transformation has been most graphically illustrated by Sri Aurobindo in *Savitri* :

As when the mantra sinks in Yoga's ear,

Its message enters stirring the blind brain

And keeps in the dim ignorant cells its sound;

The hearer understands a form of words

And, musing on the index thought it holds,

He strives to read it with the labouring mind

But finds bright hints, not the embodied truth:

Then, falling silent in himself to know

He meets the deeper listening of his soul:

The word repeats itself in rhythmic strains:

Thought, vision, feeling, sense, the body's self

Are seized unalterably and he endures

An ecstasy and an immortal change;

He feels a Wideness and becomes a Power,

All knowledge rushes on him like a sea:

Transmuted by the white spiritual ray

He walks in naked heavens of joy and calm,

Sees the God-face and hears transcendent speech....

Sri Aurobindo, Savitri , p. 375

Such is the transmutation brought about by *japa* as explained by Sri Aurobindo. It affects the most material foundation of our being, transforms its inert parts into the luminous vehicle of the spirit. Transformation then becomes integral and verifiably so. The passage moves forward with a cinematographic representation of advancing transformation which makes itself real and living.

Vedantic yoga-psychology

Ananda Reddy

In the last couple of days, hearing the speeches of the stalwarts in psychology, I was a bit nervous to come and speak to you this afternoon, myself not being a student of psychology. But, I think, I have got the greatest of confidence now. Just as I was walking to this table, I picked up this message of the Mother that fell off from Shraddhavan's file. It reads, "I am near you. The Mother". It is indeed very meaningful for me. There could not be a greater force than this message to give me confidence!

What I felt after the many psychologists spoke in the last two days is that the essential features of modern psychology, of which you have been speaking, have been covered already by the Upanishads that existed thousands of years ago. Sri Aurobindo has an apt comment regarding modern psychology:

> The significance of the lotus is not to be found by analysing the secrets of the mud from which it grows here. Its secret is to be found in the heavenly archetype lotus that blooms for ever in the light above.
>
> Sri Aurobindo, Letters on Yoga, p. 1609

I think this is the essence of modern psychology as well as the ancient Vedantic psychology. In other words what is the essential realisation of the Vedantins? They had two basic realisations, says Sri Aurobindo. The first one is Sat, Chit and Ananda. He calls it the subjective realisation. Most of you would be knowing these terms: Sat is Existence, Chit is Consciousness and Ananda is Bliss. What exactly is subjective and objective? Well, interestingly, Max Velmans was discussing the other day if there was anything like subjective or objective or if everything is only subjective?

The second one is again a trilogy called the objective experience. The three terms are Satyam, Jnanam, and Anantam, meaning Truth, Knowledge and Infinity. The whole of the Vedanta is just these two formulas—one being the subjective and the other being the objective. And amongst all the Upanishads the three most important ones are the Isha, Kena and Chhandogya. These three Upanishads deal with three different aspects: Isha looks into the truth of Brahman and the truth of the world—the aspect of Satyam. Kena looks into the mental consciousness vis-à-vis the Brahman consciousness—the aspect of Knowledge. And Chhandogya looks into the unlimited—the aspect of Infinity. So the three Upanishads deal with the three aspects, which are the essentials of objective knowledge as per the Vedanta.

From these I shall take up the aspect of Anantam, Infinity as seen in the Chhandogya—as in this limited time I cannot speak about all the three realisations in the different Upanishads. The Chhandogya Upanishad gives us the yoga process, the steps of yoga, which could be called the Vedantic yoga-psychology.

Here the first thing that we see is that the main stress is on the realisation of Sachchidananda or Brahman as Infinity. For the Vedantins to know the Superconscient is the first thing. Only afterwards can the knowledge of the outer-consciousness be obtained with certitude and in the right perspective. To know the whole is more important than to know the particular according to the Vedantins. For that would give us the consciousness of oneness in the many.

One of the chapters in the Chhandogya Upanishad opens with a dialogue between Narad and Sanat Kumara. Narad, is the highest representative of Brahmanhood and Sanat Kumara is a War God. (This was only to emphasise that Kshatriyas also had the knowledge of Brahman and not just the Brahmins.) Narad comes to Sanat Kumara and says that he would like to know about the Unlimited or the Ananatam or the Bhooman. A very beautiful word indeed—Bhooman and not Brahman. So Sanat Kumara asks Narad, "What is it that you know by now?" Here is the mind-boggling list of things that Narad knew. He replied:

> My Lord, this is what I have learnt: Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sam Veda, Atharva Veda, the Fifth Veda comprising History and Mythology; next, Grammar, Mathematics, Logic and Politics, the science of Computing time, Theology, Fine Arts and the Ritual Lore; Demonology, Astrology, and the Art of Predicting Fate; the Knowledge of Ancestors and of Serpents. I know all this, my Lord, and very well. This has made me master of the Word, but has not given me knowledge of the Self. I have heard that only by the knowledge of the Self can one pass beyond sorrow and pain. I am immersed in sorrow and pain, please reach me to the other shore.
>
> Gupta, N. K., 1989, p.147

This is, indeed, something very relevant for us, we who claim to know so much of the material world and yet are full of sorrow and pain. And thereupon Sanat Kumara answered by giving sixteen steps. These sixteen steps are: *vac, manas, samkalpa, cittam, dhyanam, balam, annam, apah, tejas, akasa, smara, asha, prana* and *bhuman*. What is important to note is that there is here an ascending order. Sanat Kumara guides Narad, telling him how to go about from the most external consciousness to the highest one. They are practical steps teaching him how without withdrawing from the external world one could attain higher levels of consciousness.

And these steps could be divided into four sections, as has been shown by Nolini Kanta Gupta. The first one is the mental consciousness and here the seven steps are—name, speech, mind, will, thought, meditation and knowledge. Sanat Kumara says that greater than name is speech and then each step from mind and will and thought is higher than the level below, ultimately culminating in knowledge. But this is only the knowledge of the particular—what we say in Sanskrit, *viveka* or discriminatory knowledge. When an individual learns to discriminate between good and bad or the lower and the higher etc. he attains the highest level of "knowledge of the particular" in the mental world.

Man is basically a dual expression of Being and Becoming, Purusha and Prakriti. What we know of man is normally only the Becoming, the outer part only. But that is insufficient and incomplete knowledge. What I feel is that in psychology or in psychoanalysis or in psychotherapy we are mostly dealing with this Becoming aspect of man, we are trying to analyze our external being only. For example, Jan Maslow was telling us yesterday to find out one's own judgments, to be aware of them and then to suspend them etc. All these therapeutic methods are basically modes of contacting the aspect of Becoming. But what I feel is that unless we link up with the Being aspect, psychotherapy or any other mode will not be of great use to humanity for a long time. As man is fundamentally moulded by both aspects of Purusha and Prakriti, a detachment from the Becoming must lead us to the Being, the most essential part of man. To quote Sri Aurobindo in this regard:

> The experience of Purusha-Prakriti, the Spirit or Conscious Being in its relations to Nature, is of immense pragmatic importance; for on these relations the whole play of the consciousness depends in the embodied being. If the Purusha in us is passive and allows Nature to act, accepting all she imposes on him, giving a constant

> automatic sanction, then the soul in mind, life, body, the mental, vital, physical in us, becomes subject to our nature, ruled by its formation, driven by its activities; that is the normal state of our ignorance. If the Purusha in us becomes aware of itself as the Witness and stands back from Nature, that is the first step to the soul's freedom; for it becomes detached, and it is possible then to know Nature and her processes and in all independence, since we are no longer involved in her works, to accept or not to accept, to make the sanction no longer automatic but free and effective; we can choose what she shall do or not do in us, or we can stand back altogether from her works and withdraw easily into the Self's spiritual silence, or we can reject her present formation and rise to a spiritual level of existence and from there re-create our existence.
>
> Sri Aurobindo, The Life Divine, p. 348

The second section deals with body as the base. This is very interesting. From the widening of mental consciousness and clarification, of the first stage, the Vedanta does not tell us to leap into a high spiritual consciousness. On the contrary, it turns the sadhak or the aspirant towards the development of the body consciousness, for, the body consists of the essence of the material world—the forces of solids, liquids, energy and air. Solids are Annam which forms the physical body of man, "while liquids give it life and mobility in the form of nutrition, energy is stamina, the ability of movement both in and outside the body; air gives it the sense of width and expansion.

(Gupta, N. K., 1989, p. 148)

Here the significance of the development of the body, as we read in Sri Aurobindo, becomes clearer. We cannot go beyond into the subtle levels of consciousness and manifest it without the support of the body which must be strong, supple and harmonious. It is only after consolidating the body-consciousness that the journey into the subliminal could be undertaken effectively.

This morning you heard Dr. Soumitra Basu speak to you about the three different layers of the being: the outermost being, the subliminal and the innermost. The Chhandogya Upanishad also speaks about the subliminal being but in a different terminology. It says that one has to start the process of going inwards with memory. Then the next step is hope. The third is *prana* and the fourth is truth. How do we relate all these to the subliminal? Memory gives man the drive for action on the external level. But its deeper function is to keep him in constant contact with the deeper truth of our being. Memory of the past may lead us to the future but memory of our deeper self leads us on our spiritual path.

The second step is hope. Hope is indeed greater than memory, says Sanat Kumara because through hope, memory is kindled.

> It learns the sacred hymns and the sayings; one then accomplishes holy deeds, cherishes a desire for sons and cattle, for this world and the yonder world; you should adore Hope! He who adores the Hope as Brahman, brings through the Hope all his wishes to fulfilment. His prayers will never become fruitless.
>
> Deussen and Bedekar, 1980, p. 184

On the psychological level, hope is a form of aspiration, just as remembrance is a form of surrender. It an aspiration for reaching and realising the *Bhooma* , the Unlimited, the Bliss.

Next we have the *prana*.

> The life breath is indeed greater than hope; because just as the spokes are inserted in the hub, so also everything is attached to this life. The life proceeds through the life, the life gives the life; it bestows life on a living creature. The life is the father and is the mother, the brother and sister; the life is the teacher and the Brahmana. That is why when anybody snubs harshly his father or mother or brother or sister or teacher or a Brahmana, one says 'fie upon you'! You are a murderer of the father, a murderer of the mother, a murderer of the brother, a murderer of the sister, of the teacher, of the Brahmana.
>
> Deussen and Bedekar, 1980, p.185

Prana or life energy, when converted into a yogic effort, becomes the force of *tapasya* , the *tejas* that brings in a purification of mind resulting in a calmness and quietness of thought.

The fourth step is the truth. We see that first we have memory, then hope, then *prana* and the last step is the truth. Truth is not merely the question of attaining a higher consciousness. The more positive thing is the rejection of falsehood. Especially when it comes to the issues of day-to-day life—in which psychotherapy is trying to help—it is to reject the falsehood—what is wrong, what is false or whatever is weak within us. This is what they call truth at this level.

These practices could be linked up with Sri Aurobindo's terminology in integral yoga. Hope is what we call aspiration. Truth we call rejection. And memory is surrender. And integral yoga speaks of these three things exactly—aspiration, rejection and surrender as the essentials of yoga-sadhana.

Through this process of aspiration, rejection and surrender we begin to open up to a spiritual aspect within us—that is the fourth level. On this level the first step is that of knowledge—this is not the same knowledge as we had analysed on the first level where it was more the mental consciousness. There it was more *viveka* , a discriminatory knowledge. But here it is the knowledge of the Vast, of Oneness, of Bhooma.

And the second step is that of contemplation or concentration, required for knowledge. Concentration implies here a concentrated one-pointedness.

The third step is faith—an unwavering trust. Faith implies steadfastness and to make the latter effective, there is need of action. This is a deep truth of integral yoga— that faith cannot increase through *bhajans* or prayers alone. Faith increases best when it is put into action. Just as Sri Aurobindo emphasises works, the Vedantic Rishis too say that faith increases through action only. Then this action leads to joy which is indeed the mainspring of all our endeavours. We know that delight is the essence of creation. Delight is the source, Delight is the ultimate. But the Rishi says that the joy is no ordinary pleasure. Its other name is Vastness. The Vast is the Delight—what we had said in the beginning—*Satyam, Jnanam, Anantam*. *Anantam* is that Infinity, Unlimitedness or Vastness. This Vastness is the highest realization.

How is it that the Illimitable is Delight? In Sri Aurobindo's book, *The Life Divine* , he explains this concept most clearly. He says that *Anantam* is absolute freedom. And absolute freedom is another form of absolute delight. So once we reach this delight, as it is said in another Upanishad, we realize what is called, *Tadvnam,* that Delight or the Brahman, for He is also known as “That Delight”.

What truth, knowledge and infinity bring to us on the practical, day-to-day level is the consciousness of unity and oneness. This conclusion is the most important—that getting the

consciousness of any one of these, truth or knowledge or infinity, we get the total sense of unity and oneness. This is where the evolution is moving –towards a universal oneness.

This sense and consciousness of oneness and unity is however best brought about only by the supramental consciousness, says Sri Aurobindo. He says that this consciousness of oneness cannot descend into the mental level. So this is where Vedanta and Sri Aurobindo come together. Vedanta does not mention the Supermind but it does tell us about the eternal consciousness of oneness. I feel that modern psychology, through its various attempts and ways, is exploring ways to find out this unitarian consciousness. And once we find that, what is it that we get? Sri Aurobindo says that by reaching that Brahmanhood, we become centers of the divine Delight, shedding it on all and attracting all to it.

And Sanat Kumara also says, concluding his conversation with Narad:

> Indeed for him who thus sees, thinks and knows, the life arises out of his soul, the hope arises our of his soul, the memory arises out of his soul, the world-space out of his soul, the heat out of his soul, the water out of his soul, the creation and dissolution out of his soul, the food out of his soul, the struggle out of his soul, the intelligent knowledge out of his soul, the thought out of his soul, the resolution out of his soul, the Manas out of his soul, the speech out of his soul, the name out of his soul, the holy hymns and sayings out of his soul, the holy deeds out of his soul– the whole world arises out of his soul.
>
> Deussen and Bedekar, 1980, pp. 188-89

So this is the conclusion of the Vedantic yogins who as you see didn't even have the word "psychology" at that time. May I take the occasion to submit to the esteemed audience here a clarification regarding the term "integral psychology"? If the term is merely "integral psychology", there could be the possibility that it does not include the concept of the Divine. And just as integral yoga does not exist without the essential element of the Divine, so integral psychology cannot exist without the concept and experience of the Divine. If psychology in general can accept to bring in the concept of the Divine, (which may be very difficult in the Western world today), then you can go ahead and use this term "integral psychology". But if it is not possible to do so for whatever reasons, then it is better we call it "integral yoga-psychology", because it will inevitably carry the concept of the Divine. All that Sri Aurobindo says is centered around the concept of the Divine. So, the Divine must be the center of the psychology too if it is to be considered as integral psychology. So, keeping this in mind you call it what you want but let us remember that without the concept of the Divine, which is represented by the Mother in integral yoga–the Mother shakti– integral psychology is not what Sri Aurobindo would mean by it. Well, I have only this to submit. The rest is for you to do as you think best–it is not my cup of tea but only your cup of coffee!

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Samjnana, ajnana, vijnana, prajnana

Vladimir

From the beginning of time man has been preoccupied with the phenomenon of Consciousness. His understanding has found its expression in the religious and ritualistic texts.

The *Aitareya Brahmana* 25. 7 depicts Vedic ritual, *agnihotra* , as consisting of three priests: *hotar* , *adhvaryu* , and *udgatar* , reciting texts from *Rig* , *Yajur* and *Sama Vedas* , corresponding to the three spheres of the Sacrifice: earth, air and heaven, respectively. The fourth one– *brahman* , who is silent during the performance, observing all the actions as well as listening to all words uttered by the priests. His function is to be a witness of all what is happening and in case of some imperfection in action or in speech to cure and correct it in his mind, *praya-citta* .

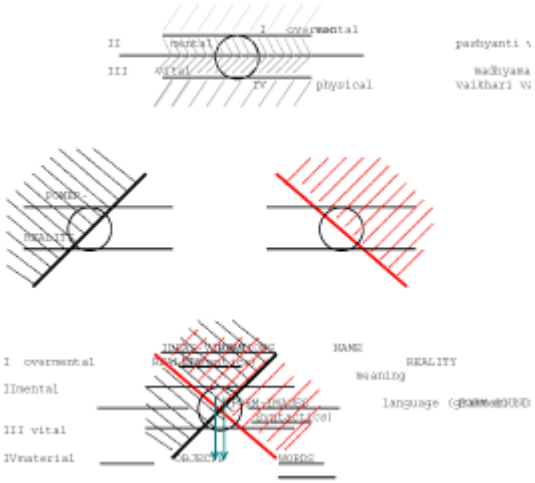
When the performance of sacrifice is over, and *dakshina* , the money and wealth are distributed to the priests, the half of it is given to *hotar* , *adhvaryu* and *udgatar* , and the other half–to *brahman* alone. So, the one who does practically nothing,– says the *Aitereya Brahmana* in dispute– gets the same part of *dakshina* as the three priests who are reciting and performing all the sacrifice. Why is it so?

The *Aitereya Brahmana* 25. 8, 9 text then explains that the first three priests represent *vac* , speech, which belongs to the earth, of which according to other Vedic texts, *agni* is an essence (*Chandogya Upanishad* etc.); and the *brahman* priest represents *manas* , Mind, which belongs to the heaven, of which *surya* is the essence. And by this Speech and Mind, earth and heaven, the space in between–*prana* , life-energy, is created, which belongs to *antariksha* , the middle world, of which *vayu* is the essence. Therefore, says the text, this *vayu pavamana* is *yajna* .

This kind of general scheme is very important for us, for we may better understand what was symbolised by the sacrifice. So, it was seen as a kind of tension between two polarities, as an energetic field created in between. One is *agni* , the pole from below, and another is *surya* , the pole from above.

The same structure remains in reciting sacred texts, *svadhyaya* , where the reader of the text, which he knows perfectly by heart, utters it, so to say, in a mechanic way, while another part of him, *manas* , is observing the flow of the words. Being detached from the active formation of the text it becomes simply a witness of the text. So these are the conditions for the sacrificial action to take place, where the altar of the sacrifice is already a reader himself or, to be more precise, his life: *prana* . In this way he becomes one with all levels of consciousness: heaven, earth and the space in between.

Here we shall give a scheme, which is to help us to imagine how the Word may relate to the Form (Sanskrit terms are taken from the ancient Indian grammatical tradition, Bhartrihari's *Vakyapadiya*):



There are two realities, which seem to be different, interconnected into one complex objective-subjective reality of the consciousness in its double status of knowledge (the perceptive reality) and that of power (the objective reality).

On the highest level of consciousness, where the power and knowledge are one, there is no difference between the form and word realities. The idea-force, the idea-vibration is one for the word and the object. The semantic of both is one and the same. So the meaning of the objective thing “book” and the meaning of the objective word “a book” are same.

It is on the level of formations (mental and vital planes), that we see the expressed and expressive elements split in their different shapes: a thought-sound (a word) and a thought-image (a form) have different shapes; and on the material plane the word and the object are absolutely separate things.

This scheme is meant to help us to approach the subject. It is only a scheme, and should be understood only as such.

The hearing and sight, *shrotram* and *cakshus* , together with the speech and mind, *vac* and *manas* , were considered by the Upanishads as four pillars on which *brahma-catushpad* , “the Spirit on four legs”, is established firmly in the world (*Chandogya Upanishad* , *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*) as *prana* , life energy. It is with a help of these *nama* and *rupa* , name and form, that Brahman, the Creator, could enter into his creation (*Shatapatha Brahmana*). In the Vedas these nama and rupa are also presented in terms of *shruti* and *drishti* , (compare also: *cit-tapas* , Consciousness-Power, in the Puranas).

So, we live, breathe, work, sleep, eat in our living space which is, according to the Vedic seers, created by the interaction of two realities: the Mind and the Word, Seeing and Hearing, Form and Name. And indeed if we deeply observe the phenomenon of life in terms of consciousness, we will find it expressed in the double status of consciousness as power

(creating any form, object of sense) and the consciousness as knowledge, perceiving this form (the sense itself).

There are four operative functions of the consciousness in the Vedantic tradition: *samjnana* , *ajnana* , *vijnana* and *prajnana* , which are defining consciousness as an interaction of Knowledge and Power, Name and Form.

> Everything begins with vibration or movement, the original kshobha or disturbance. If there is no movement of the conscious being, it can only know its own pure static existence. Without vibration or movement of being in consciousness there can be no act of knowledge and therefore sense; without vibration or movement of being in force there can be no object of sense. Movement of conscious being as knowledge becoming sensible of itself as movement of force, in other words the knowledge separating itself from its own working to watch that and take it into itself again by feeling,—this is the basis of universal Samjnana. This is true both of our internal and external operations. Sri Aurobindo, The Upanishads, p.195-96

So here Sri Aurobindo gives his definition of what is *samjnana* , "as essential sense".

> I become anger by a vibration of conscious force acting as nervous emotion and I feel the anger that I have become by another movement of conscious force acting as light of knowledge. I am conscious of my body because I have become the body; that the same force of conscious being which has made this form of itself, this presentation of its workings knows it in that form, in that presentation. I can know nothing except what I myself am; if I know others, it is because they are also myself, because my self has assumed these apparently alien presentations as well as that which is nearest to my own mental center. All sensation, all action of sense is thus the same in essence whether external of internal, physical of psychical. Sri Aurobindo, The Upanishads, p. 196

> Vijnana is the original comprehensive consciousness which holds an image of things in its essence, totality and parts and properties; it is the original, spontaneous, true and complete view of it which belongs properly to the supermind and of which mind has only a shadow in the highest operations of the comprehensive intellect.
>
> Prajnana is the consciousness which holds as image of things before it as an object with which it has to enter into relations and possess by apprehension and analytic and synthetic cognition.
>
> Samjnana is the contact of consciousness with an image of things by which there is a sensible possession of it in its substance; if Prajnana can be described as the outgoing of apprehensive consciousness to possess its object in conscious energy, to know it, Samjnana can be described as the inbringing movement of apprehensive consciousness which draws the object placed before it back to itself so as to possess it in conscious substance, to feel it.

Ajnana is the operation by which consciousness dwells on an image of things so as to govern and possess it in power.

These four, therefore, are the basis of all conscious action.

...There are secret operations in us, in our subconscient and superconscient selves, which precede this action, but of these we are not aware in our surface being and therefore for us they do not exist. If we knew of them, our whole conscious functioning would be changed. Sri Aurobindo, The Upanishads, pp. 188-89

Modern psychology has extended our knowledge and has admitted us to a truth which the ancients already knew but expressed in other language. We know now or we rediscover the truth that the conscious operation of mind is only a surface action. There is a much vaster and more potent subconscious mind which loses nothing of what the senses bring to it; it keeps all its wealth in an inexhaustible store of memory, akshitam shravah. The surface mind may pay no attention, still the subconscious mind attends, receives, treasures up with an infallible accuracy. The illiterate servant-girl hears daily her master reciting Hebrew in his study; the surface mind pays no attention to the unintelligible gibberish, but the subconscious mind hears, remembers and, when in an abnormal condition it comes up to the surface, reproduces those learned recitations with a portentous accuracy which the most correct and retentive scholar might envy. The man or mind has not heard because he did not attend; the greater man or mind within has heard because he always attends, or rather sub-tends, with an infinite capacity. So too a man put under an anaesthetic and operated upon has felt nothing; but release his subconscious mind by hypnosis and he will relate accurately every detail of the operation and its appropriate sufferings; for the stupor of the physical sense-organ could not prevent the larger mind within from observing and feeling.

Similarly we know that a large part of our physical action is instinctive and directed not by the surface but by the subconscious mind. And we know now that it is a mind that acts and not merely an ignorant nervous reaction from the brute physical brain. The subconscious mind in the catering insect knows the anatomy of the beetle it intends to immobilize and make a food for its young and it directs the sting accordingly, as unerringly as the most skilful surgeon, provided the mere limited surface mind with its groping and faltering nervous action does not get in the way and falsify the inner knowledge or the inner will-force.

These examples point us to the truth which Western psychology, hampered by past ignorance posing as scientific orthodoxy, still ignores or refuses to acknowledge. The Upanishads declare that the Mind in us is infinite; it knows not only what has been seen but what has not been seen, not only what has been heard but what has not been heard, not only what has been discriminated by thought but what has not been discriminated by thought... That conscious senses what has not been sensed by the surface mind has not learned by its acquisitive thought. That in the insect knows the anatomy of its victim; that in the man outwardly insensible not only feels and remembers the action of the surgeon's knife, but knows the appropriate reactions of suffering which were in physical body inhibited by the anaesthetic and therefore non-existent; that in the illiterate servant-girl heard and retained accurately the words of an

unknown language and could, as Yogic experience knows, by a higher action of itself understand those superficially unintelligible sounds.

To return to the Vedantic words we have been using, there is a vaster action of the Sanjnana which is not limited by the action of the physical sense-organs; it was this which sensed perfectly and made its own through the ear the words of the unknown language, through the touch the movements of the unfelt surgeon's knife, through the sense-mind or sixth sense the exact location of the centres of locomotion in the beetle. There is also associated with it a corresponding vaster action of Prajnana, Ajnana and Vijnana not limited by the smaller apprehensive and comprehensive faculties of the external mind. It is this vaster Prajnana which perceived the proper relation of the words to each other, of the movement of the knife to the unfelt suffering of the nerves and of the successive relation in space of the articulations in the beetle's body. Such perception was inherent in the right reproduction of the words, the right narration of the sufferings, the right successive action of the sting. The Ajnana of Knowledge-Will organising all these actions was also vaster, not limited by the faltering force that governs the operations directed by the surface mind. And although in these examples the action of the vaster Vijnana is not so apparent, yet it was evidently there working through them and ensuring their co-ordination.

... Here we should note, first of all, that there is an action of the sense-mind which is superior to the particular action of the senses and is aware of things even without imagining them in forms of sight, sound, contact, but which also as a sort of subordinate operation, subordinate but necessary to completeness of presentation, does image in these forms." Sri Aurobindo, The Upansihads , pp. 192-93

Working in matter

Aster Patel

Friends, in the wake of the preceding invocation this morning, we have a long, indescribable journey to undertake—from the Silence... to the Word... to Matter! How we shall traverse this seeming distance is a little hard to say at the start. But let's try.

This is the concluding session of the four-day seminar. And as such, one wishes to spend some time on what one has learnt during these three days of exchanges. What has come through very strongly is the almost pervasive love of "wholeness", of "integrality" and "integration". It is interesting to see that this happens at a time when, on the one hand, physics with its study of matter, and on the other, biology and its study of the living organism, have arrived at a point where they discover "wholes", indivisible, organic wholes which go beyond the ken of both the sciences and their methodology. At the same time you have the psychological sciences, the social sciences, the medical, the environmental—in fact, all that one can think of—where the seeking for a "wholeness" of perspective is dominant. Even the patterns of lifestyles feel this need of wholes.

In this first year of the new millennium it sets one thinking. In the last century what we developed to an extreme of perfection was the capacity of the mind which reached a zenith of effectivity. Mind applied itself, with its characteristic methodology to all problems —whether physical, scientific, sociological, even spiritual—leading to tremendous psychological results.

But where are we today? Mind which is basically analytic in its approach, constructive in its methodology, arriving at aggregates in its results—is now arrested in the presence of "wholes"—not as in distant spiritual experience but in matter, in the living cell. How is it going to deal with this "whole"? This is a very critical, urgent, relevant, pertinent question. It has been of concern to me personally like it must have been to everyone else.

In fact, there are two concerns I wish to share. Obviously we cannot pursue this kind of frenetic, analytic, mental activity much further if we really want to arrive at an experience of the "whole" and to be able to live it. We know that it is in the very nature of mind to seek wholes but it cannot seize them. It seeks harmony but can't arrive at it. So what must happen? We must psychologically prepare ourselves for another mode of being, for another mode of consciousness. There may be two possibilities—one doesn't yet know—we will have to explore a great deal. Maybe, that the mind itself opens up to another consciousness that can seize a "whole" in a kind of intuitive grasp yet see all the details of structure and relationship within that "whole". Not an amorphous "whole" but a structured, detailed, relationed "whole" and to see how it functions. Or, as an interim step, it may be of help—and I think a lot of us have tried it already as is evident by the beautiful presentations we've had in these last three days—if the analytic mind gets grounded in the depths of being, its deeper profundities of consciousness, then its function can begin to change. It was visible in some of the presentations made earlier, that the functioning had already undergone change. If this preparation is not done, then to give up the old, all of a sudden, for something new would be a painful, traumatic exercise for mankind as a whole. Thus to prepare ourselves seems to be a very urgent necessity.

The second concern, I must say, has been with me for about fifteen years with no clear answers yet! But one would like to share the question nonetheless—and this is a question of

"methodology". The dualistic, reductionist method of science followed so successfully since the Renaissance, the European Renaissance of the sixteenth century, has arrived at a point where it has discovered a reality that it is incapable of pursuing further in its investigation. How will a "reductionist" method proceed further in, let us say, a knowledge of "wholes", the handling of "wholes". How will it do so? It goes almost without saying that this method has reached its limit. But what is the new method? If we don't embark upon that discovery of the new method we go into the doldrums, scientifically speaking—for a long time to come—and land ourselves in complete confusion. Technology will, of course, keep itself repeating—for its cycle is repetitive in nature—but it will not be "breakthroughs" because the method is no longer appropriate to its subject-matter, it is no longer of the measure of its own findings. This is a significant statement to ponder over. Sri Aurobindo's formulation of this underlying truth is very succinct: "Our way of knowing must be appropriate to that which is to be known." (Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* , p. 323)

How shall we set out in search of "another" method? Shall we venture to suggest a possible direction which can be pursued? There is only a sense of "direction", no more—but even that is like taking a further step. It seems important to accept—which in itself isn't easy— that "another" poise of consciousness, other than the habitual mental form of activity, is now needed. A poise of consciousness that knows, that feels and acts in a manner other than what we have been accustomed to. The present psychological makeup of our personality divides these three functions—of cognition, affection and volition—into distinct ones. They are almost always at war with one other or, at best, tend to go their own way and have to be reined in so as to offer some semblance of order! But can these three be "unified" in one process, one effective movement of consciousness? A poise of consciousness, in which to know and to feel is to act—for the "power" at source is one but triune in its manifestation. Can we arrive at such a wholeness and integration in our very being that makes us capable of seizing other "wholes" of reality?

We would like to make a further suggestion in this regard. At a time when we are "globetrotters"—both in the geographical and cultural sense—we could examine the history of all great cultures of the past and their contemporary creations and look for indications for these other "methods" that might have been known to them. Not that we could adopt them as such, but they might give us valuable clues as to how to proceed further. This question of a new methodology and our earnest search for it, is, I think, urgent. We must look far and wide, if need be, in our world's sum of culture and knowledge and, very perceptively, pick up those strands that could lead us in the direction of the future.

Having made a round of the three days of the seminar and shared two concerns that pertain to it, we must come to the theme listed in the programme, Working in Matter. The very wording requires that we draw upon experience! In a sense, nothing is more meaningful than sharing an experience—and, in this case, though the experience, in its initial contours, seems to be that of an individual, are we not here, as a collective, all part of it? In the very act of sharing, the two merge—to create a larger identity and to give it a greater relevance.

As embodied beings, matter is the very stuff of our existence. It is the matrix in which we live and move and work. We may soar with the spirit, plane on high with the mind—but it is here in the body, in this physical world, that we have to come to terms with the "personality" that is ours. In order to come to terms with it, to seek a perfection of it—which is a big word!—but even some change in it, some degree of integration, it is right here that we have to do it. This realisation takes a bit of sinking in! As mental beings we do not easily accept it. We accept it theoretically perhaps but we do not accept it in life. It takes a very,

very long time to do so, a very long time indeed. It is then that we realise how completely rooted in materiality we are.

The body, of course, is our first base and our first environment, our entire life part is rooted in matter and so many levels of the mind too are rooted in matter. When we arrive at that point it comes as a great shock. We tend to think that the "mind" is way above. It isn't. Some levels, of course are—but the fact of rooting is right here.

How do we handle this personality of ours rooted in matter? And also the matter "outside" of us, so to speak,—in the world, other people, matter itself? At a certain point we find that the two are contiguous, that the matter that is ours is also outside. It is not broken up. We discover, in the process, that there are two distinct ways of handling matter. We all have that experience but perhaps letting it flow through words and sharing it with others, we may render it more concrete.

Habitually we handle matter from the "outside". We see it laid out in space. We see its bits and pieces, we see its objects, we run into its hard, opaque, impenetrable surfaces. We know there are days when we move around the room and we feel awkward and everything jars and jostles—chairs, tables, people... just everything! And there are days when things flow. But when we try to put bits of matter together in a given space what do we do? We establish spatial rapports between these bits and pieces—rapports which are extraneous to one other—and we arrange a space beautifully, with each object in its place.

Our collective habit of dealing with matter in this way—what we might call the "organizational" way—is so deeply ingrained in us, as mental beings, that we deal with our own personality in the same way. This has been the foremost problem of our modern civilization in psychological and sociological terms! We see our external personality in bits and pieces. We look at ourselves from "without". Since some time, however, there has been a change of perspective and we are more attuned to looking at ourselves differently.

We tend to forget that though our external personality is so completely rooted in matter, it is still supported by an inner reality which is non-material, which is a content of consciousness. Therefore this way of handling our personality runs into such serious trouble that we cannot even list the problems that it gives rise to. When we try to organise these bits of ourselves, to integrate them—it just doesn't work. For we are a "whole" in spite of our dualities, our multiplicities. We are a "whole" by virtue of that which upholds us from within. If there is a pervasive sense of helplessness that we suffer from today—whether as individuals or with regard to social units, big or small,—it is a result of this way of handling personality: "organisationally" as matter seen from the "outside".

But we also come across another way, a second way of handling matter—from "within". It is true that the normal formation of personality is—to use the ancient word from the Upanishads— *bahirmukh* . It is outward oriented. It looks out as a fact of habit and formation.. The senses and the very body relate outward. But there is an inner consciousness that is in-gathered and we have experience of it in many ways—through music, love of beauty, of harmony, other states of consciousness, also through deep emotion. There are many ways of experiencing the inner reality.

The entire formation of the external personality, which is outward directed, feels the attraction of the inner consciousness and can "turn itself around" to go within. A long preparation is needed but this is a very tangible, concrete experience. The various parts of personality are gathered within and fuse, in slow stages, with the inner consciousness—not

losing their essential characteristics, but retaining and heightening and enlarging their functioning. The disparate elements are kind of absorbed in that inner consciousness—we may call it a stream or a body or a flow of consciousness for it can change its forms also. And a total reversal of the poise of personality takes place: it becomes *antarmukh* , turned and gathered within.

Then, one discovers that there is an "inner" core of matter, the "consciousness content" of matter. It is matter in its inner and true reality. One's action in the material world then begins to proceed in another manner and to arrive at a different result. The touch becomes sure, action inter-penetrative, and the result in the objective field is more effective. Matter becomes pliable, supple. It has density but a soft density—not hard, resistant surfaces against which we knock. We find that there is a within to matter as there is a without to matter. Maybe one day we'll discover the totality of matter. But that there is a within to matter and one can live and act from that poise—in the midst of the world—this is an experience of such ease and simplicity and a smoothness of flow And, at the same time, at the risk of repeating oneself, of such effectivity as one doesn't otherwise know.

This manner of being has its own norms, its own fluctuations—it happens, it doesn't happen —but the fact remains that one can, one might say, almost slide into matter and live the perfectly normal life that one has ever lived and find that the personality, in its entirety is undergoing a change. It is almost as though, by the fact of looking at matter from within and handling it so, something of the inner consciousness has permeated the pores or layers of matter. For it seems to have layers. There is a term that comes repeatedly—the contiguity of matter. Seen from "within", matter is one. The distinctness of form, of object, its identity is not lost— but there is a basis of contiguity. And yet there is form. There is distinction, there is difference. There is still what one may call a rapport in space. But there is no sense of separation, no hard surfaces. How to express this? It is like "another" way of being in matter.... It is true that it doesn't always last. It fluctuates. One move away from it. One go back to it. Perhaps one needs to be stabilised in it. But slowly one begins to sense that wholeness of being and of life in matter is a possibility.

So if we are looking for a concrete unity of life and people, a diversified unity which alone can be the basis of multiplicity, then this work has to be attempted. One also has a feeling that this work is being done by many people, each in his own way. But sharing of it is a help —because like there is a contagion of a spiritual vibration, a contagion of mental awareness and activity, there is too a contagion of working in matter. And, in a sense, unity there is more stable because one has a feeling that matter has no ego. Matter has no ego. That is the way it comes.

A few words of Sri Aurobindo come to one forcefully. He says that the "joys of matter"—not in the sense of material sensory pleasures—are "more intense than the joys of the mind". As we enter this new millennium, this is something that we, who have been mental beings and still are in large parts of our personality, will perhaps find it useful to remember. Matter, not as we have known it, but a new kind of matter that makes the Spirit palpable by its touch— giving it body and substance and a sure "footing".

The probabilistic orientation of personality

S.Narayanan and N. Annalakshmi

Personality as the distinctive pattern of behaviour including temperament, emotion, and thought that characterize an individual's adaptations to his or her life has always attracted the attention of researchers in behavioral and social sciences (Brody, 1988; Hall and Lindzey, 1970). As a relatively long enduring pattern of behaviour and consciousness personality seems to influence the cognition, conation and affection in an individual. It is the embodiment of the physique, the mind, the vital, the level of individual consciousness and the spiritual consciousness one has imbibed into one's style of life (Dalal, 1987; 1992; 2000).

The elegance of the pattern of personality of an individual is contingent upon the pieces of the mosaic of individual traits that were selected and the organization that has gone into making the pattern. Traits remain the building blocks of personality and the edifice we see is the result of the architecture that has gone into its construction. The choice of the blocks and the organization forced on them succinctly constitute the type of personality manifest in an individual. G.W. Allport (1937; 1961) has elucidated the ordinal and cardinal traits that make up the personality. Later psychologists like Guilford (1959), H.J. Eysenck (1953; 1985) and R.B. Cattell (1946; 1957; 1966; 1990) have elaborated on the factors constituting personality types. Kelly (1955) has elaborated the significance of the constructs adopted by an individual in cognizing his environment which provide the pivot around which the personality of an individual revolves. Alfred Adler's original German term Gemeinshaftsgefuhl emphasizes social interest—a striving for perfection in reaching the ideal self in terms of caring and sharing for and with other human beings (Adler, 1929). The Adlerian concept of social interest is akin to the concept of transcendence of Carl G. Jung(1934) and may be considered a fiat of the concept of self-actualization. Carl Rogers (1980) has built his concept of personality around self-concepts. Abraham Maslow (1968; 1970) has shown the role played by security enjoyed by the self in constituting the motivational pyramid of personality. Thus orientation of personality circles around the seminal concepts adopted in the constructs used by the individual in his relationship with the psycho-socio environment. Learning theorists have shown that once a pattern is set in, it is likely that it will be further reinforced through learning principles. This gives rise to the relatively long enduring nature of personality of individuals and thus continues the teleonomy of self.

Classical psychologists have also attempted to identify the nature of personalities in terms of their typical orientations which revolve around the stages of development. (Erick Erikson, 1963; 1968). Fromm (1947; 1959; 1962), furthering the thinking of Sigmund Freud (1925; 1966), has discovered the existence of personality orientation in terms of mode of reacting to the environment (Stagner and Karwoski, 1952). Carl G. Jung (1923) has identified personality orientation in terms of thinking-intuition and outgoing-inner directedness. The Jungian classification of personality orientation still finds its use in the applied field (Myers-Briggs, 1962). The attempt to identify the orientation of individuals in terms of Internal and External Locus of Control has also gained wide acceptance among psychologists (Rotter, 1966; Lefcourt, 1982). Personality orientations are also interpretable in terms of operant learning (Skinner, 1938; 1953). That there is a selective central inhibitory mechanism which might operate to filter sensory impulses has been emphasized by such theorists as Tolman (1948), Lewin (1936) and Hebb (1952). And, as may be seen

below, information processing by the organism might explain the teleonomy of personality in terms of self.

The teleonomy of the self

The developing human organism tries to establish autonomy from genetically determined instructions by evolving the system of self. The function of the self is to mediate between genetic instructions or instinctual drives and cultural instructions or norms and rules. To achieve this function the organism needs to develop another system of consciousness. Consciousness compasses three functional subsystems: attention, awareness and memory. The content of consciousness is the sum of all the information that enters it, and its interpretation by awareness.

At a certain point in development the organism learns to direct attention, thinking, feeling, willing and remembrance. At that point of time the self evolves within awareness. The self becomes an epiphenomenon of conscious processes as a result of consciousness becoming aware of itself. Eventually the scope of self extends to cover the entirety of consciousness, and the self ultimately transforms itself into the symbol that stands for the full range of individual conscious processes.

In order to survive, the self established in consciousness directs attention, awareness and memory towards those states which are congruent with itself and eliminates all those that are incongruent or thwarting. When harmony is achieved by the self within itself there is the condition of optimal experience or flow (Csikszenthmihalyi and Csikszenthmihalyi, 1993). Such an experience connotes to the subjective conditions of pleasure, happiness, satisfaction, and enjoyment.

The construct of the probabilistic orientation

An attempt is found in ancient literature to describe personality by invoking an indigenous construct, the Probabilistic Orientation. A poet by the name of Kanian Poonkundranar, who lived in Tamil Nadu during 4000 BC, has rendered an account of this description in his poem and the poem is found included in an anthology of four hundred poems in Tamil titled *Purananooru* (Four Hundred Poems on Non-Subjective Aspects of Life).

The construct used to differentiate people in their personality is labelled, for want of a better term, the probabilistic orientation. The term connotes a set of beliefs and convictions regarding the probable nature of events. The probability characteristics of events owe their origin to an ever evolving Nature which is set in evolution. The reality one can experience is of a transient fleet of events unfolding themselves as programmed by the evolutionary nature of Nature. Evolution determines the probability distribution of events through stochastic principles.

An individual has neither absolute freedom nor is bound by an holistic bondage. A dynamic friction is exerted by forces within and forces without in every action of men. Individual efforts can motivate one's action. But, the limitation of its effect is determined by the probability of success stemming from the stochastic process governing the forces involved in the action.

Poetic expression of the construct

Given the perspective just above described, an individual is bound to develop in himself a set of behavioural consequences which shapes the perspectives that ultimately lead to the typical orientation of his personality. The poem attempts to present this orientation as follows:

All places are my abodes dear,

And every one is my kith and kin;

Good and bad are caused by none,

Sickness and convalescence are just but natural;

Nothing is new in death,

Rejoice life as sweet we do not,

Nor despise it as sour;

Since,

Convinced are we through the serene vision of the seers,

That,

Along with lightening pour down cold drops;

The Mighty river rolls down the stone

Into pebbles with constant noise, lo!

The Boat sails in the river.

Likewise precious life has it's course

In the course of Nature.

Hence, We do not wonder at the great

Nor look down upon the small.

The poem purports to place on record the water mark of the life style of the saints and seers of ancient Tamil Nadu. Tamil Nadu is one of the sites of ancient civilization in India. It was part of a vast continent, called Lemuria where the Dravidian Civilization flourished. The major part of Lemuria has submerged into the Pacific ocean due to a great flood that occurred several centuries ago. The saints and savants of Tamil Nadu thus represent a sample of highly evolved people who lived in a highly civilized society. *Purananooru* belongs to the collection of literature evolved during the Sangam Age. Sangam stands for Society or Association and the Associations of Tamil Poets mark the age of Sangam. The poem provides a description of the personality orientation of the perspective personalities who represent a population of highly evolved individuals in an ancient civilization of the world.

Simple paraphrasing of the poem brings out the profound wisdom contained in it. The poem states that we are all convinced through the serene vision of the seers and saints, that in the process of evolution the big bang occurred and the fire globe started to cool off, ultimately giving rise to the geography of seasons and climate. The rain started pouring down and the rocks were turned into pieces and pebbles giving way to the courses of rivers. The power of the water current of the river constantly changes responding to the geographical state set in by the evolution at a particular point of time. The freedom and bondage available to the sailor at one point of time is dynamically determined by internal and external forces–internal contingent on physical and subjective resources of the sailor and external based on the velocity of the wind, the power of the water currents, etc. Such a balancing of forces within and without occurs constantly due to the ongoing process of evolution and such frictions are never inimical to anyone in particular at any point of time.

The poem further adds that since the truth of the above is adopted in our basic perspective as a basic stance of our thinking, willing and feeling, we could derive the following inferences. And, these inferences reinforce our perspective, installing in us the probabilistic orientation.

We believe that all places are our dear abodes and are as good as our native place. We regard every one as our kith and kin.

We are convinced that no one can do good or inflict harm to us since every event is but a derivation from a random phenomenon conceived in the process of evolution.

We do believe that natural processes mediate the sources of sickness and the capacity for convalescence from the sickness. These processes are just but natural phenomena and are not inimical to any one in particular.

We do not consider death as anything strange or new. There is nothing new in death which is again a natural event.

Since we are given to the above convictions, we do not rejoice life as sweet nor despise life as sour due to stress and strain.

We do not wonder at any one for achieving greatness nor would we look down upon the small who are weak and meek. Since each one rises to his station due to natural processes over which no one has any simple and direct control or mastery.

The phenomenological orientation

The oriental thinking on personality outlined above has been developed on an ideographic phenomenological premise. This approach appreciates the phenomena of personality as based on rigorous appreciation of experiential facts teased out by the application of logic and dissection by intuition. The module of personality developed seems to have effectively put forth a valid conception of personality orientation.

The probabilistic orientation refers to the typical orientation of personality of an individual. Under this orientation the individual has an unique orientation of his consciousness. The consciousness of the individual is focused on an idiosyncratic perspective. This perspective has its deep roots in an extended awareness. Such an awareness transcends ordinary sensory experience. Under the probabilistic orientation an individual has a keen awareness about the nature of Nature. He is aware that Nature is given to constant evolution. He

understands that Nature acts as a dynamic system at a given point of time. Any event in Nature at a particular point of time is a random occurrence subject to its stochastic framework. Hence every outcome in Nature is unbiased to any individual.

The evolution of Nature adheres to a stochastic process. The occurrence of events and their outcomes assume different probability distributions as a function of time. Each set of probability distribution is derived from the probability distribution of its previous set of events. Hence, a system contingent upon the existence of an earlier system from which it evolved prevails at every point of time. The nature of the probability governing various networks of events defining and governing such a system also adhere to the probabilistic nature of the distribution it has derived from its predecessor. An individual can not induce any change all of a sudden in a system, since it has already been set within definite probability distributions. But, it is still possible to introduce a subtle change in the course of the system so that when the change thus introduced has gained momentum, the subsequent probability distribution characteristic of the system also may change.

This is exemplified by the metaphor of "sailing through". When a person sails in a boat the freedom available to the man sailing the boat is completely under the control of the ecosystem governing the currents of the river. Yet, a sailor may actuate the boat to go against cross currents by his efforts. The sailor is both under the limitations placed on him by the ecosystem and at the same time he can sail through, oaring with all his might. Thus the bondage and freedom hangs on the hinges of probabilities. There is a dynamic interrelationship between his limitations and assets. This interpretation of the scope and limitation of a sailor has been lucidly discussed by Acharya Vinoba Bhave in his discourse on the *Bhagavad Gita* .

The summum bonum of the probabilistic orientation is the appreciation of the fact that the dynamic system of the universe is constantly unfolding itself adhering to stochastic principles and consequently, the individual events and contingencies of events remain unbiased and are not prejudiced in favour of or against any individual at any point of time. There is unbiasedness of individual events and contingencies. An individual who is given to the probabilistic orientation looks at all outcomes with equanimity. He does not resist or instantly accept anything based on any compulsion or obsession due to his complexes resulting from what he already believes and trusts. He does not attach any value-judgments regarding the outcome. The probabilistic orientation may be regarded as the sine qua non in the personality orientation of highly evolved individuals.

Often belief in fate is confused with probabilistic orientation. It should be noted at the outset that a probabilistic orientation does not reflect fatalistic belief. The latter suggests that one's life is sealed by fate and has no scope for personal freedom while the former perceives the constraints placed on an individual as not cast in a sealed rigid frame, but spinning in a dynamic and constantly evolving framework. Perhaps, it is the stochastic principles that are duly taken into account in perceiving the constraints, that distinguishes probabilistic orientation from fatalistic orientation. A single intervention at one point of time might not be adequate enough to bring any visibly impressive effect in the system; but, nonetheless, the system is responding to every attack on it in subtle terms. Every attempt will initiate a stochastic process and tilt the system and thereby ultimately lead to perceptible change in the system itself in the long run.

Probabilistic orientation can also be distinguished from Internal/External orientation (Lefcourt, 1983). While internal and external locus of control locates one's control inside and outside the person involved, the probabilistic orientation locates the locus of control

on the basis of the dynamic balance resulting from both the inner and outer forces at a given point of time. Neither the internal nor the external locus can be valid in deciding the effectiveness of functioning. Sometimes the internal forces may be powerful enough to overcome the external forces standing barrier for a course of action, and vice versa. The probabilities attached to the stakes involved ultimately decide the success or otherwise of a course of action. The proponents of internal and external locus of control argue that the man is either free or bound in a bondage. The advocates of the probabilistic orientation contend that man is neither free nor bound; he is free to a certain degree and bound to environmental forces to a certain degree and the exact degree of freedom and bondage depends upon the system characteristics evolved through a dynamic perpetually stochastic process. Probabilistic orientation and Internal and External Locus of control have an interesting and complex relationship as found among adolescent boys and girls (Narayanan and Venkatapathy, 1984).

Factors constituting the probabilistic orientation

Narayanan (1977) finding the probabilistic orientation to be a seminal construct orienting personality of individuals in the Indian culture has attempted to empirically verify the existence of the orientation among individuals and to validate the hypotheses that could be derived with regard to the probabilistic orientation among people. Narayanan and his coworkers have been endeavouring to map the features of probabilistic orientation by undertaking research for more than two decades in the past and a considerable literature has thus evolved on the probabilistic orientation.

– Appreciating probabilistic orientation as one of the dominant features of Indian Culture, Narayanan developed a questionnaire purporting to obtain a measure of probabilistic orientation. The questionnaire contains thirty items in the form of general statements which can be endorsed or rejected by the respondent answering the questionnaire as applicable to him or not. A factor analysis of the responses of a large group of elders to the Probabilistic Orientation Questionnaire has yielded seven factors to constitute probabilistic orientation (Narayanan, 1977;1993).

Factor-I is labelled Unbounded Expectancy. This factor stresses that goodness or meanness of thought by itself cannot influence the course of action: predictions are not influenced by stature of a person; status is not a permanent state; stature of a judge need not assure soundness of his judgment; failure and success are not consistent in time; and nature does not have any bias.

Factor-II is recognised as Sensing Unlimited Possibilities. This factor emphasizes that it is not possible to enumerate all the possibilities and predict. Experience of the past like success or failure, or even the behavior pattern reviewed from research shall not lead to certainty in prediction and solutions may emerge spontaneously themselves.

Factor-III is found to refer Insight into Bias. This emphasizes chance, spontaneity and unbiasedness of nature.

Factor-IV is distinguished as pertaining to “Healthy Skepticism” and this suggests that an attitude for scientific invention tempered with skepticism is a healthy attitude.

Factor-V is regarded as Unconditional Acceptance which stresses acceptance of happenings without prejudice and not labelling anything as good or bad.

Factor-VI is Appreciation of Chance and this highlights the role of chance and an appreciation of the fact that chance works more than human effort but chances of achievement can be improved by better efforts.

Factor-VII is identified as Awareness of Predictability which emphasizes the awareness of the possibility of prediction even in cases where it is difficult to make any.

The pattern of factors identified seems to be connoting a simple parsimonious and elegant structure of the probabilistic orientation. Succinctly, when an individual does not himself restrict his range of expectancy, is given to sensing unlimited possibilities available to him in the world, has insight into his sources of biases and prejudices, shows a tendency for unconditional acceptance of events and happenings, can appreciate chances and serendipity, and is aware of the scope for predictability of events within limits, then he is given to a probabilistic orientation.

Probabilistic orientation being an elegant way of making adjustment might be expected to contribute to fostering mental health positively and also by avoiding negative symptoms. The probabilistic orientation is also found to influence attitude and values in applied situations as well.

Probabilistic orientation and mental health

Mental health may be conceived as the quality of adjustment an individual consistently exercises and maintains on the basis of plans of his life space—that is self, others, environment and life—in order to achieve certain outcomes. Acceptance of oneself, self-insight, self-identity, self-responsibility and confidence and trust in one's self connote the self dimension of mental health. Acceptance of others, warm and genuine relating to others, absence of manipulation of others, ability to give and receive, and the ability to experience affection and love constitute another dimension of mental health as relating to others. Having an objective perception of reality, personal freedom, healthy nonconformity, openness to all experience and autonomous functioning refer to yet another dimension of mental health relating to environment. Spontaneous, free and natural living, living in the here and now, living for meaning with refined values, creativity & revelation of one's potential and life-satisfaction constitutes the last dimension of mental health.

Priya (1997) studied the mental health of a large sample of women college students using the Probabilistic Orientation Questionnaire and the Mental Health Questionnaire (Augustine, 1978) and related it to probabilistic orientation. The findings of her study reveal that subjects with a high degree of probabilistic orientation have a greater degree of mental health.

Security and probabilistic orientation

Abraham Maslow, the celebrated humanistic psychologist attempted to underpin mental health and self-actualization in terms of satisfaction of needs and found that the need for security connotes the need to have mastery over one's environment. The security/insecurity of an individual is a potent dimension of the self.

Probabilistic orientation is found to be positively related to security (Maslow, 1962) as revealed in a study involving a moderately large sample of adult drivers in a transport corporation (Narayanan & Govindarasu, 1986b).

Probabilistic orientation and death anxiety

Death anxiety (Templer, 1970) connotes to the fear of one's own death in a physically healthy individual. It implies the effective component of experienced anxiety and signifies intense feeling of anxiety. Orientation to life and death may shape the content and quality of daily conduct. A moderately large study involving adults and elders shows that probabilistic orientation and death anxiety are related to one another in the case of elders but not in the case of adults (Narayanan, 1983). It is plausible that death anxiety assumes significance in reality only when someone is advanced in age and this plausibility might explain the differential findings obtained in the case of adults and elders.

Probabilistic orientation and alienation

In contemporary literature, alienation is used to connote a wide range of types of disharmony and dissatisfaction deriving from or involving a feeling of alienation of some sort (Schacht, 1971). Alienation seems to be having five facets, viz. powerlessness, self-estrangement, normlessness, isolation (or cultural estrangement) and meaninglessness (Seeman, 1959). A good measure of alienation traits has been evolved by culling out appropriate items from the Minnesota Muti-Phasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) (Hathaway and Mikinley, 1967) by an educational sociologist (Vendal, 1982). Trait alienation is reported to be negatively correlated with probabilistic orientation in the case of sport coaches (Govindarasu, 1988). The state of alienation is also reported to be negatively correlated with probabilistic orientation in the case of sport coaches (Govindarasu, 1988).

Probabilistic orientation and social desirability

Since the pioneering investigations by Edwards (1957) social desirability has assumed significance as an important social psychological variable. Social desirability is conceptualized as a facade effect or the unawareness of the individual's tendency to “put up a good front”. This tendency may reveal lack of insight into the individual's own characteristics, self-description or an unwillingness to face up to his or her limitations (Ananstasi, 1982). The strength of social desirability is closely associated with the individual's more general need for self-protection, avoidance of criticism, social conformity and social approval (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964). Social desirability is not found to be negatively correlated with probabilistic orientation among sport coaches (Govindarasu, 1988).

Probabilistic orientation and attitudes

As a learned relatively long enduring predisposition to respond in consistently favourable or unfavourable ways to certain people, groups, ideas and situations, attitudes seem to be connected with probabilistic orientation. Interesting instances of the link between the two are reported in literature.

Probabilistic orientation is significantly correlated with the business attitude of innovation only and not with business attitudes of personal control, achievement, self-confidence, opportunities among entrepreneurs (Stimpson, 1990; Balakrishnan, 1985). Probabilistic orientation is significantly correlated with the Protestant ethic (Mirels and Garrett, 1971; Balakrishnan, 1985).

High and low probabilistically oriented unemployed differ from one another in the way they attribute meanings to the concepts of self-employment, availability of money, primary group concern, social support, and expectation-achievement discrepancy. The highly probabilistically oriented unemployed perceives all these concepts in a more positive manner attributing greater significance compared to the less probabilistically oriented unemployed. Attitude to employment and probabilistic orientation interact significantly with regard to attributing meanings to the concept expectation-achievement congruence. The unemployed having low attitude to employment and high probabilistic orientation perceives the concept expectation-achievement congruence most positively compared to the group having high attitude to employment and low probabilistic orientation (Osgood, 1957; Gopukumar, 1998).

Another study on a sample of 200 teachers equally divided into both the sexes reveals that perceived support for innovation (Siegel & Kolmmerer, 1976) has no significant effect on probabilistic orientation (Jayaraj, 1984). The findings further show that female subjects are more probabilistically oriented than male subjects.

Probabilistic orientation and values

Highly probabilistically oriented entrepreneurs and less probabilistically oriented entrepreneurs do not differ in their values. Both high and low criterion groups on probabilistic orientation hold the same levels of theoretical, economic, aesthetic, social, political, and religious values (Allport et al., 1931; Sellakumar, 1999).

A study of transport drivers (Narayanan, 1986) reveals that probabilistic orientation is significantly related to certain personal values (Gorden, 1967). Probabilistic orientation is found to be significantly and positively related to Variety and Practical Mindedness and negatively to Orderliness and Decisiveness.

Probabilistic orientation and climate perception

Perception, the process of interpreting, organising, and often elaborating on sensation seem to be influenced by probabilistic orientation. Studies on organizational climate have brought interesting results in this regard.

As organizational psychologists have often shown, different patterns of management exist and are associated with different behaviour outcomes in the organizations studied (Likert, 1961). It is plausible that if all the different management systems could be ordered along a continuum involving the kinds of controls and motivational forces used and the kinds of attitudinal responses evoked under such circumstances, it could be seen that all the many operating procedures and the performance characteristics of different management systems form an orderly pattern along this horizontal dimension.

A fairly large study on organizational climate reveals that perception of organizational climate seems to be related to having a probabilistic orientation.

Clerks in a textile mill having a high degree of probabilistic orientation, are more sensitive to perceived organizational climate dimensions of structure, responsibility, reward, risk, warmth, support, standard, conflict and identity when compared to individuals having a lesser degree of probabilistic orientation.

Another large study of supervisors in textile mills reveals that probabilistic orientation sensitizes one's perception of the social processes of communication, interaction and decision making but seems not to be sensitizing one's perception with regard to motivational and allied processes. In the study just cited probabilistic orientation is found to correlate with perception of communication process, interaction influence and decision making process, but not with leadership process, motivational process, goal setting or ordering, control process and performance of goals and training. Role conflict is correlated with communication process and interaction influence process. Probabilistic orientation could be predicted from scores of the subjects on Likert's Profile of Organizational Climate:

Probabilistic Orientation = 13.834

– + 0.348 – Interaction Influence Process

– + 0.174 – Communication Process

– + 0.225 – Decision Making Process

– + 0.006 – Leadership Process

– + 0.009 – Performance of Goal Setting Process

– + 0.008 – Motivational Process

– 0.424 – Goal Setting or Ordering

– 0.341 – Control Process (Indumathi, 1989).

Probabilistic orientation and role conflict

The conflict an individual undergoes when he is faced with demands incompatible with the role subjectively defined by him is called role conflict. A direct measure of role conflict exclusively adopted to a role in any organization may be obtained using the technique of Role Conflict Differential developed by Narayanan (1982). The measure purports to assess the oscillation or dilemma experienced by an individual to accept or reject a task assigned to him or her at any point of time in course of his or her job. The dilemma reflects the state of readiness or attitudinal set an individual has with regard to his role expectations and demands. When an individual is clear in his or her understanding of his or her role expectations and demands, he or she will experience least dilemma in accepting or rejecting the assignment or a task. It is easy for any individual to express his or her readiness to discharge a task assigned using a rating scale. When the tasks attributed to the role by a set of persons knowledgeable about the job are enumerated and listed and the individual expresses his or her readiness to discharge the individual tasks on a ten point rating scale, the Statistics Q provides a valid measure of such role conflict. Role Conflict Differential has been developed for bank officers and clerks (Devi, 1982), clerks and supervisors in textile organizations by Indumathi (1986), sports coaches by Govindarasu (1988) and sex role stereotype, role conflict, social support and satisfaction by Manoranjitham (1993).

Probabilistic orientation does not have significant effect on role conflict (Devi, 1982) as revealed in a study involving a large sample of bank employees, consisting of officers and

clerks. Another large study of textile supervisors also revealed that probabilistic orientation does not have a correlation with role conflict (Indumathi, 1989). However, probabilistic orientation is reported to have a significantly negative correlation with Role Conflict among sports coaches (Govindarasu, 1988).

Job burnout and probabilistic orientation

As charcoal is slowly but steadily burnt out turning into ashes, an individual who works beyond the limits of his psychological resources also succumbs to emotional and mental exhaustion in the long run. Burnout is experienced by individuals engaged in helping professions as a chronic prolonged form of stress. Burnout involves uncomfortable physical and emotional symptoms and has attracted the attention of researchers (Maslach, 1978; 1982; Maslach and Jackson 1981; 1984; 1986). Inability to handle continued stress on the job and the feeling of psychological exhaustion mark the experience of burnout (Cherrington, 1989). Burnout stands as a type of prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job (Maslach and Ozer, 1995). It is a resultant of the nature of human service work and a function of the organizational context in which professionals provide human service (Leiter, 1992). Burnout seems to be a factor that might help determine whether ongoing worldwide changes will tear asunder people and relationships or whether a higher order stability will emerge (Golembiewski, 1996).

Individual stress experience constituting burnout is embedded in a context of social relationships and this involves the person's conception of both self and others (Maslach and Ozer, 1995). Unrealistic expectations or ambitions of candidates for a job burnout combine with organizational pressures and create stress, fatigue, frustration and feelings of helplessness and guilt (Robbins, 1995). Detached concern and dehumanization in self-defence contribute to controlling burnout: blending compassion with emotional distance and responding to other people more as objects than as persons provide a control on experiencing burnout.

Govindarasu (1988) attempted a motivational analysis of burnout among sport coaches. He administered the Probabilistic Orientation Questionnaire and the Burnout Inventory which he developed. His findings reveal an interesting relationship between probabilistic orientation and burnout. Sports coaches who constitute the high scores having a score higher than the 90th percentile report a significantly greater level of job burnout than those who constitute the low scores having a score less than the 10th percentile on job burnout. When the whole range of scores of these coaches was taken into account and correlated with their scores on probabilistic orientation, the resulting correlation was significantly negative.

Brindha (1997) studied burnout among physicians who are engaged in private practice. She administered both the Probabilistic Orientation Questionnaire and Burnout Inventory to a large sample of subjects. The results of the study reveal that physicians with a high degree of probabilistic orientation distinguish themselves from physicians with a low degree of probabilistic orientation. The former were having less burnout than the latter. Physicians who are less probabilistically oriented were given to depleted energy reserves, acute anger, lack of creativity, cynical attitude, job dissatisfaction, sleep disturbances, pessimism, avoiding decisions, obsession with problems, escape activities, physical illness, chronic exhaustion and psychological fatigue.

Probabilistic orientation and sleep and fatigue

Sleep as a state of temporary loss of consciousness and fatigue as a temporary impairment of consciousness still remain an enigma. The relationship between creativity and sleep add to the complexity of the problem. Narayanan et.al. (1992) attempted to ascertain the relationship among probabilistic orientation, sleep, fatigue and creativity. Their large scale study used the Probabilistic Orientation Questionnaire, The Clinical Scales of Sleep (Domino et.al., 1984), The Fatigue Inventory (Narayanan, 1977), and the Remote Association Test (Narayanan & Paramesh, 1978). The findings of their study reveal that probabilistic orientation is not significantly associated with dimensions of sleep or behavioural fatigue, but is significantly associated with forming remote association as found in a correlational study involving a large sample representing the general population (Domino et al, 1984; Narayanan, 1975; Narayanan and Paramesh, 1976). Quality of sleep, sleep latency, depth of sleep, positive waking up, dream affect, physical surround, love of sleep, dream recall, length of sleep, sleep regularity and femininity are not correlated with probabilistic orientation. A negative correlation exists between probabilistic orientation and the ability to form Remote Association on Mednick and Mednick's (1964) RAT type of test.

Probabilistic orientation and vocational personality

High, moderate and low probabilistically oriented adolescent groups differ among themselves on their vocational personality traits (Holland, 1966, 1975; Balakrishnan, 1979; Narayanan and Govindarasu, 1986). The group scoring high on probabilistic orientation consistently and significantly surpasses its counterparts on realistic, artistic, scientific, enterprising and conventional traits. The trend of the findings with regard to acquiescence is the same.

Another study comparing potential entrepreneurs, entrepreneurs and managers of small scale industries with one another reports that potential entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs are more probabilistically oriented compared to the managers (Balakrishnan, 1985).

A large study of women entrepreneurs reveal that women entrepreneurs as a whole distinguish themselves from the general population and are having a significantly higher degree of probabilistic orientation (Devi, 1995).

Probabilistic orientation and other aspects of personality

Curiously probabilistic orientation seems to transcend the basic personality types of gunas identified in the ancient text of the Bhagavad Gita. Using the Q-sort technique Mathew (1988) developed a test to assess the personality of individuals in terms of tamas, rajas, and sattva. A study of a large sample of postgraduate adults show that there is no relationship between probabilistic orientation and the gunas. The high and low groups on tamas, rajas and sattva do not distinguish themselves on probabilistic orientation.

Interesting findings have been adduced regarding the personality aspects of the probabilistic orientation. A study involving one hundred Rorshach Protocols (Rorschach, 1921) of male adults reveals that individuals having a high probabilistic orientation have high ego or thinking operation, emotional control, intelligence, interest, control impairment, aggressive acts, sexual interest, perception of reality and the ability to

perceive the commonplace. The findings of the study also show that individuals having a low probabilistic orientation are higher in denial, detachment from the real and fantasy (Ganesan, 1986).

Another investigation involving one hundred TAT protocols of adults (Murray, 1943; Choudry, 1967, 1979; Natarajan, 1983) reveals that highly probabilistically oriented individuals are having high achievement, aggression and passivity when compared to the low probabilistically oriented individuals. On the other hand low probabilistically oriented individuals have high abasement, dominance, intragression, nurturance, sex and succorance compared to high probabilistically oriented individuals.

A large study of adolescents including both boys and girls reveals that a probabilistic orientation is significantly and positively related with intelligence, creativity, extroversion and neuroticism among girls. The relationship is not sustained in the case of boys (Natarajan, 1983).

A study of probabilistic orientation using a sample of male graduates using the MMPI reveals that probabilistic orientation is significantly and positively related to hypochondriasis and psychopathic deviation and significantly and negatively related to masculinity/femininity, schizophrenia and social introversion (Narayanan, 1985b).

An investigation involving one hundred male transport drivers reveals that accident free drivers, low accident drivers and high accident drivers do not differ among themselves with regard to their probabilistic orientation (Govindarasu, 1984).

Egocentric and probabilistic perspectives

The epitome of maturity could be identified with undistorted acceptance of events and reality as the natural outcome of an unbiased Nature which is never inimical to anyone at any point of time. The uninitiated gets frustrated at every turn of events that deviates from his expectation, blames everything around and enters into a labyrinth of defensive pursuits contracting agony and pain. The perspective personality–the mature personality that is given to viewing everything with multifarious perspectives–appreciates reality as a phenomenon of Nature, the Mother, and accepts it with a spirit of spectatorship. This situation could not be better described than by reading the poem of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore. In his poem "The Paper Boat" the spirit of the probabilistic orientation perspective is cast in its indelible foot print:

I floated a paper boat on the stream

It was a wet day of July:

I was alone and happy ever over my play.

I floated my paper boat on the stream.

Suddenly the storm-clouds thickened, the wind

Came in gusts, the rain poured in torrents:

Rills of muddy water rushed and swelled the stream and sank

— my boat.

Bitterly I thought that the storm had come on

Purpose to spoil my happiness; all its anger was against me.

All this long cloudy day of July I have been musing

Over those games in life in which I was the loser.

Just now I am blaming my fate for the many tricks it

Has played on me,

When suddenly I remembered

The paper boat that sank in the stream.

The poem succinctly suggests that an adult reacting to natural events by cursing them as meant to have purposely occurred to spoil his peace and joy could be best matched with the childish act of cursing rain for having come purposely to spoil its delight due to an egocentric stance in perspective. A mature adult should refrain from cherishing his own world of phantasy and be keenly aware that every event happens as it should in the scheme of Nature.

Probabilistic orientation

The tone and tenor of one's quality of being are construed through one's own personality. A mature personality stands for an ever-learning person who constantly integrates his experiences within and moves forward. An immature personality signifies getting stuck up with a particular stage or phase in the course of development resulting in stagnation in growth at one point of time. The modern learning society necessitates inculcating those behaviour patterns that contribute to having multivariate perspectives and achieving a balance among them.

What constitutes the perspective personality? Which set of cardinal traits would contribute to serene perception and learning, keen observation and thinking, appropriate motivation and control over action and maturity and development? What is the tap root of the perspective personality which is given to constant awareness and eternal vigilance?

We believe the question raised above has immense significance for life and work of men and women that decide their place of worth in this world. Perhaps the probabilistic orientation might offer a clue to the answer for which we are searching and seeking. But, as we all are fully aware, this question does not have a single answer. Truth being a pathless land (J. Krishnamurti) many a path might exist and lead us towards realising the truth. Today, we, following the ancient Tamil scholars, have traced a plausible path and the journey we have hitherto undertaken, we assure you, has been quite satisfying. We have no pretence that we have answered the question completely and successfully. The more we probe on, the more we become conscious of the gaps and distortions in our thinking which give rise to more and more disappointment and frustration. Yet we feel we have been filling in the time not without any reward. I invite every one of you to join us to dig deep to discover the perspective personality that might enlighten the individual in his personality

and elevate the society at large, and perhaps, the elusive enigma we are confronted with might be solved to some satisfaction at a distant future.

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Models of consciousness and its transformation

V. George Mathew

The Western perspective starts from the external material reality while the Oriental approach regards consciousness as the base and material reality as an experience in consciousness. According to the Western point of view consciousness is the product of matter and consciousness exists in matter. From the perspective of Eastern spirituality, matter exists in consciousness and matter is the product of consciousness. Consciousness is primary; time, space and matter originate and exist in consciousness.

There is an absolute view in the East which says that only consciousness is real. Consciousness is consciousness and it cannot have a model and it cannot be transformed. According to this view, this is a bogus paper. However, there is a relative view which conceives different gradations of reality. There is an apparent transformation of consciousness. Sri Aurobindo belongs to this category.

Reality is a continuum extending from absolute pure consciousness (beyond time and space) to the gross physical plane. This distance can be divided into several planes, like physical, astral, causal, etc. Ordinarily a man is fully aware only of his gross physical body, but his personality extends to all planes. The notion of mind derives from our subtle awareness of those aspects of personality which are in the subtler planes. Here the term awareness is used in a relative sense as awareness of something; consciousness is awareness of awareness or pure awareness.

Mind can be conceived as a band of vibrations (in consciousness). Ordinarily, this has a main (average) vibration and a number of smaller constituent vibrations. This can be understood in analogy with the speaking voice of a person which has an average frequency band with a number of sub-frequencies giving it a uniqueness.

Qualities of mind

Ancient Indian thought, particularly Sankhya Yoga, speaks of three qualities (gunas) in all nature: Inertia (Thamas), Activation (Rajas) and Stability (Sathwa). An individual's mind also can be described and differentiated from minds of other people in terms of the extent to which it has these three components. No doubt, there are contrasted brain processes going parallel with the contrasted behavioral inhibition (resulting from fear) in Inertia and behavioral excitation (resulting from compensatory aggressiveness) in Activation. Stability (freedom from both fear as well as need for compensatory aggression) possibly involves brain transcendence through quiescence. Fear is responsible for dissociation, rigidity,

defensive ego and compensatory desires. Freedom from fear leads to flexibility, spontaneity and unitiveness which is the same as self-control or will. In terms of the analogy of vibrations, "I" (Thamas) may be regarded as a band of consciousness constituted by a few independent weak vibrations of high frequency, "A" (Rajas) one strong predominant medium frequency vibration and "S" (Sathwa) several well integrated weak low frequency vibrations. S involves greater sensitivity (similar to Weber-Fechner law which postulates greater differential sensitivity at lower levels of sensation), awareness, flexibility and control). SS (Gunatheetha state) is the absence of any particular vibration at all. An SS individual, can at will create any vibration in his mind and usually, when he functions in the relative plane, creates a network of low frequency vibrations.

S generally involves maximum capacity with minimum of desire, dependence or involvement (in the matter of sex or any other activity or work). I involves minimum capacity with wishful thinking. A is medium capacity with maximum desire, egoistic effort or indulgence.

According to the Sankhya concept, the sum of the three qualities is always a constant; differences are in terms of the relative strengths of the three components. The IAS Rating Scale (Mathew, 1995) measures the relative predominance of these three characteristics in an individual.

1. I: Inertia Root fear (death or survival anxiety, existential insecurity) at this level or type of personality is accompanied by defensive non-awareness or inhibition. Inertia is introverted instability or proneness to develop introverted type of maladjustment under stress.

This is characterized by lethargy, laziness, fear, inhibition, anxiety, shallowness of emotions, low initiative, low self-confidence, low self-respect, etc. People having a large degree of I lack energy; they are slow, late, not venturing, shy, withdrawn, weak-willed, suggestible, submissive, masochistic, intropunitive, and so on. They are unable to refuse, assert or argue individually; but are collectivistic and show hysteric collective aggression. They show blind conformity and inability to mix with strangers. They do not have strong emotional ties. The strong emotion they show is fear. They believe in fate and luck (external locus of control) and are superstitious. They have least awareness and show poor moral control and they have simple sensuous values only.

Mentality characterized by high I is most susceptible to dissociation, as the vibrations are not well integrated by the unitive overall awareness process. Ordinarily, each constituent vibration is modified by the general vibrational quality of the mind and each new experience modifies the total vibrational quality a little bit. The person with high I has a loosely structured mind and it may have more than one relatively independent component. He has least control of his own mind and therefore may function like different persons (multiple personality) in different situations with different patterns of memory and action tendencies. He is also capable of having circumscribed amnesia for events.

2. A: Activation This is characterized by restless overactivity, uncontrolled energy, high drive, and inability to remain alone or silent. Activation is extraverted instability or proneness to develop extraverted types of maladjustment under stress.

Persons having high A are compulsive mixers, impatient, hasty, risk taking, rash, adventurous, analytical, efficient in planning practical things for the future, competitive, go-getting, assertive, aggressive, maniacal, proud, egoistic, rebellious, dominant, individualistic, greedy, possessive, dogmatic, etc. They show considerable sportsman spirit. They recognize, admire and encourage excellence in others, and allow others to keep the benefits and earnings of rightful effort. Their predominant emotions are anger and passionate, possessive love. They often show intense ambivalence. They have a high degree of practical intelligence and mechanical ability. They show organizational abilities and strong group identifications. They show inability to be restful. They value power, are autocratic, need rigid external moral control, have moral conflicts, and so on. They are ready to die to defend their honour or the group. They believe in self-effort and freedom of the will (internal locus of control). They are usually struggling all the time and have mental conflicts. They are sadistic or extra-punitive; they have good anticipation and awareness of material things. The two sub-types of A are the physically aggressive type (manifested often as interest in sports or war) and the hyperintellectual type (showing interest in science and technology). The A type person has more awareness (of physical, practical things) than the pure I type person but less than the pure S type. His mind has more integration than the I type. However, he also experiences some dissociative tendencies like often losing temper or getting into mood swings altering the mode of functioning; but he will have at least some awareness or memory of his experiences when he changes the mode of functioning.

3. S: Stability Stability is characterized by high self-awareness, sensitivity, freedom, flexibility and control. Stability is stress tolerance and freedom from fear and maladjustment tendencies. People having a high degree of S are present centred, egoless and non-conventional.

Persons having a high degree of S can be fast or slow, can work or rest as they choose or as the situation demands. They can be very sociable or be alone with equal ease. They can assert if they want to. They show meta-motivation and are capable of detached action. They are wise, mature and intuitive. They are creative, self-actualizing, holistic, balanced, even-tempered and dispassionate. They are capable of the deepest (at the same time detached) emotion and their predominant emotion is altruistic love or compassion. They are relaxed, peaceful, self-sufficient, democratic, fair, unselfish, tolerant, altruistic, transcending, and broad-minded. They have a natural moral sense based on mature love. Their autonomy operates within their awareness of inherent morality. They believe in the value of self-effort, which results from will which in turn is regarded as part of the predetermined chain of events in nature. They are impunitive.

The two sub-types are artistic and philosophical. The pure S type person has a very well integrated personality. He may be able to function differently in different situations, but with full control, awareness and memory. From the holistic point of view, cognitive (intellectual), affective (emotional) and volitional (will) capacities are mutually dependent and a Stable person has all these potentialities though for the actual skills (ex. mechanical ability or musical talent) he has to depend on specific ancestral experiences as well as practical training. Usually high S persons find more satisfaction in actualizing their artistic or philosophical potentialities than in exercising practical skills in dealing with material things.

Formation and dissolution of mind

The mind is formed as result of the formation of the three qualities I, A and S. Gradual dissolution of the three qualities through personality change results in pure consciousness. The Poorna Chakra (Fig.1) gives a model of the formation and dissolution of mind including both the materialization phase and the spiritualisation phase.

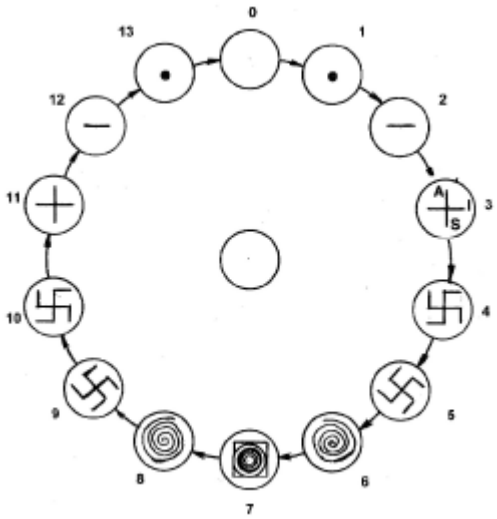

Figure 1. Poorna Chakra

Pure consciousness or the pure field (Picture 0) is the absolute state and it forms the basis of all relative experience. Therefore it is given at the centre also. The pure field is also the field of all possibilities. Accessing the pure field makes paranormal intervention possible. Individual consciousness (ego) or experience of the separate limited self (P. 1) is a superimposition on the pure field. The first quality to be formed is Inertia (I) (P. 2). The second quality to be formed is Activation (A) (P. 3). The position of a person on each of these two can be marked on the two axes. Stability (S) is the central point and this can be obtained by subtraction of the other two from a constant.

Experiencing a set of characteristics of personality and identification with it, attachment to it and involvement with it produce feelings of limitation which induce fear of death as well as compensatory desire for unlimitedness (P. 4). Desire leads to dynamic effort and action (P. 5). Material aggrandisements only increase the desire and consequent struggle, making the person all the more restless and confused (P. 6). Finally the person reaches the point of rebirth or conversion from materialism to spiritualism (P. 7). The Materialism–Spiritualism Scale (Mathew, 1980) can be used to measure a person's materialistic vs. spiritualistic orientation. The momentum of materialistic desire and action cannot be nullified all on a sudden, but its direction gets reversed, the person directing his activation into spiritual quest (P. 8). Spiritual pursuits gradually reduce the confusion and the person gets some insight into his personality and condition (P. 9). Further personal growth leads to cessation of compulsive spiritual activities, but spiritual desires remain (P. 10). With further evolution, even spiritual desires disappear and the person becomes aware of his root personality (P. 11). Then he gradually loses A or the aggressive component of his personality (P. 12). This is frequently referred to as the aesthetic state. At last, with more spiritual awareness, he loses the I component also, but retaining the feeling of a separate limited self (P. 13). Further purification of awareness leads him back to the pure field (P. 0).

The aesthetic state of consciousness is associated with nullification of Activation (aggressiveness, masculinity). This is the reason why the aesthetic disposition is often accompanied by femininity, sex-role interchangeability, androgyny, unisex temperament, and the like. This may also, under some situations create sex-role confusion or lead to maladjustment or homosexuality. Absence of rigidity or dogmatism and the experiential orientation also make people with a moderate degree of S vulnerable to addictions (like alcoholism) which suppress the brain and deautomatise providing temporary release from instinctuality. These drugs in the long run damage the system. People with a very high degree of S do not need these drugs for achieving transcendence.

Beauty is close to truth because the aesthetic state comes close to pure consciousness, the absolute basis for all relative experience. Art also becomes a channel for the release of surplus energies resulting from unfinished sequences in a person who has partially transcended instincts and instinctual sequences. The aesthetic experience is also associated with the experience of increase of integration resulting from ego dissolution. Perceptions which reduce fear and increase security (now or in ancestral experience) and therefore make for real or symbolic integration or change towards purity of consciousness produce aesthetic feelings.

The ego

Identification with the limited self activates the self-processes of self-importance, self-value and self-centredness. All mental processes (like sensation, perception and memory) operate through this exaggerated picture of self (often called the ego). The ego identifies with the body at the conscious level; but the identification extends to all the subtle levels. All notion of external value derives from the basic self-value. Reality is experienced only when this personal equation is nullified through the dissolution of the ego. Figure 2 illustrates the different planes.

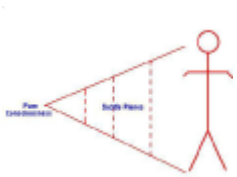

Figure 2. Self-processes across different planes

S is basically harmony across the different planes. I & A represent two types of disharmony. An individual is an apparent continuous projection across all the planes. Any disharmony increases rigidification. S increases flexibility of the point of operation across the planes. When a person is fully harmonized he can consciously and voluntarily shift the point of operation to any desired plane. Separate individuality increases as we proceed from pure consciousness towards the physical plane. Reharmonisation involves getting harmonized with the group mind, species consciousness, etc., step by step.

Group mind or collective consciousness

We appear to possess totally separate and independent bodies at the physical level. Our minds certainly overlap and as we move from the physical to the subtler layers of our being, our subtler bodies overlap more and more and when we reach the level of pure consciousness there is unity. Consciousness is always singular and there is only one consciousness and only one ultimate will. The overlapping nature of subtler parts of mind makes it justifiable to speak of a group mind. The group mind influences all individual minds, and changes in one mind in turn influences group mind also. A marked profound change in the mind of one member of a species can change an entire species and the course of its evolution. Therefore the sacrifice of Jesus or the bringing down of the supramental by Sri Aurobindo can be regarded as attempts to alter group mind by altering an individual mind.

Personal growth

Personal growth is the holistic and humanistic approach to personality development. Personal growth implies change from I or A to S. Contrary to some popular suppositions, the position taken here is that S is not the mid-point between I and A; it is transcendence of both. Also it is not necessary to go from I to A to go to S; it is possible to move from I to S directly. Many popular personality development programs like assertive training have exercises which seem to see A as the ideal position. Here I and A are seen as two deviations from the ideal state of S.

Contrary to popular supposition, I is not inferior to A. High I people have simple minds and they do not have as much egoistic rigidity as the high A people (especially of the hyperintellectual type of A). The dissociability of high I people itself is a kind of flexibility. I people often have more artistic talents (particularly capacity to imitate) than A people, though the artistic nature of I people is very plain and not as spiritual as those of high S people. High I people are generally happy and contented so long as they do not have any immediate threat as their fears are kept in check by superstitious beliefs and ceremonies, unlike high A people who are generally discontented and restless. The main block for I people (to go to S) is lack of motivation and absence of the concept. The main block of A people is wrong concept of S as an egoistic achievement, overmotivation and inability to let go. I is low integration because of dissociability and A is low integration because of conflicts.

A diagrammatic representation of personal growth involving change from I or A to S is given in Fig.3. S involves high sensitivity and therefore some vulnerability to develop I or A. SS is Super Stability (the Gunatheetha state) which is the same as pure consciousness. SS may be regarded as absolute sensitivity at the same time with absolute integration, stress tolerance, invulnerability and transcendence. The zero point on S indicates maximum instability which has to express itself as deviations in the direction of either I or A. SS is the end-point of personal growth.

People with different initial personalities should emphasize different practices to change their personality. For example, a person with predominance of I, should take the required physical exercise, need to develop autonomy by learning to function independently of the

group by moving away from the group periodically, learn new languages to come out of cultural conditioning and practise passive morality (honesty, dependability, etc.) to develop S. He may also need externalized ceremonial forms of religion for control. A person with high A should practice active morality (channellise his energies through social service activities) and gradually replace religious practices like ordinary prayer which partly reinforce insecurity, by the practice of mindfulness. Counselling and psychotherapy have become very popular in competitive A societies because of the need for social interaction to convert competitiveness to cooperation through personal interaction for growth. Meditation (direct increase of pure awareness) is the most important practice for an S person to increase S. Progress from high S to SS very often is by insight and not the result of any intentional, linear or effortful process. Existential questions arise naturally in the mind of a high S person leading to either gradual or sudden disappearance of self-processes. A high S person, as a result of the high degree of self-sufficiency, also reaches the "break off" point where he transcends the dependence on most of the conditions for the maintenance and development of personality. For example, he may be able to break off totally from society and live in a cave, without losing any S.

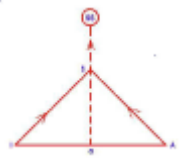

Figure 3. Model of personal growth

Personal growth essentially involves improving and purifying the vibrational quality of mind. Deliberately digging up the past (e.g.. reliving traumatic experiences) is not only unnecessary, but can even be harmful also. However, often there may be spontaneous revival of forgotten incidents when one gains stability and has the capacity to review them straight. Repression and dramatic revival of forgotten memories, however, occurs only for people with too much I in their root personality. Similarly deliberate cathartic exercises also can be harmful as they may strengthen the wrong kind of emotions. Spontaneous catharsis may occur when the personality changes as result of more acceptable naturalistic practices like cultivation of awareness.

The integral approach to personal growth

The quality of mind (in terms of the constituents I, A and S) are influenced by a large number of factors which can be classed into physical factors (closeness to nature, climate, food, exercise), social factors (population density, closeness to man's natural social environment, etc.), and psychological factors (degree of right company of right type of people, right type of social interaction, degree of availability of right extent of privacy, etc.). In fact any condition, influence or response makes for a change in personality in terms of I and A, or S. The integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo can be regarded as a holistic attempt at personal growth. Yoga involves a world view, a way of life, a style of life and an integral attempt to improve all aspects of one's life and environment. This involves identifying those aspects needing more attention and more emphasis at any point of time at a given level of growth. Reduction of I

and A leads to increased S which is greater awareness and this awareness is awareness of one's total self (pure consciousness) and its transformation across all the different planes. The Sreechakra (traditional diagram) is a model of this awareness.

Figure 4. Sree chakra

The dot at the centre signifies pure consciousness. The diagram also brings out the holistic interconnected nature of personality or transformation across various planes as we move from the innermost point of pure consciousness to the outermost physical plane.

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Developing Creativity

Jane Henry

Abstract

This paper will show how Western ideas about how creativity develops have changed over time, through a consideration of the role of inspiration, luck, ability, style, mental flexibility, motivation, experience, intuition and context. It will go on to discuss the reasons for the recent interest in creativity in management and the implications of this shift in thinking for the development and empowerment of employees and the way organizations are run.

Introduction

There have been attempts by Western scientists to understand creativity for sixty years or so. Whilst hitherto a minority interest, the topic is now of interest to cognitive scientists interested in how the mind works, educators who want to develop thinking students and businessmen interested in drawing out the creativity in their workforce.

Research has been carried out on creative people, the processes they use, the "products" they produce and the places in which creative endeavour occurs. Much work into creativity has been based around biographical studies, life history interviews, and the use of personality and other inventories. There is a fair amount of work on creative artists and scientists, gifted children and genius level creativity, but less on the more common "local" or everyday creativity, creative influencers or how creative ideas come to be accepted.

Many scientists think of creativity as entailing something new and appropriate. West and Farr (1990) point out that by new we mean relative novelty, i.e. something that is new to the perceiver. That a work must also be appropriate indicates it must have an element of quality, being different is not enough, the work must also be apt.

Traditional views

Traditionally creativity was thought to be associated with *grace* . If fortunate, you were visited by the muse who provided all the creative inspiration you could need. And indeed if one considers the work of geniuses such as Leonardo da Vinci, Mozart or Shakespeare, a divine source seems to be an understandable explanation for such extraordinary work. This view placed creativity outside the head. Nowadays Western scientists see creativity as a property of the individual or emerging from the context in which they work or some combination of the two. Indeed there a is a body of work which goes to considerable length to deconstruct what they see as the myth of genius (see Weisburg 1986 for example.)

A certain rapprochement of Western and Eastern views of creativity may be found in the acceptance of certain psychodynamic and humanistic psychologists that creativity is a sign of healthy development. Thus Winnicott (1971), for example, believed that creativity was a universal and natural component of healthy development, and Maslow (1962) included creativity as one characteristic of his self-actualised individuals.

In addition various Western scientists and practitioners have commented on the *state of mind* which seems well suited to receiving ideas from the unconscious (the presumed source of creative ideas). McKim (1980) refers to this as a state of relaxed attention. Claxton (1997) advocates quietening the mind and slowing thought as good ways to allow new ideas to surface. A number of stories attest to the value of non-verbal images for creative thought; one famous account is Kekule's dream of two entwined snakes which gave him the clue to the structure of benzene. Nonaka has pointed out that while Western rhetoric stresses explicit analysis, Japanese researchers seem to feel comfortable working to more ambiguous briefs that leave room to play with implicit hunches and allow creative understanding to emerge over time (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995).

Individual characteristics

Personality

Early studies of creativity in the 1940s and 1950s tended to assume that creativity was an *ability* and that some people were more creative than others. Thus psychologists of this period devoted considerable attention to trying to identify the personality characteristics of creative individuals with a view to developing pencil and paper tests that would enable them to identify creative from non-creative individuals. This approach was in keeping with the emphasis on personality traits common at the time.

Guildford's (1959) extensive studies of the creative personality emphasised, amongst other things originality, flexibility, idea fluency, problem sensitivity and redefinitional skills. Perkins (1981) more recent studies show parallels: he stressed intrinsic motivation, risk taking, mental mobility, tolerance for ambiguity and problem-finding skills. Many studies of creative people have concluded that they spend longer on what is termed problem finding, i.e. considering which problem to address and the nature of the problem before trying to find a solution to it (Getzels 1975). This applies equally to artists as scientists. The idea that creativity is an ability suggests some people are creative and others are not.

In passing we may note that a number of eminent geniuses, including Einstein and Edison, were not particularly outstanding students. In addition numerous successful innovators, including Richard Branson of Virgin, Steve Jobs of Apple, and Bill Gates of Microsoft, have left either school or university without finishing their studies. On the other hand the combination of a creative maverick and long standing business partner seems to be a fruitful innovative combination, for example Honda and Fujisawa or Anita Roddick and her husband.

Recently interest has shifted to creative *style* , the different ways in which people show their creativity. For example Kirton's (1994) theory of adaptive and innovative creativity differentiates between the innovative creativity of people who like to challenge the status quo and do things differently and the adaptive creativity of those who prefer to work within existing frameworks, demonstrating creative improvement by doing things better. There is some work, Goldberg (1993) that suggests that these style preferences may have a genetic underpinning as they are related to a trait called openness. (There is increasing consensus that this is one of five traits with a genetic underpinning. The others are extroversion/introversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and emotional stability.)

In Western societies we have tended to associate creativity with the radical breakthroughs favoured by Kirton's innovators. However most inventions come about through a series of incremental improvements that build on what has gone before. TVs and planes today are

quite different from the original models and if they weren't we would probably not be using them as much. Many companies now appreciate that they need to bring out the creativity in all the workforce if they are to survive.

Cognitive explanations

In contrast cynics often incline to the view that creativity is simply an accident of *serendipitous* good fortune, a matter of being in the right place at the right time. (The serendipity here, being attributed to nothing more than chance.) On this view Flemming was just fortunate that he happened to notice the Petrie dish with the odd reaction that led to the discovery of Penicillin, as opposed to being a bright lad (with creative ability) having the presence of mind to realise the growth he saw was significant.

Perhaps the most popular lay view of creativity is that creative ideas are largely the result of a fruitful *association* –mapping a metaphor from one area, via lateral thinking, and being fortunate enough to see that this leads to a useful new idea. The most famous example is Archimedes who when taking a bath, realized that the volume of water he displaced suggested a way of measuring the gold in the king's crown. Koestler's (1969) theory of bisociation provides an example of this line of thinking.

Skill

Studies of creative people show that they do indeed possess a certain mental flexibility that allows them to withhold judgement and shift perspective on an issue. In the 1960s and 70s the notion that creativity was largely a matter of mental flexibility became popular and various people endeavoured to teach skills they attributed to the creative mind. DeBono (1971) for example popularized the notion of lateral thinking, Adams (1974) the need to overcome mental blocks and Osbourne (1967) the merits of suspending judging before deciding on the way forward. This led to creativity training that emphasised brainstorming, creative problem solving, or procedures for teaching anyone to draw (Edwards 1982). Many organisations still use creative problem solving and related approaches.

Whether creativity is more a matter of technique or attitude is a moot point. Certainly part of the gain in many creativity courses is working on one's own "stuff", and through this an unblocking of previously held assumptions, which makes creativity easier.

The idea that learning is principally about inputting skills is currently very popular with governments, who often believe that the answer for education and training is to input ever more mental skills and competencies into the brain. Creativity, decision making, communication, assertion and indeed just about any personal and interpersonal behaviour you can think of have been analysed in the belief that complex social phenomena can be taught and that they are skills that are transferable–i.e. once learnt in one domain, they can be transferred to another.

Experience

Extensive studies by cognitive psychologists and others show convincingly that creativity and indeed many other skills are not readily transferable to other contexts, rather that knowledge is situated. In the context of creativity this means that the creative doctor is not

necessarily the creative engineer. These studies have pointed to the important part played by experience in creative endeavour.

The idea here is that working in a field for a long time enables you to develop a certain expertise which means you chunk the information you hold in your brain about that field differently than a novice would. We know novices tackle problems differently than experts. Creative experts seem to be better able to distinguish the important problem from the non-important one due to their more elaborate map of the area. On this view Flemming, who had looked at hundreds of Petrie dishes in his time, had the experience to realise the reaction he saw that day was significant and worth studying further. It seems that Pasteur was right in his edict that Chance favours the prepared mind.

It has been suggested that truly great creativity such as that demonstrated by Einstein or Beethoven, needs at least ten years of apprenticeship working in the field (Hayes 1989). Weisburg (1986) claims that the ten year rule works just as well with apparently difficult cases like Mozart, claiming that he had been composing for ten years before he produced any truly great works. A similar claim has been made in respect of those who have successfully turned around organisations, for example Lee Iaccocca at Chrysler or Jan Carlzon at SAS, had been working in their respective fields—the automotive and airline industries—for many years before turning their companies around. Worth (2001) found that even those nominated by their peers as being creative in a local context (e.g. one of the more creative individuals in a single organisation) had also been working in the field they were nominated for, for seven years prior to that nomination.

One consequence of this view is that managers might want to think twice before downsizing. Younger staff maybe cheaper but they will lack the domain dependent know-how locked up in people's tacit knowledge.

Motivation

But experience is not the only factor, a number of studies attest to the fact that *motivation* , and the love you feel for your work, is also a very important factor (Amabile 1975). By motivation I refer to intrinsic motivation, i.e an interest for personal satisfaction, not extrinsic motivation—the desire for financial gain, status or power. Creativity often involves challenging the status quo in some way and if you care about what you are doing you are more likely to be prepared to do that. In addition most successful creative people have been found to work hard over a long period; caring about the area they are working on gives them the impetus to carry on. Indeed most successful people enjoy their work. There are various stories that attest to how far motivation has taken some people. For example the tennis player Tim Henman, apparently showed only moderately good performance at his chosen sport in his youth but has gone on to do well through motivation, persistence and technique.

One interesting consequence of this aspect of creativity that many organisations recognise is that creativity needs an element of freedom. Successful innovative companies such as 3M, make a point of allowing their research scientists 15% of their time to work on projects of their own choosing. They also provide seed grants to support such projects. 3M's motto is “Find the inventors and do not get in their way”. Companies have found that this largesse easily pays for itself in the long run. Post-it pads are one example of a product that emerged from a free-time project.

Individual creativity seems to be more likely when a certain mental flexibility, intrinsic motivation and experience coincide.

Group creativity

From around the 1940s to 1980s psychologists focused on individual creativity, assuming creative ideas were generally the province of a single mind but more recently attention has switched to the communities of practice from which creativity emerges through an examination of the role of the group, culture, network and system.

Creative teams

Studies of groups that bring projects to successful conclusions suggest that a team made up of people with diverse natural styles are more likely to complete a project, whether creative or otherwise, and that those groups where the members have similar mental tendencies are less likely to succeed. Successful groups may only have one person with a natural talent for coming up with ideas, but they probably also have some who attends to the groups social needs, another who keeps focuses on the task that needs doing, someone who is good with detail, someone who knows what is available outside and someone who is good at monitoring and evaluating progress. One person may handle more than one of these roles, however studies suggest most of us incline to one, two or three or these roles and not all of them (Belbin 1981).

The culture we find ourselves in can also affect our creativity. Psychologists know that babies are more likely to explore their environment if they feel safe and the same seems to be true of adults. Most of us seem to be more likely to speak out and consider alternative ways of going about things if we feel valued and appreciated. Many people react defensively when threatened. Studies of organizations suggest that those that grant employees freedom as to how they do their work, encourage challenge, tolerate rather than punish mistakes and nurture new ideas seem to be more creative (Ekvall 2001).

Creative communities

At certain places and times in history there seems to have been a creative flourishing, for example painting in Florence in the 14th century, writing in Bloomsbury in the 1920s, pop music in Liverpool in the 1960s and Manchester in the 1990s, IT in Silicon Valley in the latter part of the 20th Century, and software development in Bangalore at the turn of the 21st century. A basic infrastructure may be needed to support this, e.g. patrons, and sufficient technical expertise, however it is assumed that the participants' creativity benefits from building on each others work.

Another aspect of creative work that has been given little attention until recently, is that of persuasion. For a work to be considered creative is has to be recognised as such by others. This is another reason why creative networks are important.

A consequence of this view is that managers might be advised to spend less time worrying about individual traits and more time facilitating the system of social relations from which creativity emerges.

Complexity

So far we have been looking at creativity as if it were a property of the individual or a team but the new science of complexity looks at creativity from the outside in, noting the characteristics of the system from which it emerges. Complexity is concerned with the dynamics of complex adaptive systems, i.e any system of agents that adapt to their changing environment. These agents might be brain cells in a brain, the rise and fall of stock and shares or water molecules, and the systems studied include weather patterns, ant colonies or organisations of people. The surprising finding here is that if agents follow a few simple rules their collective behaviour produces creative solutions. Termites for example appear to be programmed merely to drop little bundles of mud near the strongest chemical marker, and since they mark these piles as they drop them, the smell is stronger where two are close together which makes it more attractive place for future bundles. This process allows termites to build large multi-cellular structures several metres in height merely by doing what comes naturally to them.

Complex adaptive systems over time incline towards one of three states: order and repetition, disorder or finally a balance between the two. Disordered systems and societies do not last long, very ordered ones become limited in their range of actions which leaves them more vulnerable to disaster when the environment changes. It turns out that those societies on the edge of chaos between order and disorder seem to have the best chance of survival, partly because they retain the capacity for creative and unpredictable responses.

On this view creativity is not a characteristic of an individual or a team, but is an emergent property inherent in the interactions between agents and their environment. Furthermore the creative outcomes of such systems cannot be anticipated. This has led certain consultants who accept the applicability of these ideas to organisations, to abandon attempts to plan, monitor and control and to focus their efforts instead on facilitating fruitful relationships and networks, confident that creativity will emerge automatically when people are allowed sufficient autonomy and interaction (Wheatley 1994.)

Creativity in management

Creativity, innovation and knowledge are currently hot topics in management. One of the main reasons for this is the increasing competition, particularly in high wage economies. Technology has enabled globalisation, this coupled with deregulation has increased competition and the speed of change world wide. Many organisations find the only way they can survive is by a process of continual creativity that involves all staff. In addition the nature of work is changing as we move from the industrial to an information age. It is now imagination, intellect and creativity that hold the key rather than land, labour and capital, as evidenced in the value of intangible assets which tend to be worth anything from three to a hundred times more than most firm's tangible assets (Handy 1998).

In order to engender sufficient responsiveness to meet this changed business environment (which moves faster and is more responsive to customer preferences) many organisations have had to fundamentally change their mode of organisation. In the West in the 1980s this entailed a lot of downsizing, delayering and decentralization as organisations tried to reduce costs, and push responsibility down. In the 1990s many companies realised they needed to engage the hearts and minds of all their staff in a process of continuous creativity if they were to keep pace with the competition. Popular organisational change

programmes focused on quality, empowerment and continuous improvement. However you cannot legislate for creativity, it needs freedom and support to flourish, so many organisations have tried to develop a more open culture where employees feel able to challenge the status quo. To empower staff to learn, organisations realised they needed to develop their staff and that this process needs to be tailored to the individual's declared needs and wants. At the turn of the millennium organizations have begun to realise they need to get staff to want to share knowledge. Handy (1998) argues that most people are only likely to do this when they feel trusted and respected and that this will normally limit the number of people they are likely to be willing to share knowledge with.

Organisations have begun to turn their attention outwards; key management buzz words are partnership and cooperation as organisations reach out to benchmark practices in related organisations. Many erstwhile competitors like Ford and VW have joined together to share development costs and badge essentially the same product under different logos.

Some more avant guard companies (including Semco, a Brazilian pump manufacturer, through Oticon, a Danish hearing aid company, to Dutton, an English sheet metal working company) practice a form of minimal management and self-organisation that includes some combination of open accounting—making cost, charge and profit data available to staff and clients, abolishing the standard organisational chart, trying to minimise memos, letting staff choose who they wish to appoint, selecting their own hours, and running the business through a series of temporary projects staff elect to join (Henry 1999a).

Several commentators have argued that increasingly what holds the modern organisation together is common values (Kanter 1999). In a sense the private sector is beginning to manage itself more like a professional practice (such as doctors or lawyers) or a charity. So the command and control paradigm where the manager was feared has gone in many quarters and the rule and committee bound bureaucracy is going. These days many Western managers are more coordinators or facilitators acting as coach and mentor to colleagues rather than as a captain telling them what to do. Though the management paradigm has changed this does not mean that all managers "walk the talk". It is very difficult for many middle managers to feel safe enough to be able to give up the power they have been used to, and this is one reason reality does not always match the management rhetoric of participative empowered partnership.

Many of the ideas about how to achieve creativity in organisations are based on strategies that appear to work in Western companies. The stress on the importance of freedom and speaking out seems fitting for individualist cultures. It may be that in other cultures, with other values, such as a greater sense of communality and/or higher power-distance, different patterns of organisation would be equally creative. For example overseas Chinese communities have developed highly successful networks of linked companies based around family clans. These organisations tend to be very lean and have few of the corporate trappings found in the West. On the other hand each individual company tends to be smaller than the typical Western multi-national. However most large organizations I have spoken to in, for example, Hong Kong, India, Malayasia, Borneo and Ethiopia, have felt that a culture where staff felt more able to speak their mind would be beneficial to the company's creativity and believed their culture needed to change to accommodate this. On the other hand I have met managers in Vietnam and China who were more doubtful that their staff could offer much in the way of creativity until they were better educated. Participatory action research offers a form of creative problem exploration that is used extensively in development management with illiterate villagers. It aims to allow all to participate creatively in decisions that affect them.

Changing conceptions of creativity

Ideas about what causes creativity have changed over time as illustrated in Table 1. For the purposes of this paper these possible causes have been grouped into four areas.

Roots		Cause
Traditional	Grace	Muse
	State	Relaxed attention
Personality	Ability	Trait
	Style	Preference
Cognitive	Serendipity	Luck
	Association	Insight
	Skill	Mental flexibility
	Experience	Expert recognition
	Motivation	Persistence
Social	Social context	Nurture
	Emergent phenomena	Interaction

Table 1. Changing conceptions of creativity

(Source: Adapted from Henry 1999 p. 10)

Conclusion

Conceptions of creativity have changed fundamentally over time. Nowadays scientists believe individual creativity to be the result of a combination of intrinsic motivation, a certain mental flexibility and experience in the field, normally arising from a particular community of practice. They also increasingly recognise the value of non-rational ways of thinking. Organisations are now keen to draw out the creativity in their staff. This appears to be easier in open cultures that allow staff a lot of freedom and support to undertake work in a manner, time and place of their choosing. These trends appear to promise a more humane form of management. These themes are developed in more depth in Henry 2000 and 2001.

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Contextual approach to meditation and integral psychology

S. K. Kiran Kumar

Introduction

In the past few decades meditation and yoga have become household terms all over the world. Many meditation and yoga centres, big and small, have been established. National and international yoga competitions are held. Many researches on the physiological and psychological benefits of meditation and yoga have been conducted. In the process meditation and yoga are viewed by some as a panacea for many modern maladies of mind and body. The spiritual dimension is pushed into the background.

Secondly, the terms meditation and yoga have been used loosely to refer to many practices without due regard for the overall connotations of what they involve and for what they are intended. While for a common man these things are not a matter of concern, for serious practitioners as well as researchers they are crucial. For practitioners it is the means of personal growth and evolution and they acquire the right understanding through traditional means, i.e. studying the scriptures, following a particular guru and a path. For a researcher it is a matter of understanding what yoga and meditation are as psycho-physiological and spiritual phenomena. For him the understanding of meditation and yoga comes through studies conducted on the basis of scientific paradigms. The primary assumptive framework and methodology guide what comes out of research. Thus in contemporary research on meditation and yoga, depending on the perspective adhered to by the researcher, different models of meditation have been put forth.

In contemporary psychological literature meditation is used as a broad and generic term, which refers to all those spiritual practices prevalent in traditions like Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Jewish Kabalah, Taoism, etc. Further it is used to refer to many other mental devices or techniques developed by researchers, for example, Clinically Standardized Meditation (Carrington, 1987). Thus, the term is a "conglomerate word" and under this conceptual umbrella a number of "*different* techniques and intents" are grouped (Carrington, 1987). They include sitting quietly, relaxing, closing the eyes, breathing deliberately, focusing attention on an object or image non-analytically, observing the thought process without judging, repeating sounds mentally, rhythmic moving of the body as in Sufi dervish dance, and so on.

Naranjo and Ornstein (1971) have categorised all the different meditative practices into three types viz., the way of forms (concentration, absorption, union, outer directed, Apollonian), the expressive way (freedom, transparency, surrender, inner directed, Dionysian) and the negative way (elimination, detachment, emptiness, centred, the "middle way"). Goleman (1977) has grouped them into two types viz., "concentration" and "opening up" meditation. Carrington (1987) distinguishes "centering" techniques from "meditation".

Some of the important objectives of meditation as conceived by different researchers include: (a) heightening of awareness of physiological and psychological processes leading to their voluntary control; (b) inducing psycho-biological and psychotherapeutic effects; (c) effecting changes in different aspects of mental functioning and personality; (d) and inducing changes in interpersonal and social behaviour (Carrington, 1987; Johnson,

1982; Naranjo & Ornstein 1971; Shapiro & Walsh, 1984; Walsh, 1980; 1983; West, 1987). Development of insight into the nature of mental functioning, identity, consciousness, and reality are the final aims of these practices (Walsh, 1983).

The goal, to achieve for which meditation is practised, also forms a basis of classification besides the underlying psychological processes. Carrington (1987) speaks of "practical" and "spiritual" meditation. Spiritual meditation is historic embedded in centuries-old religious traditions. Practical meditation is contemporary and frequently practised in the West. The objective of spiritual meditation is to attain spiritual development, through a process of deepening the range of the human spirit and changing the entire life of a human being. Practical meditation affects the practitioner's life in certain practical ways, without changing their lives in an essential fashion. The objective of practical meditation is to enrich the experience of the average Westerner who continues to function within the framework of ordinary society. Other researchers have also referred to such distinctions (Johnson, 1982; Rao, 1989; West, 1986).

Such distinctions as mentioned above arise from the need to be theoretically and methodologically specific in examining meditation as a subject of scientific scrutiny. They have steered the course of contemporary research by allowing value choices between the two and the research strategy adopted. The majority of published research articles and books deal with practical meditation. The effort is (a) to tease out the underlying technique from its traditional context; (b) to understand the underlying psychological mechanisms, and (c) to test its uses and benefits in a variety of life situations. Comprehensive overviews and reviews of such studies can be found in Murphy & Donovan (1997), Rao (1989), Shapiro & Walsh (1984), Vigne (1997), and West (1987). Understanding meditation as an integral aspect of spiritual traditions, but against the background of modern psychological perspectives can be found in Brown, Engler & Wilber (1986), Naranjo & Ornstein (1971), Ornstein (1972), Tart (1975a, 1989), Walsh (1980, 1999), and West (1986).

Notwithstanding the demonstrated benefits of meditation practices from research studies, many theoretical and methodological issues are controversial. One of them is researchers' greater preoccupation with practical or secular meditation and relative neglect of spiritual meditation. The following observation of Michael West, who reviewed hundreds of research articles on practical meditation, illustrates this. "Why has meditation therefore been practised for thousands of years in a variety of cultures and religious and philosophical contexts if *this is all*[1] that it accomplishes?" (1986, p. 250). That is, if meditation is used only for reduction of anxiety, stress, depression, etc., then the original intent and purpose are lost and West (1986) urges us to go back to the original or Eastern context of meditation.

Second, there is an overemphasis on practising and defining meditation as technique, thereby focusing on the operational aspect without sufficient consideration for contextual aspects. Walsh (1999) has observed that in the Western culture, though Asian disciplines, such as meditation and yoga, have significant cultural, religious, contemplative and intellectual effects, their practice and understanding of these disciplines are partial. Practitioners use a single technique divorced from the comprehensive framework or context. For example, practising *asana* or *pranayama* without bothering about *yama* and *niyama* , or *prathyahara* and other aspects of *ashtanga yoga* . Further, Walsh (1999) is of the opinion that though such techniques in themselves are beneficial for psychosomatic and psychological problems as demonstrated by many studies (Murphy & Donovan, 1997), something vital will be lost in this piecemeal approach. This partial approach to yoga is not limited to Western countries. It exists even in India. Now-a-days *asana* and *pranayama* are

practised more as physical exercises by many, and we find many yoga competitions held just like any other athletic event.

Third, there exists a tendency to redefine meditation within the framework of existing modern psychological theories. A number of psychologists with different theoretical orientations—behaviourist, constructivist, cognitive, humanistic, and psychoanalytical—are actively investigating the phenomenon (Delmonte, 1987) without due consideration for the original religio-spiritual, theoretical or conceptual framework. Such contemporary theoretical approaches to meditation are characterized as predominantly atheoretical for this reason (West, 1987). The point West is arguing is that the current approaches to meditation do not utilise effectively existing Eastern psychological theories to generate intelligent methodologies, explain results, and develop theory further. He also indicates that there are appropriate Western psychological theories, which are more directly relevant to the concerns of meditation such as, identity and self-concept, awareness and self-awareness, interpersonal relations, and relationship between individuals and social systems, which can be utilised.

On the other hand, the transpersonal group has been more responsive to the original context of meditation than others. These include Brown (1986), Engler (1986), Goleman (1977), Kornfield (1979), Ram Dass (1990), Shapiro (1990), Tart (1989) Walsh (1980, 1999) and West (1986). However, the difference lies in their attempt to integrate the knowledge of the ancient spiritual traditions with that of modern psychology. Even these attempts are limited in their scope because the dominant framework of modern science governs them. Thus, they may fail to take into account the logical limits of human possibilities suggested in spiritual traditions.

Consequently, there exists a certain amount of conceptual and methodological confusion. Many questions like whether meditation has any intrinsic goal or is everything extrinsic to it; whether meditation refers to a particular practice or to a whole set of practices; whether meditation can be defined generically or not; and what research and strategies are appropriate to study it have been raised. Rao (1989) notes that the conceptual confusion stems from the failure to distinguish between meditation as a state and as a technique; a lack of adequate criteria to identify it; and from the simplistic notion that sitting quietly and chanting a *mantra* is qualitatively the same as practising the rigorous discipline as advocated by the classical meditative traditions. Methodologically, most experimental studies of meditation suffer from the use of the same subject designs, in which each subject is his own control, and the failure to control for individual differences in personality, attitudes, expectations, training, and the length and quality of meditation of the subjects tested.

Such problems of a conceptual and methodological nature, and atheoretical approaches in the psychology of meditation have originated partly due to the very complex nature of the process itself, which is an internal event. More than that the problem is also due to socio-cultural factors and paradigmatic reasons, which are interdependent and have codetermined the direction of meditation research. The Western socio-cultural ethos in which the majority of the studies on meditation have been carried out is widely acknowledged to be materialistic in outlook and scientific in orientation. As a natural corollary meditation is practised from a practical viewpoint to facilitate achieving material goals and is also studied with a view to effectively exploit meditation's potentials as mental technology. These compulsions led investigators to define meditation in non-cultic context free terms (Carrington, 1987; Johnson, 1982).

Contextual approach to meditation

Taking stock of the progress of meditation research and the course it has taken, Shapiro (1990, 1994) observes that it is possible to identify two distinct stages, and compares them to an "hourglass". The first stage is narrowing of the hourglass. Here meditation research has focused on seeking precision and refinement. The attempt is to define meditation in non-cultic and context-free terms; to explore its utility in a variety of clinical and health care settings; to document its subjective and phenomenological validity; and to determine its mediating mechanisms and component parts. This is the classical reductionist approach of modern psychology. In Shapiro's view it was a necessary and critical stage in meditation research that yielded impressive results. However, Shapiro believes that a stage has come in meditation research when one has to "widen the hourglass". That is, contextual aspects of meditation have to be re-considered. Shapiro argues that there is always a specific belief system, goal, and particular framework (whether psychological, scientific, and/or spiritual) within which meditation is utilised and studied and hence there is no such thing as a context-free investigation.

According to Shapiro (1990), there are two possible consequences if one does not consciously specify the context. First, the research on meditation may become methodology driven. That is, it gets limited to the tools we have to examine. Second, without an explicit framework of values, just as other behaviour strategies like biofeedback, or behavioural self- control, meditation may become an amoral technology to serve the often unexamined values and cultural assumptions of the larger society, as Nolan (1972) suggested. Then the culture in which the technique is used becomes by fiat the context. So he strongly holds that the premise that we can develop and study a generic context-free meditation is a chimera. Therefore, the agenda for future research according to Shapiro is to systematically articulate and study the context of meditation rather than to create a context-free study of meditation, which is impossible, in his view. In other words, he advocates a contextual approach to meditation.

A study conducted against this background explored the role of certain personality and socio-cultural variables in meditation practice and experience.[2] The findings suggest that meditation is a multivariate dynamic phenomenon, in contrast to a univariate static phenomenon. In such a phenomenon, more so than the particular type/technique of meditation, it is the *person as a changing context,* which determines the nature and effects of his/her own practice. Hence it is the person or the meditator (not the type/technique of meditation) who is the independent variable. A "person-centred" or "meditator-centred" strategy rather than "technique centred" strategy may throw more light on the phenomenon of meditation.

Further, the results indicate that proper understanding of the phenomenon of meditation requires three categories (factors in the statistical sense) viz., nature, influencing factors, and effects.[3] These interact in different ways to determine the course and outcome of meditation. All the existing research on meditation addresses one or more of these facets. The first two categories interact to create a context and lead to certain experiences and effects. They in turn, have the capacity to alter one or more of the variables (properties and their dimensions) which operated initially leading to a new mental set or context. In the process the person has changed. Thus the beginning meditator is not the same as he (she) progresses in meditation over a period of time. This is the dynamic context.

Integral psychology as a contextual variable

Within the framework of a contextual approach to the study of meditation, integral psychology serves as an influencing factor (Category II) especially under belief systems and goals (table 1). Belief system refers to an individual's worldview and value orientations as distinguished from ethnoepistemology, which refers to cultural belief system. The latter significantly shapes the former, but an individual may transcend its influence and expand his belief system. Shapiro (1990) has enumerated ten different aspects of personal belief systems in relation to meditation practice. 1) A person's belief about the ultimate nature of the universe. 2) The factors which contributed to the development of a belief system and components within that belief system. 3) Belief as an independent variable. 4) Belief as a dependent variable. 4) Intensity of beliefs. 5) Relation between beliefs and values. 6) Congruence between beliefs and behaviour or action. 7) Our attachment to our belief as well as the specific language, symbol, and form in which it is contexted. 8) How the questions of evil, duality, self-other dichotomy, non-human caused childhood disease and death, earthquakes and other natural catastrophes are addressed by those with a belief in an ultimate, unifying universe (at the deepest level of reality). 9) The potential negative implications and consequences of beliefs.

Integral psychology having its basis in the integral vision of Sri Aurobindo about human and planetary/cosmic evolution, offers a unique and comprehensive belief system to a meditator. It addresses many of the issues delineated above. As Herman (1983)[4] has rightly pointed out Sri Aurobindo used the word "integral" as equivalent to the Sanskrit word "*purna* ", which means holistic or full. His view "has the unique distinction of being considered in India a modern orthodox (*astika*) school of traditional Vedanta...*purna advaita Vedanta* (integral non-dual Vedanta). Yet at the same time it claims to be a universal doctrine relevant to the critical concerns of the whole planet, and therefore beyond any particular religious tradition, including Hinduism itself" (p. 95).

It is noteworthy that Herman (1983) emphasizes that Sri Aurobindo's thought did not develop in a vacuum and it was typical of the Indian cultural renaissance that took place during the period from 1875 to 1950. Others who thought on similar lines include H.S. Olcott, H.P. Blavatsky, Annie Besant and the Theosophical Society; Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and Swami Vivekananda; Rabindranath Tagore, Mohandas K. Gandhi, Sri Ramana Maharshi, and S. Radhakrishnan. Further Herman points out that there are significant common elements in the teachings of the theosophical movement, the Ramakrishna movement and the writings of Sri Aurobindo and Radhakrishnan. They include most importantly, a universal perspective, an evolutionary outlook, concern for social integration and justice, and a multidimensional view of human consciousness and cosmic structure (p. 96).

According to Herman (1983), Haridas Chaudhuri, a distinguished disciple of Sri Aurobindo who founded the Asian Institute of Integral Studies[5] at San Francisco, used the word "integral" in a much broader sense, to include not only the contributions of all significant members of the Indian cultural renaissance but even those of Western thinkers. Therefore, Chaudhuri's conception of integral psychology is not limited by any particular tradition but at the same time can hold in itself each of the different valid traditions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Sufism, etc. Hence, Chaudhuri's vision of integral psychology as stated by Herman is that it "should be open-ended, flexible, able to transform itself according to the demands of the fast-paced evolution of contemporary culture. In expression it must also remain as global as possible, avoiding over-identification with Indian metaphysical modes of discourse" (p. 96). Ken Wilber's many writings can be viewed as an example of such a vision being concretized, though it has its limitations.

Since integral psychology concerns itself with all phases of human existence, which includes physical, emotional, instinctual, mental, moral, social and spiritual aspects, it looks upon them as equally valid and contributing for human evolution (Chaudhuri, 1977). For this reason integral psychology seeks to be practical and applicable to concerns of everyday life and at the same time to facilitate the spiritual growth of those who are ready to take off to a different realm (Herman, 1983).

Thus, integral psychology as a contextual variable develops expectations (property 1) about physical, psychological and spiritual outcomes (dimensions). It develops motivation (property 2) for information gathering and learning new techniques (dimensions). And it insists on adherence (property 3) to practice as part of life and as a movement toward a spiritual goal (table 2).

In view of its multidimensional emphasis integral psychology has implications for the nature of meditation (category I) (table 1). Referring to "integral meditation" as conceived by Chaudhuri in his *Integral Yoga, The Philosophy of Meditation* and other writings, Herman (1983) describes it as follows: "Chaudhuri discusses meditation as a psychological approach to the authentic values of one's life. Meditation is an exploration of the whole psyche in order to amplify self-understanding" (p. 99). Integral meditation operates at two levels. On one level it "serves as a process of mental housecleaning, removing clutter and debris to allow the light of Being to be reflected inside" (p. 99). At another level "by inquiring into the essence of our selfhood we gain insight into the mystery of universal Being" (p. 99).

According to Chaudhuri in integral meditation the need for growth of inner consciousness is more important than any particular method or technique per se. So the integral view supports many techniques for different psychological types and stages of development. In Integral Yoga, Chaudhuri describes thirteen different methods of meditation, which range from simple to complex mental processes. They facilitate the actualization of the five fundamental principles of integral yoga as delineated by Chaudhuri: dynamic self-offering to the cosmic reality; psychic self-exploration; self-energizing; critical evaluation; and existential experience (McKay, 1980).

In conclusion, from the point of view of a contextual approach to meditation, it can be said that integral psychology as a theoretical framework along with "integral meditation" offers a broad and comprehensive context and variety of techniques for a meditator, beginner as well as advanced, for sadhana. Nevertheless, there is a possible danger. The orthodox schools, which exclusively associate dhyana with God-realization and Self-realization, discourage a *sadhaka* even from psychical self-exploration lest he or she may stray away from the goal. On the other hand, integral psychology with its affirmation of all aspects of human existence may keep a *sadhaka* moving in circles in a horizontal plane without vertical movement. A guru's guidance is indispensable to avoid this pitfall.

APPENDIX[6]

Category I	Category II	Category III
Nature	Influencing factors	Effects
Properties	Properties	Properties
(a) Perceptions	(a) Goals	(a) Stress relief

(b) Practice	(b) Belief system	(b)Attitudinal change
(c) Process	(c) Society	(c) Dependency
(d) Faith community		
(e) Personality traits		
(f) Facilitative factors		
(g) Disturbing factors		

Table 1. Categories of meditation

The properties listed under each category are not exhaustive and are derived and limited by the data obtained on a particular sample. The different definitions of meditation currently available in scientific literature seem to focus on different categories. For example, Goleman's (1978) distinction between "concentration" and "opening up" meditation defined in terms of attention strategies, emphasise on the nature of meditation (Category I). Much discussion has taken place about the relation between the procedure one adopts and the experiences one undergoes during meditation (Goleman, 1978; Naranjo & Ornstein, 1971). Similarly, Carrington's (1987) distinction between "spiritual meditation" and "practical meditation", and Johnson's (1982) distinction between "intrinsic" and "extrinsic" goals are definitions which emphasise the influencing factors (Category II). Defining meditation as a means of inducing altered states of consciousness or as a self-regulation strategy (Shapiro & Giber, 1978), as relaxation response (Benson, 1975) are examples of Category III related to effects. One can suggest that the three categories represent a *three-factor model* of meditation. The various properties of the three categories interact with each other resulting in a variety of meditative experiences.

Property 1	Property 2	Property 3
Expectations	Motivations	Adherence
Dimensions		
Physical : Relieving stress Gaining more energy Overcoming illness	Information gathering Learning new techniques	Part of life movement toward spiritual goal
Psychological Resolving emotional conflicts Resolving identity problems Experiencing calmness Experiencing awareness		
Spiritual : God-realisation Self-realisation		

Table 2. Goals of meditation

Properties	American society	Indian society
Place of spirituality in the hierarchy of values	Least valued	Highly valued
Social acceptance of meditative practices	Neutral to rejection/ negative evaluation	Positive acceptance
Supportiveness of environment	Non-supportive	Supportive
Faith factor	Less	More
Availability of opportunities to learn meditation	Less	More
Availability of information and models	Little	Much

Table 3. Socio-cultural properties related to meditation

Liturgic	Interactional	Environmental
Rituals conducted	Interaction between the teacher and the taught—verbal and experiential	Physical surroundings
Chanting hymns		Serenity and quiet atmosphere
Singing devotional songs	Interaction between the group members—verbal and experiential	Holiness attached to the place
	Sharing experiences with others	
	Group meditations	

Table 4. Properties involved in faith community

Internal	External
Relaxed state	Quiet and peaceful atmosphere
Satisfaction in work and enjoying the same in family and work	Lack of problems
Constant practice and	Few external demands

persistence
Value attached to the goal and practice

Table 5. Facilitative factors

Internal	External
Worry	Travel
Conflicts	Work schedules
Tensions	Family commitmen
Tiredness	Physical environment
Lack of discipline	Sporadic life style
Attitude towards meditation	Problems in work

Table 6. Disturbing Factors

It is interesting to note that for one participant meditation practice itself came in the way as a disturbing factor because her attitude towards her practice was very rigid. As she reported she took her practice very seriously and started "judging" her meditation practice. Her attitude, *I think I never do it right* , was nagging her leading to frustration.

Notes

[1] Italics author's for emphasis

[2] For details refer to author's *Psychology of meditation: A contextual approach* Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, India. I also thank the publishers for permitting me to reproduce some ideas from the book.

[3] For details refer to Tables 1 to 6 provided in the Appendix.

[4] I am indebted to Paul Herman for giving me some of his and others' papers on Integral Psychology.

[5] Now California Institute of Integral Studies

[6] The tables are reproduced from my Post-Doctoral research report "Culture, Context and Meditation".

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Spirituality and well-being: an overview

K. Krishna Mohan

Introduction

The last two decades have provided evidence from a wide range of disciplines, that human potential for psychological growth and well-being is more than what had been previously estimated. Though spirituality is as much a part of human experience as any other normal form of thought and behaviour, until recently it has not been given due importance by researchers in psychology. This same opinion is echoed by researchers and therapists who report that the spiritual dimension of human experience has not been given the attention that it deserves in mental health (Adams, 1995; Canda, 1995; Ganje-Fling & McCarthy, 1996; Hall, 1995; Kane, Cheston & Green, 1993; King, Speck & Thomas, 1995; Lindgren & Coursy, 1995; Pargament, 1996; Sargent, 1989; Sinclair, 1993; Vesti & Kastrup, 1995; Weaver, Koeing & Ocherg, 1996; Wulff, 1996). Mental health professionals, in fact, have often viewed spiritual content as pathological (Larson et al., 1993; Post, 1992; Weaver et al., 1996).

Both religion and spirituality are universal and widespread phenomena, in that they are integral to numerous cultures, and influence people of all ages, socio-economic status, and educational levels. They continue to live because of, among other things, social influences and need satisfaction. Every aspect of life, particularly in the East, is more or less imbued with religious sentiments or perceived as part of religious life. It is estimated that 94% of the American population believe in God, 88% believe God loves them, 81% believe we will be called before God on Judgement Day, 71% believe in life after death. More people have confidence in organised religion than in any other social institution (Gallup & Castelli, 1989).

The aim of this paper is to show the close relationship between spirituality and well-being by presenting research based evidence that spirituality or a spiritual way of life has a bearing on well-being. In addition, it will show that ideas or concepts drawn from spirituality can be effectively applied to counselling and psychotherapy. But before presenting an overall view of the relationship between spiritual outlook and psychological well-being it will be appropriate first to define the basic concepts.

Spirituality: definition

Definitions of spirituality in the relevant literature usually include some version of the following words and phrases: feeling connected or belonging in the universe, believing in a power outside of one's self, searching for a sense of meaning or purpose, experiencing transcendence and immanence, seeking one's ultimate and personal truths, experiencing a numinous quality, knowing unity of the visible and invisible, having an internalized relationship between the individual and the Divine, encountering limitless love, and moving towards personal wholeness (Canda, 1995; Gaje-Fling & McCarthy, 1996; Decker, 1993; King et al., 1995; Wulff, 1996). However, Reese (1997) strips the term spirituality to its minimally necessary elements and defines it as “consistency of action with belief”. He argues that spirituality is, in behavioural-analytic terms, rule-governed behaviour in that the rules (beliefs) that govern this behaviour (action) are a part of a coherent system that defines “rightness”.

And additionally there is a functional definition of spirituality which has been adopted by the California state psychological association task force on spirituality and psychotherapy —"courage to look within and to trust", implying that what is seen and what is trusted appears to be a deep sense of belonging, of wholeness, of connectedness and of openness of the infinite.

Though spirituality traditionally has been considered to be exclusively the domain of religion, it is now being conceptualized in terms that have no particular relationship to theology, and is at the same time being accepted as practical and intellectually respectable. Worthington et al., (1996) speak of three categories of people whose beliefs were classified to differentiate the religious from the spiritual; (1) those who may be spiritual but not religious in that they believe in and value a universal human spirit or an "elan vital" without holding religious beliefs to be true, (2) those who are religious but not spiritual holding to doctrines of a religious organization but not experiencing any devotion to a higher power, and (3) those who are both spiritual and religious and believe in valuing a higher power that is acceptable to and consistent with some organized religion. It may be said with some conviction that the majority of Hindu Indians may fall into the second and third categories, for most use religion to morally and spiritually guide their behaviour. This may be to a certain extent true of other religions.

Spirituality which has always been considered to be a natural part of being human, is an innate human capacity to transcend the egocentric perspective from which people constantly experience and evaluate their lives, opening them to a broader world view, a heightened capacity for loving, and an increased motivation to enhance the greater good (Chandler, Holder & Colander, 1992).

The definition of spirituality provided by the tenth edition of Oxford English Dictionary is as follows: "the equality or condition of being spiritual, attachment to or regard for the thing of the spirit as opposed to material or worldly interest". The term spirituality refers to the individual's experience of a dimension of power and meaning transcendent to the ordinary sensory reality. Such spiritual experiences may be associated with a naturalistic occupation as well as with religious tradition and spiritual disciplines. According to Vrinte (1996) spirituality is inspired and sustained by transpersonal experiences that originate in the deepest recesses of the human being and they are but the natural manifestations of that domain of the human psyche that contain the greater depth of life.

Krippner and Welch (1992) say that the word "spiritual" is used to describe aspects of human behaviour and experience that reflect an alleged transcendent intelligence or process, and is associated with several "identifiable values": Among the values a spiritual person experiences are: (1) a transcendent dimension conceptualized as a supreme being, a "greater self", or simply as "something more" from which a person shows a sense of personal power, (2) meaning in life when an authentic meaning and purpose in life fills an "existential vacuum" (3) mission in life where there is a purpose in one's vocation which may be felt as a "call" or "destiny" to fulfill, (4) sacredness of life where life is not divided into sacred and the secular but all experience is sanctified and is suffused with awe and reverence (5) ultimate satisfaction wherein a person may take pleasure in material things but the ultimate basis for their happiness and satisfaction lies in their spiritual value (6) altruism which propels one to respond to the needs of others as connectedness between all persons is felt, (7) idealism where a commitment to the betterment of world through not only meditation and prayer but also through concrete actions is felt (8) realism where facts of tragedy, suffering pain or death deepens one's appreciation of life and strengthens the commitment to make a difference in the world (9) fruits of spirituality such as compassion,

courage, joy, devotion have a positive effect not only on the spiritual person but also on others and the world around them (10) healing effects that draw others to the spiritual person who is viewed by friends as an empowering resource in a relation.

Further Krippner and Welch distinguish spirituality from religiosity and maintain that spiritual people may or may not engage in formal religious practice and religious people may not embody spiritual values. They say that people who have internalized an institutionalized common set of beliefs, practices and rituals (as dictated by religion) regarding spiritual concerns and issues are not always spiritual. This view is elaborated by Vrinte (1996) who says spirituality is distinct from religion in that spirituality is more related to authentic mystical experiences whereas religion is more associated with normative practices (laid down by a prophet or a religious group). In fact Keen (1994) observes that millions of people who are unmoved by established religion as well as disillusioned with a secular view of life, are yet looking for some "missing value", some absent purpose, some "new meaning" and some "presence of the sacred"—all of which indicate becoming spiritual in one's orientation.

Attempts to define spirituality as an innate characteristic which develops in a manner roughly corresponding to psychological development defined by Freud and Erikson (who said that normal crises precipitated by external or internal changes of life send us from one stage of psychological development to the next), has led Fowler (1981) to propose six stages of spiritual development. The first stage begins with the age of two to seven when a child's spirituality is fantasy based. Next is school age when belief becomes more literal and concrete as in seeing God as anthropomorphic. The third stage is adolescence governed by a community aspect of spirituality. Then comes the stage of the early twenties when individuals tend to relocate authority within themselves and rely mostly on rationality. The fifth stage is midlife when there is a shift toward a concept of God as a cosmic flow of life or light within, and finally one reaches the sixth stage of universalizing faith with a devotion to a transcendent vision not of one's own making. Further, Fowler has also pointed out that in spite of effective articulation there are serious limits to the observations of spiritual states as opposed to the observation of routine or ordinary psychological phenomena. It is not possible in this present paper to cover comprehensively this aspect.

To summarize so far, from the above discussion spirituality may be understood as an innate human capacity to transcend the egocentric perspective from which people experience and evaluate their lives and in the process to attain full enlightenment. They have thoughts and feelings of connectedness with the universe and a sense of moving towards personal wholeness by experiencing transcendence and immanence.

Psychological well-being: definition

Since recorded history, philosophers have always considered happiness to be the highest good and ultimate motivation for human functioning, but it is only recently that excellent reviews of the history and philosophy of happiness have begun to appear in psychological literature (Diener et al., 1999; Chekola, 1975; Culberson, 1977; Willson, 1967). There have been many attempts to describe psychological health in ideal terms which give us a list of qualities that constitute a mature, healthy, fully functioning, self-actualizing person. It is important to examine the definitions provided by some health psychologists who have, in their attempts to define a healthy individual, spelt out a list of specific characteristics, mostly based on research and observation, that could be associated with an individual who is psychologically healthy and experiences a state of well-being most of the time.

In her analysis of many definitions Jahoda (1958), says positive mental health is based on the following: (1) Attitudes towards the self which include the accessibility of the self to consciousness, a correct self-concept which is one's sense of identity and the acceptance of one's self. (2) Growth, development and self-actualization (3) Integration (4) Autonomy (5) Perception of reality and (6) Environmental Mastery which includes abilities to work, love and play, adequate interpersonal relationships, the ability to meet situational requirements, adaptation and adjustment, and efficiency in problem solving.

David Seedhouse (1995), introspects that the term "well-being" as used in present day health promotion literature is an extremely vague notion. While psychologists believe well-being is constructed out of three components: (1) Life-satisfaction (2) Positive affect and (3) low Negative affect, the author concludes that judgements of well-being are irreducibly subjective and that the meaning and content of the term are seen to fluctuate, depending on who is using it and why it is being used. Myers and Diener (1995) in their paper entitled "Who is happy?" define high subjective well-being as frequent positive affect, infrequent negative affect and a global sense of satisfaction with life.

Based on the above discussion an operational definition of well-being may include the following: Firstly it may be understood as a scientific sounding term for what people usually mean by happiness. Secondly, it refers to what people think and feel about themselves i.e., the cognitive and affective conclusions they reach when they evaluate their existence. Thirdly, it involves the individual's entire condition i.e., psychological, social, and spiritual aspects of one's existence, and fourthly well-being is a relative state of affairs—relative to the situation as well as to the values of the particular culture one belongs to, such as the traditional "Indianness" of avoiding extreme and maintaining equilibrium, of having good health and practicing self control, self-realization and dissolution of the self.

Research studies

For the purpose of this review of studies relating spirituality with psychological well-being, studies involving religious influence have also been considered as they are closely related to spirituality.

Spirituality and well-being

From time immemorial it is believed that spiritual experiences and practices have a therapeutic value in so far as they are capable of establishing an integrated personality. A report (Culligan, 1996) of a 1995 conference held at Harvard University reflects the new collaborative attempts of religion and medicine wherein there is a recognition of the power of religion and spiritual practices in medical treatment. The conference explored the relationship between spirituality and healing in medicine, with reference to the major world religions, and it provided a platform to discuss the physiological, neurological and psychological effects of healing resulting from spirituality.

Several recent studies (Allman et al., 1992; Elkins, 1995; Shafranske & Malony, 1990) have shown that the majority of practicing psychologists though not involved in organized religion, consider spirituality important not only to their personal lives but also to their clinical work. In a study Sullivan (1993) reports findings from a larger qualitative study that is seeking to discover factors associated with the successful adjustment of former and

current consumers of mental health services. The study concludes that spiritual beliefs and practices were identified as essential to the success of 48% of the informants interviewed.

Vaughan (1991) explored the relevance of spiritual issues for individual psychotherapy among those motivated by spiritual aspiration and concluded that spirituality underlies both, personal impulses to growth and healing, and many creative cultural and social enterprises. Spitznagel (1992) and Sweeney and Witmer (1992) discussed the spiritual element in the well-ness model approach to work-adjustment and rehabilitation counselling and said that this holistic concept of working with clients is generally centred on faith, belief and values. Westgate (1996) in her review proposed four dimensions of spiritual wellness: (1) meaning in life (2) intrinsic value (3) transcendence and (4) spiritual communality. The paper also discussed the implications of these dimensions for research, counselling and counsellor education.

In a two year exploratory group study of participants in spiritual healing practices, Glik (1986) found that the healing which occurred is related to various measures of psychological wellness defined as the construct of subjective health. Fehring et al., (1987) correlating studies that investigate the relationship between spirituality and psychological mood states in response to life change, found that spiritual well-being, existential well-being and a spiritual outlook showed a strong inverse relationship with negative moods, suggesting that spiritual variables may influence well-being.

Over the years numerous claims have been made about the nature of spiritual/mystical and Maslow's "peak experiences", and about their consequences. Wuthnow (1978) set out to explore findings regarding peak experiences from a systematic random sample of 1000 persons and found that peak experiences are common to a wide cross-section of people, and that one in two has experienced contact with the holy or sacred, more than eight in ten have been moved deeply by the beauty of nature and four in ten have experienced being in harmony with the universe. Of these, more than half in each have had peak experiences which have had deep and lasting effects on their lives. Peakers are more likely also, to say they value working for social change, helping to solve social problems, and helping people in need. Wuthnow stressed the therapeutic value of these experiences and also the need to study the social significance of these experiences in bringing about a world in which problems such as social disintegration, prejudice and poverty can be eradicated. Savage et al., (1995) provided clinical evidence to suggest that peakers produce greater feelings of self-confidence and a deeper sense of meaning and purpose. Mogar's (1965) research also tended to confirm these findings.

Some researchers in the recent past have found that life satisfaction correlated positively with mystical / spiritual experiences, and these experiences were further found to relate positively to one's life purpose (Kass, et al., 1991). In fact researchers are of the view that a positive relation between positive affect and mystical experiences may not be surprising given that intense positive affect is often considered to be one of the defining characteristics of these experiences (Noble, 1985; Spilka, Hood & Gorsuch, 1985). The few studies that investigated well-being measures, spirituality and spiritual experience have found that people who have had spiritual experiences are in the normal range of well-being and have a tendency to report more extreme positive feelings than others (Kennedy, Kanthamani & Palmer, 1994; Kennedy & Kanthamani, 1995).

Spiritual experiences are also considered to be exceptional human experiences at the upper end of the normal range such as creative inspiration and exceptional human performance, and can be life changing. Fahlberg, Wolfer and Fahlberg (1992) interpreted

personal crises from a developmental perspective that includes the possibility of self-transcendence through spiritual experience / or emergency. The authors suggest that health professionals need to recognize, facilitate and support positive growth experiences.

A study by De Roganio (1997) content-analyzed and organized into a paradigm case examples found in themes of 35 lived-experience informants and 14 autobiographers who represented a wide range of people with physical disability and chronic illness. It was found that the combined elements of spiritual transformation, hope, personal control, positive social support and a meaningful energetic life enabled individuals to improve themselves and come to terms with their respective conditions. These experiences led many people to realize their own interest, sense of wholeness and unity, and to experience and integrate a deeper meaning, sense of self and spirituality within their lives.

Some studies have offered a spiritual approach to addiction problems. Caroll (1993) found that 100 members of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) benefited from spirituality which was found to correlate positively with having a purpose in life and the length of sobriety. Frame and Williams (1996), in their study of religions and spiritual dimensions of the African-American culture, address the role of spirituality in shaping identity, and conclude that reconnecting AA clients to their powerful spiritual tradition may be a crucial catalyst for personal empowerment and spiritual liberation. The finding was confirmed in a later study by Wif and Carmen (1996). Another study reported by Green et al., (1998) described the process of spiritual awakening experienced by some persons in recovery during the quest for sobriety. The data suggested that persons in recovery often undergo life altering transformations as a result of embracing a power higher than one's self i.e., a "higher power". The result is often the beginning of an intense spiritual journey that leads to sustained abstinence.

In the last few years investigators in the rapidly growing field of mind-body medicine are coming across findings that suggest that an attitude of openness to unusual experiences such as spiritual, transcendental, peak, mystical may be conducive to health and well-being. For example, Dean Ornish, a heart disease researcher, believes that "opening your heart" to "experience a higher force" is in an important component of his programme for reversing heart disease (Ornish, 1990, chapter 9). There are also studies that relate illness with spirituality: Reese (1997) found in her study of terminally ill adults aged 20-85 years that, (1) they had a greater spiritual perspective than non-terminally ill hospitalized adults and adults, (2) their spiritual perspective was positively related to well-being and (3) a significant larger number of terminally ill adults indicated a change toward increased spirituality than did non-terminally ill or healthy adults.

Further, McDowell et al., (1996) investigated the importance of spirituality among 101 severely mentally ill and chronically dependent in-patients, and 31 members of the nursing staff who treated them. It was found that both the patients and the staff who treated them were equally spiritually oriented, and that the patients viewed spirituality as essential to their recovery and they valued the spiritual programme in their treatment more than some of the more concrete items.

Numerous studies have found positive relationships between religious beliefs and practices and physical or mental health measures. Although it appears that religious belief and participation may possibly influence one's subjective well-being, many questions need to be answered such as when and why religion is related to psychological well-being. A review by Worthington et al., (1996) offers some tentative answers as to why religion may sometimes have positive effects on individuals. Religion may (a) produce a sense of

meaning, something worth living and dying for (Spilka, Shaves & Kirkpath, 1985); (b) stimulate hope (Scheier & Carver, 1987) and optimism (Seligman, 1991); (c) give religious people a sense of control by a beneficient God, which compensates for reduced personal control (Pargament et al., 1987); (d) prescribe a healthier lifestyle that yields positive health and mental health outcomes; (e) set positive social norms that elicit approval, nurturance, and acceptance from others; (f) provide a social support network; or (g) give the person a sense of the supernatural that is certainly a psychological boost-but may also be a spiritual boost that cannot be measured phenomenologically (Bergin & Payne, 1993). It is also reported by Myers and Diener (1995) that people who experience a sustained level of happiness are more likely to say that they have a meaningful religious faith than people who are not happy over a long period of time.

A study by Handway (1978) on religiosity concluded that religion is one potential resource in people's lives. More recently Myers and Diener (1995) in their survey of related studies observe that links between religion and mental health are impressive and that culture and religiosity may provide better clues to understanding the nature of well-being. Religious belief and practice play an important role in the lives of millions of people worldwide. A review by Selway and Ashman (1998) highlighted the potential of religion to effect the lives of people with disabilities, their families and care givers.

Research relating stress to religion indicated that religious and non-religious people tend to experience equal amounts of stress but religion may help people deal better with negative life events and their attendant stress (Schafer & King, 1990). A study by Maton (1989) supports the view that high level of stress individuals are likely to benefit from perceived spiritual support and is consistent with the stress and coping model based on religion proposed by Pargament. Anson et al., (1990) found that belonging to a religious community reduced stress whereas personal religious beliefs did not among 230 members of a kibbutzim. Similar findings were obtained by Williams et al., (1991) where for 720 adults religious attendance buffered the deleterious effects of stress on mental health. Courtenary et al., (1992) found a significant relationship between religiosity and physical health and that religion and coping were strongly related especially among the oldest-old.

With regard to coping Pargament (1996) cites five studies that show that religious forms of coping are especially helpful to people in uncontrollable, unmanageable or otherwise difficult situations. In the same lines Moran also believes that survivors of crisis or disaster may benefit by experiencing God as a refuge and as a reason to have hope (Moran, 1990). Patricia (1998) in her review shows how religion and spirituality help adult survivors of childhood violence.

Individuals with strong religious faith have been found to report higher levels of life satisfaction, greater personal happiness, and fewer negative psychological consequences of traumatic life events (Ellison, 1991). Anson et al., (1990) examined among 639 Jewish retirees over 60 years the relationship between self-rated religiosity, physical and psychological well-being and life satisfaction using data from a longitudinal study. Findings revealed religiosity was only weakly and inversely related to health and psychological distress, poor well-being at time 1 and a decline in well-being during the follow-up year led to an increase in religiosity. Ellis and Smith (1991) administered to 100 undergraduate students the Reasons for Living Inventory (RFL) and a spiritual well-being scale, and found a positive correlation between religious well-being and the total RFL score. Ellison's (1993) data from a national survey of Black Americans supported the hypothesis that participation in Church communities fosters positive self-perception.

There have been studies on the effects of religiosity. A study by Mookherjee (1994) found that the perception of well-being was positively and significantly influenced by, among other things, church membership and frequency of church attendance. Blaine and Crocker (1995) found that religious belief salience and psychological well-being were moderately positively correlated among Black students. Two-thirds of the panel reported a consistently positive attitude toward being religious when subjects attached importance to being religious even after 14 years later (Atchley, 1997).

Many psychologists who study religion distinguish between intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientation (Paloutzian, 1996). An intrinsic orientation involves internal religious motives within a person. On the contrary extrinsic orientation involves external motives outside of the religion, using the religion for unreligious ends. There appears to be a positive correlation between intrinsically religious people (religion as an end in itself) deriving substantial positive mental health benefit from their religion (Donahue, 1985). Intrinsic religiosity has been related to the following qualities characterising positive mental health: internal locus of control, intrinsic motivational traits, sociability, sense of well-being, responsibility, self-control, tolerance, and so on (Bergin, 1991).

A long standing misconception is that religion is a crutch for the weak. However, researchers in the psychology of religion have found that many religious individuals were competent. Payne et al., (1991) in their review on religion and mental health found that there was a positive influence of intrinsic religiosity on mental health in regard to well-being. In one study (Ventis, 1995) found that individuals with intrinsic religious motivation reported a greater sense of competence and control, as well as less worry and guilt than did individuals with extrinsic religious motivation. In another study by (Genia, 1998) it was found that intrinsically religious and pro-religious students reported greater existential well-being than extrinsic or nonreligious subjects.

As Indian culture has a long tradition of spiritual practitioners as well as authentic records of spiritual experiences it will not be out of place here to consider them briefly. In addition their contribution to well-being is not inconsiderable.

Well-being: Indian perspective

The schools of Hindu philosophy are abundant with rich, insightful, psychological treatises on well-being. Buddhism and Jainism represent a view of personality and describe methods for its growth into a particular form of perception. The various schools of yoga prescribe methods to help to reach a high level of consciousness and go beyond the limits of ordinary human experience. Well-being is equated with the integration of personality.

Psychological well-being to the Hindu means (1) integration of emotions with the help of an integrated teacher (a spiritual master, Guru), (2) acquiring a higher philosophy of life which helps to resolve inner tensions, (3) channelizing basal passion directing the emotions to ultimate reality, (4) developing an attitude whereby everything is viewed as a manifestation of ultimate reality (5) cultivation of higher qualities which replace negative qualities, and (6) the practice of concentration (Sinha, 1965).

The ultimate goal in Indian thought goes beyond self-realization or transcendence and seeks for a spiritual pursuit leading to the highest state of everlasting happiness, "*nirvana* " or supreme bliss. The ultimate motive is spiritual pursuit with the aim of attaining union with the universal self or *moksha* or *nirvana* . The concept of well-being has also been

elaborately given in C *harka Samhita* , the ancient treatise on the Indian systems of medicine which is called Ayurveda (the treatise on life). In this treatise the characteristics of happy and unhappy life have been elaborated. According to the *sankhya* philosophy, human personality is a product of the interaction between the spirit (*purusha*) and matter (*prakriti*). The influence of *prakrit* i on behaviour is emphasised in terms of the three Gunas or qualities called *sattva* or the element of knowledge, *rajas* or the principle of activity, which on the affective side is the cause of all painful experiences, and *tamas* or the principle of passivity that clouds our intellect thereby producing ignorance. It is said that the state of *samyavastha* or equilibrium of the three Gunas is that which holds the secret to an individual's well-being.

Seminal contributions to the concept of well-being have been made by one of the most widely acclaimed religious philosophical texts of the Hindus, the *Bhagavad-Gita* (1905) which focuses on the idea of avoidance of extremes and maintaining a kind of balance or equilibrium to enjoy a state of well-being. The concept of well-being in Indian (Hindu) thought is significantly characterized by a state of "goodmind" which is peaceful quiet and serene. The *Bhagavad Gita* speaks of being steady of mind (*Sthitapragya*) and of performing ones duties without being lustfully attached to the fruits of one's action (*karmayoga*) as representing a healthy person. The dissolution of the self or ego is considered the most evolved stage of mental health; further it is believed that the healthy mind acts but does not react and, therefore, is always watchful of the root cause of any disturbance. A mind which is free from conflicts and hence is clear about its duties which are performed with a spiritual mission, is a mind which enjoys well-being (Verma, 1998).

Besides "the steadying of mind" which is characterized by calm and poise in all situations, adverse or favourable, other features such as being friendly, not bearing ill-will for anyone, having compassion, forgiveness, being free from attachment and egoism and being balanced in both pleasure and pain are hallmarks of well-being according to The *Bhagavad Gita* (Chapter XII, Verse 13); self control, self-realisation which is the realisation that everything is totally interconnected, and the dissolution of the self by the expansion of the "self" beyond its personal boundary leads to a stage of the finest form of humanity where there are positive feeling for all things and beings. So according to Indian thinking, well-being unfolds at cognitive (rigorous self examination), conative (performance of duty) and affective (expression of self beyond the ego) levels.

From the above account it is clear that there exist differences about the concept of well-being in the West and the East, in that the conceptualizations made in the West revolve around the ability to satisfy one's needs, avoidance of frustrations and stress, and exercising certain amounts of control on the environment such that it enhances the satisfaction of personal and social needs. In the Indian tradition control over the senses is thought to be essential to well-being. Emphasis is on the maintenance of balance between extremes of satisfaction and denial (implying that needs need not be totally denied) and adoption of a path of moderation. Further, since frustrations, failure, successes and joys are considered inevitable in one's life, the essence of well-being lies in not being overwhelmed by either. While in the West the idea is to have control or exploit the environment since it is thought that environment provides the inputs that lead to need satisfaction, in Hindu spiritual thought the concept of "being in tune" with the environment is encouraged to be able to experience well-being.

Indian studies

In spite of the abundant and regular information available on the nature and effects of spiritual experiences, not many studies, in the empirical mode, have been carried out so far in India. The few studies carried out with the aim of looking into the relationship between spirituality/religion and well-being are reported here. A study conducted by Naidu and Panda (1990) on 465 Hindu adults aged 30-50 years, revealed that those low on the Hindu spiritual concept of non-attachment (*anasakti*) obtained higher scores on tests measuring stress and strain indicating that non-attachment reduces stress by eliminating negative emotions.

Another recent study by Krishna Mohan (1999) looked into the effects of the spiritual experiences of 200 respondents aged 20-70 years, belonging to 13 various spiritual organizations based on Hindu Philosophy. The subjects were administered the Life Experience Questionnaire (LEQ), Index of Changes Resulting from Experience (ICRE) and Checklist of Effects of Experiences (CEE). The findings revealed that after the spiritual experiences they were generally happy, cheerful and at peace most of the time, and rarely downhearted or depressed. Among the values and motivations which give them meaning in life, they reported that the need to achieve personal growth and maintaining close relationships with loved ones who are important gave them a purpose in life. The majorities of the respondents reported having excellent health, and were satisfied with the meaning and purpose they found in their lives. A significant number of respondents said that the spiritual experiences they had were valuable or beneficial to them. It was also found that most of the experiences contained references to the spiritual leader, God and a "Higher power". Further they have reported an increase in areas reflecting humanistic and spiritual concerns, and a decrease in negative feelings and beliefs.

Spirituality and well-being: a contemporary scenario

Spirituality and religion, despite their significance for individuals and institutions, have mostly been neglected by psychologists and other mental health professionals in this century. In more recent years, however, there have been signs of renewed interest in the study of spirituality and religion. In the earlier days of psychology there were many influential thinkers in the field who included religion and spirituality in their theories e.g., Freud, James, Jung, Erikson and Maslow (Wulff, 1996). But gradually interest in this area faded out with rise of behaviourism as a legitimate and respected field of study for psychologists (Dennis, 1995).

Many researchers have argued the need for a spiritual and religious component in counselling and psychotherapy in recent years. Scolled, (1993) expressed distress over contemporary psychology and many contemporary psychotherapeutic approaches which express the perception of human beings as cut off and isolated, not only from nature and from individuals, but more significantly from activities of cosmic purpose. While stressing the importance of spirituality in psychotherapy, Bergin (1980) suggests that contemporary psychotherapy has much to gain from a world view that reconnects human beings with one another and with universal and spiritual purposes.

Recent years have witnessed encouraging developments in research interest in the interaction of spirituality and mental health and this interest is currently growing (Adams, 1995; Hall & Hall, 1997; Wulff, 1996). Another encouraging sign in this direction is that the recent psychiatric literature and contemporary socio-political developments are suggesting a need to reconsider the place of religion and spirituality in psychiatry (Turbott, 1996). Further, it appears that science and spirituality are no longer considered as being

diametrically opposed or mutually exclusive (Neil, 1995). For example, Helminiak (1996) argues that spirituality can meet the demanding criteria that qualify it as a science, a specialisation within psychology. There is also a renewed effort in psychology to embrace spirituality (Dennis, 1995) and a recognition that there was a serious oversight all these years to have ignored the role of spirituality in the development of the psyche (Gopal-McNicol, 1997).

There is a growing evidence for increased interest in psychology of religion and spirituality in Western society as a whole (Hill, 1999). This can be seen in the steep increase in the number of articles published in mainstream journals and workshops on spirituality. Pargament (1999) a leading researcher in the area of religion and spirituality observes that the field is beginning to emerge in coming years as a leading sub-field of psychology. Even in research the trend is changing where respect and under-representation of research in the area of religion and spirituality which was present in the past is slowly beginning to fade. To sum up, the growing interest, as religion and spirituality are importantly related to, in a number of domains, has led to a great interest among psychologists and other related professionals in recent years.

Much of the credibility established by the field in the recent years can be attributed to the literature showing the relationship of religion and spirituality with mental health (See Gartner, 1996; Ventis, 1995) and physical (see McCullough, 1999, Dull & Skokan, 1995; Hill & Butter, 1995) health, which substantially established the link. Though the relationship is complex, with religion and spirituality correlating both positively and negatively with mental and physical health, the positive benefits of religion and spirituality seem to outweigh the negative (Bergin, 1983; Payne et al., 1991). From the compelling evidence based on literature it can be said that spirituality and religion are a potent force in society, shaping both individual and institutions.

Given its concerns with the individual-in-context and systemic change, spirituality has many implications for mental health in particular and psychology in general. Further, considering religion and spirituality as a cultural phenomena which has relevance and meaning to its practitioners, it can be understood in a secular frame drawn from the West. It opens a new area of significant study in understanding human dynamics of non-European cultures. It also hold the key to understanding the behaviour patterns and modes of thought which westerners often find either amusing or puzzling.

Realising the role of culture in understanding behaviour and using culturally based knowledge in mental health interventions in recent years has further broadened the scope for the study of religious and spiritual issues. The first part of this paper presents studies showing positive effects of spirituality and religion on psychological well-being. While drawing implications, the second part of the paper attempts to look into the possibility of spirituality as a cultural alternative to Western psychotherapies in an Indian context.

There is a growing interest in spirituality in everyday life (Daniels, 1997; Forman, 1998; Gallup Poll, 1997; Moyers, 1993; Yankelovich, 1981), but also in disciplines ranging from philosophy and popular literature to psychotherapy, health psychology, medicine and science (Begley, 1998; Brown, 1994; Garvey, 1985; Goleman, 1993; Harris, 1997; Hunt, 1995; Roof, 1993; Vaughan, 1991, 1995; Walsh, 1997; Wilber, 1998; Wulff, 1997). Religiosity and spirituality were formerly used almost interchangeably but spirituality seems to be a more inclusive and abstract concept than religiosity (Mahoney & Graci, 1999). With the acceptance of some role of spirituality and religion in counselling and psychotherapy,

the last decade has witnessed an increase in research attempts to look for the significant contribution being made by religion to counselling and psychotherapy.

Spirituality and psychotherapy

In a study by Heise and Steitz (1991) it was found that the philosophy of spiritual progress, which was promoted in many 12-step programs, proved more conducive to functional mental health and morality than did a philosophy of spiritual perfection based on a fundamentalist Christian focus. This was true for dysfunctional individuals, family systems and societies. Knoblauch (1985) reported his findings based on Taoist thought and 5 Taoist counselling constructs helped individuals begin to accept themselves as they are rather than providing an ego-based system of organized despair by increased self-esteem or helping them to be more rational or positive in their lives.

The need for mental health professionals to be sensitized to the role of religion and spirituality as coping mechanisms is being stressed (Jenkins & Pargament, 1995) and many believe that spirituality may be appropriate for inclusion in therapy if the client and situation warrant it (Kivley, 1986). On the same lines Ross (1994) argued that understanding and the judicious encouragement of religious practice can augment therapy and provide a basis for reframing, which can assist in treatment. Sappington (1994) calls for the development of a psychology of Christian living to help in Christian oriented counselling.

In fact a wide range of spiritual healing traditions emphasizes the central importance of the connection of all life to spiritual or cosmic realities. In these views, healing is usually seen as restoring a condition of wholeness or harmony (Carlson & Shield, 1989). Several investigators have studied the relative frequency of use of various religious techniques with counselling and psychotherapy. For example Ball and Goodyear (1991) and James et al., (1992) found that prayer has often been used by the religious counsellor for religious clients as an adjunct to counselling. In a study by Soderton and Martinson (1987) it was found that the 25 cancer patients' strategy for coping with cancer was through prayer.

In India one very often finds that a spiritually oriented person is also at the same time religious, more so if he/she happens to be a Hindu. To most Hindus religion is the source of their spirituality. It is interesting, to note that a survey (Gallup, 1988) reported that 98% of the population in India said that they believe in God. In India it is a common practice to use religious methods and spiritual concepts for both physical and mental well-being and it is now being increasingly recognized that psychotherapists would do well to incorporate spiritual dimensions of people not only in healing mental disturbances but in enhancing positive growth and well-being to the willing individuals (Rangaswamy, 1994). While reviewing the *Atharva Veda,* a sacred Hindu text, Balodhi & Chowdhary (1986) argued that the *Atharva Veda* has been an important tool of traditional healers over the course of history. They also suggested that it may prove useful, if modified, to fit within an Indian context of treating mental illness. This is corroborated by Holdstock (1979) who, while discussing the incidence of indigenous healing in South Africa, recognised that including the spiritual and emotional dimensions in psychotherapy yielded better results. Further he suggested that such an approach might provide an alternative to existing modes of Western psychotherapy.

Indian mental health professionals have attempted to apply the psychotherapeutic system evolved out of yoga, in addition to the Western methods, which may not exactly suit the prevailing cultural conditions (Rao P.V.K. 1998). Emphasising the strength of yoga and

showing parallels with psychotherapy, Lerner (1971) affirms that yoga is basically spiritual in its thrust and suggests that Western psychotherapists might benefit from yoga knowledge as it has therapeutic and growth qualities. If adopted in psychotherapy, counselling and community programmes, this yoga knowledge might promote well-being.

Based on the research studies it can be said that spirituality as an individual and cultural phenomena has not received the due attention that it deserves in psychology. To study spiritual phenomena appropriate modalities and methods should be devised in order to have clarity and rigor. It can also be observed that spirituality offers an alternative and inexpensive method of psychotherapy aimed at strengthening the personality. Finally, spirituality can be studied as a part of cultural studies with specific reference to the Indian context where a long tradition of spiritual experiences and way of life has been authentically established.

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A map of consciousness studies*

Max Velmans

In ordinary life, first-person accounts of our mental life and actions in terms of what we think, desire, feel, believe, and experience with our senses provide useful explanations of what is going on. Indeed, for most everyday purposes, such accounts are more useful than the more theoretically driven accounts offered by cognitive psychology, neuropsychology and other sciences of the mind. They also provide an initial point of departure for a science of consciousness. In themselves, however, they no more *exhaust* the scope of a science of consciousness than everyday descriptions of the physical world exhaust the scope of physics. As in physics, a science of consciousness aims for more precise knowledge, deeper understanding, and to discover *general* truths that can be applied to individual situations (thereby providing a measure of prediction and control). As in any communal science this requires the development of a systematic investigative methodology.

How can one investigate phenomenal consciousness? One cannot do so simply by investigating something *other* than phenomenal consciousness—even something that relates as closely to it as its neural causes and correlates. As in other areas of science, causes and correlates are not ontological identities.[1] That said, there is nothing to prevent a systematic enquiry into how phenomenal consciousness *relates* to brain processes and to the embedding physical and social world.

This enables one to create a form of "consciousness science" that is already well known and well accepted in psychological research. Psychophysics for example has traditionally investigated how changes in simple dimensions of external physical stimuli (such as intensity and frequency) are translated by perceptual systems into changes in experience. Cognitive psychology investigates the ways in which mental processes operate and how some of these processes (selective attention, working memory, and so on) relate to and support current experience. Neuropsychology tracks the changes in the brain that cause or correlate with normal and disordered forms of experience (see Farthing, 1992, and readings in Velmans, 1996a; Cohen & Schooler, 1997).

Overall this provides a two-pronged approach to consciousness studies in which traditional third-person methods for investigating the brain and physical world are combined with first-person methods for investigating subjective experience with the aim of finding "bridging laws" which relate such first- and third-person data to each other. These traditional routes to the investigation of experience require no *a priori* commitment to philosophical reductionism (of first- to third-person data). On the contrary, first-person approaches provide data that cannot be obtained from a third-person perspective—for example what it is like to have a given conscious experience or to be in a given conscious state. And third-person approaches provide data that cannot be obtained from a first-person perspective—for

example data about what is going on in the brain while one is having a given experience. As I have argued in Velmans (1991a) "first-person and third-person perspectives are complementary and mutually irreducible. A complete psychology requires both."

There are of course many different ways in which first- and third-person investigations can complement each other. In some situations the relation of first- to third-person data may be very precise. Ordinary conscious states are always *of* something, so it is plausible to suppose that both they and their neural correlates are representational states. It is also plausible to suppose that given conscious states and their neural correlates encode identical information (about what they represent) although this information may be formatted in very different ways. Consequently, at the interface of consciousness with its neural correlates it may be possible to specify the relation of first- to third-person information with mathematical precision; for example, it may be possible to specify the topology of phenomenal space, the topology of correlated neural representational space, and the mapping of one on to the other.[2]

First- and third-person investigations can also be "complementary" in a more general sense. The aetiology of conscious mental states can be investigated both in first-person terms and via third-person methods such as the use of non-invasive imaging techniques that provide real-time information about operations of the brain that correlate with given experiences. First- and third-person approaches can also be mutually supportive in the discovery of *unconscious* mental states. In other situations the complementary use of first- and third-person information pits interpretations based on first-person data *against* that obtained via third-person techniques. Here the aim is to find interpretations that most fully account for *all* the data. Sometimes, third-person data can show first-person theories about the mental states that cause behaviour to be wrong (as in the celebrated studies of folk-psychological beliefs by Nisbett and Wilson, 1977). Conversely, Solms (2000), demonstrates how first-person psychoanalytic investigation of right hemisphere syndrome (a combination of anosognosia, neglect, and defective spatial cognition), can reveal flaws in standard third-person, neurophysiological accounts.

Difficulties in the development of more sophisticated first-person methods

In the study of consciousness, both first- and third-person methods clearly have a role to play. However, given the traditional commitment to "objective" third-person methods in Western science, it is not surprising that these have become far more sophisticated than the so-called "introspective" techniques. Neural imaging studies illustrate this point nicely in that they typically employ impressive machinery with multicoloured displays producing data that can only be analysed with sophisticated statistical techniques. By contrast, the conscious activities and reports required of subjects in neural imaging studies are usually very simple. For example, in studies that investigate the transition from a preconscious to a conscious visual state, subjects might be asked to attend to a simple visual stimulus and to report whether or not they see it. In studies that investigate the processes supporting visual imagery, subjects might be asked to report when they have a visual image (of some object) and so on. In such situations, subjects are asked to enter into or are placed into a given

mental state, but the *investigation* of that state is largely up to the experimenter (using entirely third-person techniques) rather than the subject.

In the early psychological laboratories of Wundt, Titchener and their followers, it was hoped that first-person methods could be developed that are, in their own way, as sophisticated as third-person methods. Although the history of psychological science has shown that this is not easy to achieve, this project was never entirely abandoned, even during the behaviourist years. With the re-emergence of consciousness studies the development of better first-person methods has once again become serious scientific business.[3]

What are the residual problems? There is more than one map that can be drawn of the consciousness studies terrain—depending on one's direction of approach and the depth and breadth of one's focus. Given this, it is not surprising that both the analysis of problems and the suggested solutions differ. Tart (2000), for example, approaches the problems of consciousness from the perspective of an investigator of altered conscious states. Consequently, he focuses on the need to *enter into* a given conscious state in order to understand it fully, which opens up the possibility that investigators of consciousness may need to develop a series of "state-specific sciences." Taking a multidisciplinary approach, Wilber & Walsh (2000) draw a map of the consciousness studies terrain that is as large as the cosmos itself, including its evolution, its microcosm and macrocosm, its individual and social (relational) aspects, and its inner and outer manifestations. This map includes all that we are or can be conscious of. As they make clear, consciousness studies may be divided into distinct *domains* . Ultimately, all domains support each other (being parts of the whole), but investigative techniques, and the methods of attaining agreement and settling disagreement need to be tailored to the given domain that one wishes to explore. One must choose the map that is most useful for one's purposes for oneself. My own tentative map approaches the terrain with the traditional concerns of an experimental psychologist. Viewed this way, what are the difficulties that first-person methods face? The problems are of three kinds:

1. Epistemological problems: How can one obtain public, objective knowledge about private, subjective experiences?

2. Methodological problems: Given that one cannot attach measuring instruments directly up to experiences, what psychological "instruments" and procedures are appropriate to their study?

3. The relation of the observer to the observed: The more closely coupled an observer is with an observed, the greater the potential influence of the act of observation on the nature of the observed ("observer effects"). Given this, how can one develop introspective and phenomenological methods where the observer *is* the observed?

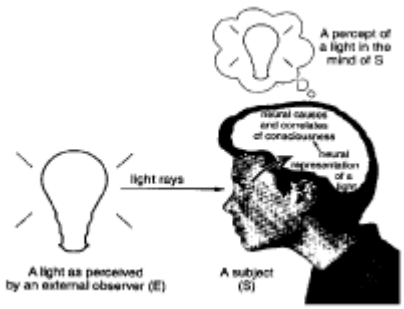

Figure 1

Epistemological problems[4]

Although the private, subjective nature of conscious experience is widely thought to preclude its scientific investigation. I will argue that this is not where the real problems lie. Rather, the epistemological problems posed by the study of subjective experience are largely artefactual, arising from a misconceived, dualist, splitting of the world which we have inherited from Descartes. This implicit dualism is clearly shown in the model of perception shown in Figure 1. In fact there are *two* splits in this model: (1) the observer (on the right of the diagram is clearly separate from the observed (the light on the left of the diagram) and (2) public, objective "physical phenomena" in the external world or in the brain (in the lower part of the diagram) are clearly separated from private, subjective psychological phenomena "in the mind" (represented by the cloud in the upper part of the diagram).

How we make sense of this in conventional studies of perception

Following usual procedures, a subject (S) is asked to focus on the light and report on or respond to what she experiences, while the experimenter (E) controls the stimulus and tries to observe what is going on in the subject's brain. E has observational access to the stimulus and to S's brain states, but has no access to what S experiences. In principle, other experimenters can also observe the stimulus and S's brain states. Consequently, what E has access to is thought of as "public" and "objective." However, E does not have access to S's experiences, making them "private" and "subjective" and a problem for science. This apparently radical difference in the epistemic *status* of the data accessible to E and S is enshrined in the words commonly used to describe what they perceive. That is, E makes *observations* , whereas S merely has *subjective experiences* .

Although this way of looking at things is adequate as a working model for many studies it actually misdescribes the *phenomenology* of conscious experience—and, consequently misconstrues the problems a study of conscious experience must face. A more accurate model of the way events in the world are experienced by subjects is shown in the reflexive model of perception in Figure 2.

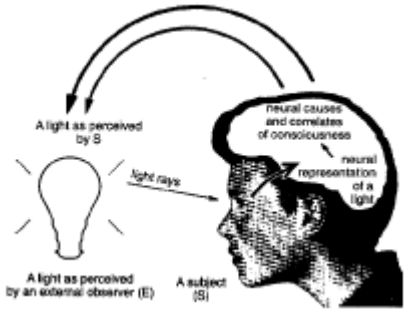

Figure 2

This reflexive model accepts conventional wisdom about the physical and neurophysiological causes of perception—for example, that there really is a physical stimulus in the room that our experience of it *represents* . But it gives a different account of the nature of the resulting experience. According to this non-dualist view, when S attends to the light in a room she does not have an experience *of* a light "in her head or brain," with its attendant problems for science. She just sees a light in a room. Indeed, what the subject experiences is very similar to what the experimenter experiences when he gazes at the light (she just sees the light from a different angle)—in spite of the different terms they use to describe what they perceive (a "physical stimulus" versus a "sensation of light"). If so, there can be no actual difference in the subjective versus objective status of the light *phenomenology* "experienced" by S and "observed" by E. I have developed the case for this and analysed its consequences elsewhere (Velmans, 1993a, 1996b, 2000). However, one can easily grasp the essential similarities between S's "experiences" and E's "observations" from the fact that *the roles of S and E are interchangeable* .

A thought experiment—"changing places"

What makes one human being a "subject" and another an "experimenter"? Their different roles are defined largely by *differences in their interests* in the experiment, reflected in differences in what they are required to do. The subject is required to focus only on her *own* experiences (of the light), which she needs to respond to or report on in an appropriate way. The experimenter is interested primarily in the *subject's* experiences, and in how these depend on the light stimulus or brain states that he can "observe."

To exchange roles, S and E merely have to turn their heads , so that E focuses exclusively on the light and describes what he experiences, while S focuses her attention not just on the light (which she now thinks of as a "stimulus") but also on events she can observe in E's brain, and on E's reports of what he experiences. In this situation, E becomes the "subject" and S becomes the "experimenter." Following current conventions, S would now be entitled to think of her observations (of the light and E's brain) as "public and objective" and to regard E's experiences of the light as "private and subjective."

Notice that this outcome, where the epistemic status of the experienced light switches from "subjective" to "objective" as S switches from being a "subject" to an "experimenter" is absurd, as the phenomenology of the light remains the same, viewed from the perspective of either S or E, whether it is *thought of* an "observed stimulus" or an "experience." Nothing has changed in the character of the light that E and S can observe other than the focus of

their interest. That is, in terms of *phenomenology* there is no difference between "observed phenomena" and "experiences." This raises a fundamental question: If the phenomenology of the light remains the same whether it is thought of a "physical stimulus" or an "experience," is the phenomenon *private and subjective* or is it *public and objective* ?

All experiences are private and subjective.

I do not have direct access to your experiences and you do not have direct access to mine. For example I cannot experience your pain, your thoughts, your colour qualia, the way your body feels to you, the way the sky looks to you, the way I look to you, etc. I can only have my own experiences (however well I empathise). The privacy and subjectivity of each individual's experience is well accepted in philosophy of mind. It seems to be a fundamental given of how we are situated in the world.

In dualism, "experiences" are private and subjective, while "physical phenomena" are public and objective as noted above. However, according to the reflexive model there is no *phenomenal* difference between physical phenomena and our experiences *of* them. When we turn our attention to the external world, physical phenomena just *are* what we experience. If so, there is a sense in which physical phenomena are "private and subjective" just like the other things we experience. For example, I cannot experience your phenomenal mountain or your phenomenal tree. I only have access to my own phenomenal mountain and tree. Similarly, I only have access to my own phenomenal light stimulus and my own observations of its physical properties (in terms of meter readings of its intensity, frequency, and so on). That is, w *e each live in our own private, phenomenal world* . Few, I suspect, would disagree.

Public access to observed entities and events; public phenomena in the sense of similar, shared, private experiences

What are the implications of this for science? If we each live in our own private, phenomenal world then each "observation" is, in a sense, private. This was evident to the father of operationalism, the physicist P.W. Bridgman (1936), who concluded that, in the final analysis, "science is only my private science". However, this is clearly not the whole story. When an entity or event is placed beyond the body surface (as the entities and events studied by Physics usually are) it can be perceived by any member of the public suitably located in space and time. Under these circumstances such entities or events are "public" in the sense that there is public access to the observed entity or event itself.

This distinction between the *phenomenon* perceived by a given observer and the entity or event *itself* is important. In the reflexive model, perceived phenomena *represent* things-themselves, but are not identical to them. The light perceived by E and S, for example, can be described in terms of its perceived brightness and colour. But, in terms of physics, the stimulus is better described as electromagnetism with a given mix of energies and frequencies. As with all visually observed phenomena, the phenomenal light only *becomes* a phenomenal light once the stimulus interacts with an appropriately structured visual system—and the result of this observed–observer interaction is a light as-experienced which is private to the observer in the way described above. However, if the stimulus itself is beyond the

body surface and has an independent existence, it remains there *to be* observed whether it is observed (at a given moment) or not. That is why the stimulus itself is *publicly accessible* in spite of the fact that each observation/experience of it is private to a given observer.

To the extent that observed entities and events are subject to similar perceptual and cognitive processing in different human beings, it is also reasonable to assume a degree of *commonality* in the way such things are experienced. While each experience remains private, it may be a private experience that others share. For example, unless observers are suffering from red/green colour blindness, we normally take it for granted that they perceive electromagnetic stimuli with wavelength 700 nanometers (nm) as red and those of 500 nm as green. Given the privacy of light phenomenology there is no way to be certain that others experience "red" and "green" as we do ourselves (the classical problem of "other minds"). But in normal life, and in the practice of science, we adopt the working assumption that the same stimulus, observed by similar observers, will produce similar observations or experiences. Thus, while experienced entities and events (phenomena) remain private to each observer, if their perceptual, cognitive and other observing apparatus is similar, we assume that their experiences (of a given stimulus) are similar. Consequently, experienced phenomena may be "public" in the special sense that other observers have similar or shared experiences.

Being clear about what is private and what is public

The consequences of this non-dualist analysis can be summarised as follows:

- — There is only *private* access to individual observed or experienced *phenomena* .
- — There can be *public* access to the entities and events which serve as the stimuli for such phenomena (the entities and events which the phenomena represent). This applies, for example, to the entities and events studied by physics.
- — If the perceptual, cognitive and other observing apparatus of different observers is similar, we assume that their experiences (of a given stimulus) are similar. In this special sense, experienced phenomena may be *public* in so far as they are *similar or shared private experiences* .

From subjectivity to intersubjectivity

This reanalysis of private versus public phenomena also provides a natural way to think about the relation between *subjectivity* and *intersubjectivity* . Each (private) observation or experience is necessarily *subjective* , in that it is always the observation or experience of a *given* observer, viewed and described from his or her individual perspective. However, once that experience is shared with another observer it can become *inter* -subjective. That is, through the sharing of a similar experience, subjective views and descriptions of that experience potentially converge, enabling intersubjective agreement about what has been experienced.

How different observers establish intersubjectivity through negotiating agreed descriptions of shared experiences is a complex process that involves far more than shared experience. One also needs a shared language, shared cognitive structures, a shared world-view or

scientific paradigm, shared training and expertise and so on. In the process of establishing intersubjectivity, interacting observers can also influence each other's experience and shared understanding of experience in more subtle, interpersonal and social ways to create a shared perspective. This adoption of a shared perspective, from which *we* see each other and the world is sometimes referred to as "the second person perspective" (see for example, Wilber & Walsh, 2000). We return to this briefly below (in the discussion of "observer effects"). All we need to note for now is that, to the extent that an experience or observation can be *generally* shared (by a community of observers), it can form part of the database of a communal science.

Different meanings of the term "objective" that are used in science

According to the analysis above, phenomena in science can be "objective" in the sense of intersubjective. Note, however, that intersubjectivity requires the presence of subjectivity rather than its absence. Observation statements (descriptions of observations) can also be "objective" in the sense of being dispassionate, accurate, truthful, and so on. Scientific method can also be "objective" in the sense that it follows well-specified, repeatable procedures (perhaps using standard measuring instruments). However, if the analysis above is correct, one cannot make observations without engaging the experiences and cognitions of a conscious subject (unobserved meter readings are not "observations"). If so, science cannot be "objective" in the sense of being observer-free.

Intra-subjective and inter-subjective repeatability

According to the reflexive model, there is no phenomenal difference between *observations* and *experiences* . Each observation results from an interaction of an observer with an observed. Consequently, each observation is *observer-dependent* and *unique* . This applies even to observations made by the same observer, of the same entity or event, under the same observation conditions, *at different times* —although, under these circumstances, the observer may have no doubt that he/she is making *repeated* observations of the same entity or event.

If the conditions of observation are sufficiently standardised an observation may be *repeatable* within a community of (suitably trained) observers, in which case intersubjectivity can be established by collective *agreement* . Once again, though, it is important to note that different observers cannot have an *identical* experience. Even if they observe the same event, at the same location, at the same time, they each have their own, unique experience. *Inter* subjective repeatability resembles *intra* subjective repeatability in that it merely requires observations to be sufficiently similar to be taken for "tokens" of the same "type." This applies particularly to observations in science, where repeatability typically requires intersubjective agreement amongst scientists observing similar events at *different* times and in *different* geographical locations.

Consequences of the above analysis for a science of consciousness

The above provides an account of the empirical method, i.e. of what scientists actually do when they test their theories, establish *intersubjectivity* , *repeatability* and so on which accepts that observed, physical phenomena just *are* the entities and events that scientists experience. Although I have focused on physical events, this analysis applies also to the investigation of events that are usually thought of as "mental" or "psychological." Although the methodologies appropriate to the study of physical and mental phenomena may be very different, the same *epistemic* criteria can be applied to their scientific investigation. Physical phenomena and mental (psychological) phenomena are just different kinds of phenomena which observers experience (whether they are experimenters or subjects). $S_{1\ to\ n}$ might, for example, all report that a given increase in light intensity produces a just noticeable difference in brightness, an experience/observation that is intersubjective and repeatable. Alternatively, $S_{1\ to\ n}$ might all report that a given anaesthetic removes pain or, if they stare at a red light spot, that a green after-image appears, making such phenomena similarly public, intersubjective, and repeatable.

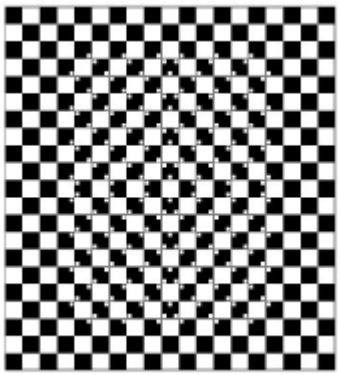

Figure 3

This closure of psychological with physical phenomena is self-evident in situations where the same phenomenon can be thought of as either "physical" or "psychological" depending on one's interest in it. At first glance, for example, a visual illusion of the kind shown in Figure 3, might seem to present difficulties, for the reason that physical and psychological descriptions of this phenomenon conflict.

Physically, the figure consists entirely of squares, joined in straight lines, while subjectively, most of the central lines in the figure seem to be bent. However, the physical and psychological descriptions result from two different observation procedures. To obtain the physical description, an experimenter E typically places a straight edge against each line, thereby obscuring the cues responsible for the illusion and providing a fixed reference against which the curvature of each line can be judged. To confirm that the lines are actually straight, other experimenters ($E_{1\ to\ n}$) can repeat this procedure. In so far as they each observe the line to be straight under these conditions, their observations are public, intersubjective and repeatable.

But, the fact that the lines *appear* to be bent (once the straight edge is removed) is similarly public, intersubjective and repeatable (amongst subjects $S_{1\ to\ n}$). Consequently, the illusion can be investigated using relatively conventional scientific procedures, in spite of the fact that the *illusion* is unambiguously *mental* . One can, for example, simply move the straight

edge outside the figure making it seem parallel to the bent central lines–thereby obtaining a measure of the angle of the illusion.

The empirical method

In short, once the *empirical method* is stripped of its dualist trappings, it applies as much to the science of consciousness as it does to the science of physics, and it applies both to Western phenomenological methods, focused on ordinary conscious states and to methods for investigating altered states, such as those developed in the East. It also applies to the evaluation of processes for changing experience.

Stated formally, the empirical method follows one, fundamental principle:

> — *If observers $E_{1\ to\ n}$ (or subjects $S_{1\ to\ n}$), carry out procedures $P_{1\ to\ n}$, under observation conditions $O_{1\ to\ n}$, they should observe (or experience) result R*

(assuming that $E_{1\ to\ n}$ and $S_{1\ to\ n}$ have similar perceptual and cognitive systems, that $P_{1\ to\ n}$ are the procedures which specify the nature of the experiment or investigation, and that $O_{1\ to\ n}$ includes *all* relevant background conditions, including those internal to the observer, such as their attentiveness, the paradigm within which they are trained to make observations and so on).

Or, informally:

> — *If you carry out these procedures you will observe or experience these results.* [5]

Complicating factors: symmetries and asymmetries of access.[6]

Investigations of consciousness do, of course, face domain-specific problems, which are different to those typically encountered in investigations of the external world. These differences arise partly from differences in the questions of interest, partly from differences amongst some of the phenomena studied and partly from systematic differences in the typical *access* an observer has to the observed.

For experimental purposes, the entities and events studied by physics are located *external* to the observers. Placed this way, such entities and events afford *public access* (see above) and different observers establish intersubjectivity, repeatability and so on by using similar exteroceptive systems and equipment to observe them. E and S in Figure 2, for example, might observe the light via their visual systems, supplemented by similar instruments that measure its intensity, frequency and other physical properties. When S and E (and any other observer suitably place in space and time) use similar means to access information about a given entity or event we may say that they have *symmetrical access* to the observed (in this case, to the stimulus light itself). If the event of interest is located on the surface of or within

S's body, or within S's brain, as would be the case in the study of physiology or neurophysiology, it remains external to E. Thus placed, it can still afford public, symmetrical access to a community of other, suitably placed external observers ($E_{1\ to\ n}$). Consequently, such events can be investigated by the same "external" means employed in other areas of natural science.

In the study of consciousness, however, what the *subject* observes or experiences is of primary interest and, if one compares the information *about S* available *to S* with the information *about S* available *to E* (and other external observers), various forms of *asymmetry* arise. If the event of interest is located on the surface of or within S's body, she may be able to observe or experience that event through interoceptive as well as exteroceptive systems. For example, if she stabs her finger with a pin she might not only be able to see the pin go in, but also to experience a pain in her finger consequent on skin damage. Under these circumstances, she has two sources of information about the event taking place in her skin, while E retains only exteroceptive (visual) information about this event, as before. Likewise, if one stimulates S's brain with a microelectrode, she might, like E, be able to observe the electrical stimulation (with an "autocerebroscope"[7]). But, in addition, she might be able to experience the effects of such stimulation in the form of a consequent visual, auditory, tactile or other experience. In such situations, observers E and S have *asymmetrical access* to the observed.

Crucially, E and S (and any other observers) have *asymmetrical access* to each other's *experiences* of an observed (asymmetrical access to each other's observed phenomena). That is, they know what it is like to have their own experiences, but they can only access the experiences of others indirectly via their verbal descriptions or non-verbal behaviour. This applies to *all* observed phenomena, for example, it applies even if the observed is a simple physical stimulus, such as the light in Figure 2. As E does not have direct access to S's experience of the light and vice-versa, there is no way for E and S to be *certain* that they have a similar experience (whatever they might claim). E might nevertheless *infer* that S's experience is similar to his own on the assumption that S has similar perceptual apparatus, operating under similar observation arrangements, and on the basis of S's similar observation reports. S normally makes similar assumptions about E. It is important to note that this has not impeded the development of physics and other natural sciences, which simply ignore the problem of "other minds" (uncertainty about what other observers actually experience). They just take it for granted that if *observation reports* are the same, then the corresponding *observations* are the same. The success of natural science testifies to the pragmatic value of this approach.

Given this, it seems justifiable to apply the same pragmatic criteria to the observations of subjects in studies of consciousness (i.e. to their "subjective reports"). If, given a standard stimulus and standardised observation conditions, different subjects give similar reports of what they experience, then (barring any evidence to the contrary) it is reasonable to assume that they have similar experiences. Ironically, psychologists have often agonised over the merits of observation reports *when produced by subjects*, although like other scientists, they take them for granted *when produced by experimenters*, on the grounds that the observations of subjects are "private and subjective," while those of experimenters are "public and objective." As experimenters do not have access to each other's experiences any more than they have

access to the experiences of subjects, this is a fallacy, as we have seen. Provided that the observation conditions are sufficiently standardised, the observations reported by subjects can be made public, intersubjective, and repeatable amongst a community of subjects in much the same way that observations can be made public, intersubjective and repeatable amongst a community of experimenters. This provides an epistemic basis for a science of consciousness that includes its phenomenology.

In sum, asymmetries of access complicate, but do not prevent the investigation of experience. In Figure 2, E has access, in principle, to the events and processes in S's visual system, but not to S's experience. While S focuses exclusively on the light, she has access to her experience, but not to the antecedent processing in her visual system. Under these circumstances, the information available to S *complements* the information available to E. As noted earlier, to obtain a complete account of visual perception one needs to utilise *both* sources of information.

Methodological problems

It goes without saying that the empirical method, formulated in this way, provides only basic, *epistemic* conditions for the study of consciousness. One also requires *methodologies* appropriate to the subject matter—and the methodologies required to study conscious appearances are generally very different from those used in physics. There are many ways in which the phenomena we usually think of as physical or psychological differ from each other and amongst themselves (in terms of their relative permanence, stability, measurability, controllability, describability, complexity, variability, dependence on the observational arrangements, and so on). Even where the *same* phenomenon is the subject of both psychological and physical investigation (as might be the case with the light in Figure 2 above) the *interests* of psychologists and physicists differ, requiring different investigative techniques. A physicist, for example, is typically interested in the nature of the light as such, characterised for example in terms of the quantum mechanical properties of its constituent photons. Psychologists are more interested in how such physical energies are translated by the visual system into phenomenal appearances, for example in the ability of the visual system to translate changes in light intensity and frequency into discriminable changes in brightness and colour. Unlike entities and events *themselves*, one cannot hook measuring instruments up to conscious appearances. For example, an instrument that measures the intensity of the light in Figure 2 (in lumens) cannot measure its experienced brightness. Given this, one needs some method of systematising subjective judgements and consequent reports, for example, by recording minimal, discriminable differences in brightness, in the ways typically used in psychophysical experiments. [8]

The need to translate observations into observation reports also occurs, of course, in natural science, although here, reports are often made precise through the use of measuring instruments (which can be hooked up to the observed entities and events themselves). In some cases, a mental phenomenon can also be "measured", in spite of the fact that the only observer with access to that phenomenon is the subject. It is standard practice, for example, to measure the size of a visual illusion by requiring subjects to adjust the dimensions of an

external, comparison stimulus so that it matches the dimensions of the illusion (see, e.g., the discussion of the illusion shown in Figure 3 above).

That said, not all phenomena of interest to consciousness studies are easy to measure or even to communicate in an unambiguous way. Some experiences are difficult to translate into words, and therefore into subjective reports. Images, for example, generally lack the clarity, vividness and relative permanence of events as experienced out in the world, which may make them difficult to describe with accuracy and precision. Consequently, indirect measures of imagery such as its effects on memory, learning, perception and so on are common in imagery research.[9] Difficulties may also arise because one does not have a vocabulary adequate to communicate some experience unambiguously. Most human beings know what it is to love or be angry, but the many nuances of such experience are more difficult to describe (the differences in the feeling of the love of wild places, love of one's child, love of one's lover, love of the truth, love of life, compassionate love, and so on). Investigators typically deal with such situations by developing new typologies and descriptive systems (as with the typologies developed for the chemical sense modalities, taste and smell). The way experiences are categorised into types and the extent to which given categories are differentiated in ordinary language are also, in part, culture-specific. English, for example, has a highly differentiated colour terminology (consequent on the development of pigments and dyes) whereas the language of the Dani tribesmen of New Guinea has only two colour terms ("mola" for warm, light colours and "mili" for dark, cold ones). In such situations, investigators can bypass linguistic differences by using non-verbal responses—measuring, say, colour discrimination or memory by requiring subjects to visually match target colours with comparison colours on a colour chart.

These brief points about methodological problems and some of the ways that they are commonly addressed will be familiar to those trained in psychological research. Psychology and its sister disciplines have developed many different methodologies for investigating sensation, perception, emotion, thinking, and many other areas that deal directly or indirectly with how phenomena are experienced. However, as the chapters in this book demonstrate, there is much more to be said about this subject and still much to be done.

The relation of the observer to the observed.

Observations in science or in ordinary life are, to varying degrees, dependent on the *relation* of the observer to the observed. The very act of observation can affect the nature of the observed although the strength of this effect depends on the strength of the observer/observed coupling. As Norbert Wiener (the father of cybernetics) pointed out, in classical physics the observer and the observed are, in general, "loosely coupled" and the effects are relatively small (although one still has to take account of the effect of one's measuring equipment on what is being measured). In psychology, when the observed is another human being, the observer and observed are often "closely coupled" which can produce a range of "experimenter effects." In traditional experimental psychology, as in physics, care is taken to control for such effects. Experimenters might place themselves in a different room to the subject, take care to be non-invasive, give non-leading instructions, and so on.

However, in consciousness studies the effect of relationship on experience can itself be a topic of considerable interest. By what process of mutual influence, for example, do we make the transition from first- to second-person perspectives? How does the private, subjective, phenomenal world (which "I" inhabit) become the shared, intersubjective world (which "we" inhabit)? And how does the intersubjective world of "we" have enduring effects on the private world of "me." Individual experience is also shaped by its broader social and cultural context. This provides another rich field of study, as the full effects of such embeddings are not well understood. Individual relationships also vary in their "quality" with potentially potent effects on the participants. Henry (2000), for example, reviews evidence that the quality of relationship between therapist and client is a major determinant of change in clients' experience. And, Richardson (2000) examines ways in which different forms of intersubjectivity established in clinical practice contribute to a "therapeutic relationship." A detached versus an engaged clinician-client relationship, for example, may have very different consequences for what can be revealed or expressed in therapeutic encounters, which can have powerful effects on health outcome and well being. But what *determines* the quality of relatedness? How, for example, can one move from isolation to communication, intersubjectivity, empathy, and intimacy?

The relation of the observer to the observed is most intimate, of course, in situations where the observer *is* the observed, for example, in the use of introspective and phenomenological methods where subjects become the primary investigators of their own mental processes and states. In this situation "observer effects" seem to be unavoidable. The very act of directing one's attention to one's own mental states affects those states, for the simple reason that the direction and quality of attention itself defines a state of mind. Once one adds the problems of self-description, self-analysis, and self-interpretation (of mental states) it is little wonder that some authors despair of ever developing a systematic, introspective science.

However, other authors suggest that it is possible for the mind to become sufficiently stable to attain a deeper first-person knowledge of its own nature, uncovering states and processes that can be confirmed by an appropriately trained research community. Such investigative techniques often encourage a dispassionate, focused but open attitude to whatever emerges in experience (noticing whatever emerges without grasping, avoiding, judging, and so on). Depraz et al. (2000), for example, give a detailed description of a first-person investigative method that requires a "phase of suspension of habitual thought and judgement", a "phase of conversion of attention from the exterior to the interior" and "phase of letting go or receptivity towards the experience." Various readings in *The View From Within* (see note 3) illustrate how this method (augmented by other techniques) can be applied in practice. For example, an investigation of intuition by Petitmengen-Peugeot (1999) revealed the states of mind preparatory to having creative insights in a sufficiently detailed form to provide a basis for making predictions about how to facilitate such states. And Varela (1999) demonstrates how a detailed phenomenological exploration of the experience of time can provide first-person accounts that can be related to sophisticated models of the brain's temporal processing. Needless to say, the application of such subtle introspective methods requires careful training (a common situation in science)—in this instance, training in how to enter into an appropriately receptive state of mind. This may be an example of the "state-specific sciences" suggested by Tart, as only those researchers who

can enter into the appropriate states of mind can confirm or disconfirm the findings. It is important to note however that the utility and productiveness of such research methods can be assessed in the normal way, in terms of whether they enable prediction, control, provide a more integrated understanding of the phenomena under investigation, and so on. For example, Petitmengen-Peugeot's findings on states conducive to creativity can be evaluated in terms of whether others trained to enter into such states really do become more creative. And Varela's findings on the phenomenology of experienced time may be supported (or not) by triangulating evidence about temporal processing in the brain.

It should be clear that in the application of such phenomenological methods, changing the state of mind of the observer becomes an unavoidable part of the investigation. Conversely, another traditional purpose of self-investigation is to *effect* change, for example in the therapeutic and clinical situations reviewed by Henry (2000) and Richardson (2000). In discovering its own nature, the mind changes its nature. This process too, may follow discoverable, systematic principles—and it may be that in this, consciousness studies in Western science has a good deal to learn from traditional first-person investigative methodologies that have been developed over the millennia with aim of inducing such changes, particularly in the East.

Conclusions

There are many maps that can be drawn of consciousness studies. But from the perspective of psychological science, the difficulties posed by the study of consciousness may be categorised into epistemological problems, methodological problems, and problems that follow from the potential effects of the observer on the observed.

It has traditionally been thought that one cannot make consciousness studies into an "objective" science on the grounds that one cannot obtain public, objective knowledge about private, subjective experiences. However, all science relies on the experiences/observations of scientists. Scientists can be "objective" in the sense of being dispassionate, employ procedures that are "objective" in the sense of being well specified and repeatable, and develop "objective knowledge" in the sense of *intersubjective* knowledge. But no observations in science are "objective" in the sense of being observer-free. Nor does science *require* "observer-free observations." The heart of science is the *empirical method* which, simply put, is *if you follow these procedures you will observe or experience these results* . This applies as much to a science of consciousness as it does to physics.

No science of consciousness can be complete without first-person methods. Although existing first-person methods can be combined with third-person methods in a variety of useful, complementary ways, there is a clear need to develop more sophisticated first-person methods, particularly for those aspects of experience that are relatively complex, impermanent, unstable, or variable, or are difficult to describe, measure, or control. As with any area of investigation, the investigative tools and procedures need to be tailored to the phenomena under study. While there is a great deal of methodological development to be done, particularly in less well-articulated domains of experience, such development is standard practice in psychological science.

Within consciousness studies, there are many situations where the very act of observation can change the observed. These "observer effects" take two forms: The way an external observer relates to an experiencing subject can alter his or her experience ("experimenter effects"). With introspective methods where the observer *is* the observed, the act of introspection *already* produces a change in the operations of the mind.

Depending on one's purposes, there are two basic ways of dealing with such effects: one can attempt to *minimise* them, or study and *harness* them. Techniques for minimising observer effects in the study of other people all hinge on "removing" the observer (in some sense) from the observation—either literally, by placing the observer in a separate room, or metaphorically, by being non-invasive, giving non-directive instructions, etcetera. While self-observation techniques cannot remove the observer, they often encourage a dispassionate, focused, but open attitude to whatever emerges in experience (noticing whatever emerges without grasping, avoiding, judging, and so on).

For other purposes, the way that relationship changes experience is itself of primary interest. The experiences of individual observers are embedded in interpersonal, social and cultural contexts, requiring continuous re-negotiation of the borders between the first-person space of "I" and the second-person space of "we". The transitions between subjectivity and intersubjectivity are complex and not fully understood. The effects of different forms of self-investigation on the contents of consciousness are similarly obscure. Such observer/observed interactions become particularly important when the deeper purpose of the investigation is to transform experience rather than to describe it, analyse it or theorise about it. *How* different forms of engagement with others or oneself might facilitate such change is an important topic for research.

It has to be said that the methodological problems are sometimes complex and the solutions sometimes controversial, particularly in the use of introspective and phenomenological methods where subjects become the primary investigators of themselves. But this does not alter the fact that the *phenomena* of consciousness provide data that are potentially public, intersubjective and repeatable. Consequently, the need to use and develop methodologies appropriate to the study of such phenomena does not place them beyond science. Rather, it is part of science.

Notes

[1] If consciousness could be demonstrated to be *nothing more than* a state or function of the brain it would be possible to study consciousness by studies of the brain alone. I have summarised some of the fallacies of such reductionism in Velmans (1998) and reviewed these in depth in Velmans (2000), so I will not repeat this analysis here.

[2] Following this theoretical approach, phenomenal and neural-state "spaces" are dual aspects of a form of mental information, and their very different phenomenal and neural formats arise from the different first- versus third-person perspectives from which that information is viewed. In some respects (but not others) this is analogous to wave-particle complementarity in quantum mechanics where the wave- or particle-like nature of photons depends entirely on the measuring arrangements, and where a complete description of photons requires both wave and particle accounts. A more detailed analysis of such "psychological complementarity", is given in Velmans (1991a, section 9.3, 1991b, sections 8 and 9, 1993a, 1996c, and 2000, chapter 11). Some

aspects of this position have also been adopted by Chalmers (1995) and Maclennan (1996) (see the commentary on Chalmers in Velmans, 1995).

[3] See readings in Pope & Singer (1978), the *View From Within* an entire issue of *The Journal of Consciousness Studies* , 6, 2/3, 1999, and the on-line course and discussions of "The Investigation of Conscious Emotion: Combining first- and third-person methodologies." Sponsored by the University of Arizona at Tucson and the *Journal of Consciousness Studies* , February to March, 1999.

[4] The following analysis of epistemological problems is largely taken from Velmans (1999).

[5] It is interesting to note that Tart (2000), and Wilber & Walsh (2000) arrive at a very similar conclusion.

[6] The following analysis is taken largely from Velmans (2000), chapter 8.

[7] A hypothetical machine for viewing activity in one's own brain, e.g. via a T.V. monitor attached to sensors which detect electrical, magnetic or other activity.

[8] To clarify the epistemic issues, I have so far focused only on very simple cases of conscious experience (simple visual percepts, pains and so on) which are relatively easy to study and control. Under normal conditions, for example, visual perception appears to be so tightly guided by the information picked up by the retina that the resulting experience gives every appearance of being a "direct perception" of what is out-there in the world. Consequently, given similar stimuli, presented under similar viewing conditions, with similar expectations, experimental instructions and so on, different subjects are likely to agree that they see the same thing. By contrast, experienced thoughts, emotions and images are largely determined by endogenous factors, and even when they are influenced by events in the external world, they generally represent some inner response *to* external events, rather than representing the events themselves. This makes them heavily dependent on individual differences in heredity, personal history, momentary fluctuations in attention and interest, and on other endogenous factors, making them less easy to reproduce under controlled conditions. Other experiences may be rare or even unique to the individuals involved. While these factors complicate investigation they do not prevent it. Psychologists simply include such complicating factors within their research—investigating the effects of heredity, learning, and attention on thinking and emotion, making use of single case studies where needed and so on. In some studies investigators harness subjects' ability to control their own experience. A common method of studying imagery for example is to ask subjects to generate a given image, and then to perform some task that reveals something about its nature or use. When a given experience is very difficult to reproduce at will, it can be investigated when it occurs naturally, as in studies of dreaming during REM sleep. As in natural science, the accuracy of reports can become suspect when stimuli or experiences are near the limits of detectability, for example, when a weak signal is embedded in noise—in which case estimation procedures have to be developed, such as those suggested by signal detection theory. One also has to be mindful of the well-known effects of the act of observation on the nature of the observed. Such "experimenter effects" have been extensively investigated in psychology (along with the means by which they can be minimised), but they can be particularly powerful when the observer *is* the observed, for example, when a subject studies (rather than simply reports on) her own conscious experience. In such cases one either has to attempt to limit such influences (cf Ericsson & Simon, 1984) or to harness them, for example in situations where focused self-observation is intended to transform conscious states rather than to describe them (see below).

[9] A useful review of current methods for investigating imagery is given by Richardson (1999).

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Integral phenomenology
A method for the "new psychology", the study of mysticism and the sacred

Dennis Hargiss

There has been much talk recently concerning "the new psychology." I feel it necessary to state from the outset that this is *not* the topic of my paper, for that would be rather like "putting the cart before the horse". Instead, this paper addresses the issue of how the new psychology is to arise and presents a method or academic discipline through which such a development may come about. I say "may come about," for that depends upon one's sadhana (spiritual discipline).

For those sadhaks among us whose calling for the present moment is to breathe, dwell in, and strengthen one's self in the subtle, thought-free atmosphere of the illimitable, what I have to say in this paper may seem secondary, perhaps elementary—even unnecessary. But for those among us who are presently called to help build the intermediate bridge between the intellectual formulations of thinking humanity and the truth vision of the gnostic seer, what follows may be of import, whether one's work arises from the illuminating insight of spiritual realisation or the ardent, burning flame of psychic aspiration.

When I initially envisioned this paper I intended to present in terms of religious psychology a model of spiritual formation for the contemporary world—a graded architectonic of the psyche, cross-cultural in scope, that would illustrate what Sri Aurobindo refers to as "the natural curve of spiritual experience". I was then to present Sri Aurobindo and the medieval, mystic-theologian Meister Eckhart as case studies, as I have done elsewhere, for example, with the yoga sutras of Patanjali, the teaching of the Buddha as found in the Pali canon, the mystical writings of the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria, and the haiku of the Japanese nature-mystic poet Matsuo Basho. I soon realized, however, that such a work presupposes a certain methodology and hermeneutic without which much of the assertions put forth could appear questionable or even untenable according to the rigors of academic inquiry. Consequently, I decided a short paper on methodology more appropriate for this conference, and although the following ideas were not derived from the discipline of psychology but rather through my studies in the history of religion, my hope is that they may help ensure that the house of the New Psychology will be built upon the sure foundation of sound method and process—a foundation that I term "Integral Phenomenology."

So how does all this relate to Integral Psychology? Integral Psychology is based upon the first-hand discovery, observation and eventual mastery of the various phenomena at play within the subtle dimensions of the human psyche, as illumined by the yoga of Sri Aurobindo. According to the discipline of Integral Phenomenology, this comes about through actually "re-experiencing" through "mystical lived-experience" the fundamental realizations that form the experiential foundation of integral yoga. A corresponding spiritual state of consciousness is formed within the scholar/sadhak, and this becomes the basis for the expression of yogic insight in terms appropriate for the contemporary world.

Though this notion of the awakening or creation within oneself of the consciousness from which integral yoga derived may not have been expressed in the terms of phenomenology, it has been operative since the earliest days of the ashram. For instance, among Sri Aurobindo's earliest disciples Nolini Kanta Gupta once said: "Indeed if you want to know truly something you have to become it. Becoming gives the real knowledge. But becoming Sri Aurobindo and the Mother means what? Becoming a portion of them, a part and parcel of their consciousness..."[1] He continues:

> "He [Sri Aurobindo] used to put me in contact with his life, ... what he was, what he represented in his consciousness. That was the central theme, because a truly great poet means a status of consciousness; in order to understand his consciousness, you must become identified with his being."[2]

Nolini wasn't the only one with this understanding. Amrita expressed similar notions, and the Mother also stressed that to the quiet and receptive mind the sharing or identification with the being and consciousness of Sri Aurobindo may take place through the reading of his work, especially *Savitri*.[3]

Sri Aurobindo once wrote that *Savitri* was written "as a field of experimentation to see how far poetry could be written from one's own yogic consciousness and how that could be creative."[4] The power of such creative poetry lies especially in its ability to evoke, create, and foster a corresponding yogic consciousness in the contemplative mind of the reader.

In his comments on *Savitri* , Sri Aurobindo writes:

"The tale of Satyavan and Savitri is recited in the Mahabharata as a story of conjugal love conquering death. Satyavan is the soul carrying the divine truth of being within itself but descended into the grip of death and ignorance; Savitri is the Divine word, daughter of the sun, goddess of the supreme truth who comes down and is to save." He continues: "Still this is not a mere allegory, the characters are not personified qualities, but incarnations or emanations of living and conscious Forces with whom we can enter into concrete touch and they take human bodies in order to help man and show him the way from his mortal state to a divine consciousness and immortal life."[2]

And in all the thousands of pages in a plethora of academic tomes addressing issues of methodology and hermeneutics, there is not a clearer and more succinct description of Integral Phenomenology than that found in a couple of short lines in Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* itself (p. 525):

—

> "For every symbol was a reality
>
> And brought the presence which had given it life."

The approach of integral phenomenology has arisen in response to two observations I have made in the comparative study of mysticism. First is the tendency of scholars to think in terms of dualities and to thereby create unnecessary polemics and stalemates in their work and discussions. (Such as we find in the on-going debate between constructivism and

essentialism.) A second observation—stemming from such dualisms—concerns the epistemological problematic of the traditional "objective" stance required of the scholar in the study of religion. This perspective has been challenged in recent years by postmodern views questioning the very possibility of objectivity, and emphasizing the imperative of critical self-appraisal and identification of the perspectives which shape (and circumscribe) the very mental lens through which we pursue our studies. As Shelly once said in a poetic echo of Immanuel Kant, "The eye sees what it brings to the seeing."

This problem is particularly acute in the study of mysticism due to the claim among certain mystics that the nature of mystical experience can only be understood through first-hand encounter. If, as William James once said, mystical states represent points of view *superior* to normal rational consciousness, and if "objectivity" is not even possible, then is the mystic or adept from within a tradition privileged, or better able to understand and explicate his area of study? Or stated differently: In the attempt to understand the different types of *samadhi* as mentioned in Patanjali's *Yoga-Sutras* (or the various rarified mind states delineated in Buddhist psychology), would one's objectives be best accomplished through a religious scholar or a realized yogi (or meditation master)?

Underneath this question lies a deeper inquiry addressing the very nature of the academic study of religion. While many religious scholars are presently involved in a debate concerning the noetic dimension of mystical experience, perhaps a more relevant inquiry for our purposes concerns the noetic dimension of religious scholarship itself. What exactly is knowledge—religious or spiritual knowledge, or knowledge of mystical matters (as distinct from mere information and theories)—and how is it related to our work as scholars of religion and psychology?

This paper relates to such questions, and consequently speaks to the larger issues concerning the future of the study of religion and the "New Psychology". However, due to brevity it hopes at best to hint at a method of scholarship that avoids the polarities among extremists and integrates the perspectives of both scholars and mystics in a new model of "spiritual scholarship" for the coming years.

Let me first contextualize our study. Scholars in the comparative study of mysticism[5] usually fall within one of two distinct schools.[6] Those who maintain that all mystical phenomena are necessarily grounded within the particularities of the socio-religious frameworks within which such phenomena arose are called "constructivists" or "empirical theorists of mysticism."[7] They stress the irreducibility and uniqueness of a particular religious idea, experience or doctrine, and usually restrict their work to the study of a certain personage or an aspect of a single religious tradition. Those in the second school bear the appellation of "essentialist theorists of mysticism,"[8] and accentuate the commonality—even "essential unity"—of mystical phenomena which have been observed through crosscultural study and inter-religious dialogue.

Considerable debate has taken place between these two schools, and disagreement continues concerning which of the two approaches reveals the "true" nature of mysticism.[9] Yet from within the discipline of the phenomenology of religion may be found an alternate approach which integrates the values of both schools.

It should be noted, however, that many phenomenologists are likewise split between two similar schools: a) "concrete" or *descriptive* phenomenology of religion (which regards religious phenomena as unique, and consequently restricts its work to the formation of an inventory of phenomena that accentuates the historicocultural contexts of certain religious

ideas and the distinct meanings that they have for believers and practitioners); and b) "essential phenomenology" (the branch that engages in crosscultural comparisons of religious phenomena in the attempt to discern shared types or common features of human religiosity). In this paper I propose an alternate approach[10] that regards these schools as two complementary levels of phenomenological description. This third approach integrates the perspectives of both schools into a comprehensive view including both "surfacelevel" description of religious phenomena which believers regard as important, distinct and/or peculiar to their religion, as well as structural description of common features shared across various religious traditions.[11]

Perhaps the most well-known and influential scholar to employ the notion of structures as an heuristic device in discovering shared features throughout the world's religions was Mircea Eliade. According to Eliade, the perceptive scholar may discern "patterns" in diverse religious phenomena, and the recognition of these patterns or "structures" facilitates our understanding of their *meaning* .[12] While this "search for formal structures with universal values"[13] has recently fallen into disrepute among certain postmodern critical theorists (e.g., Foucault, Derrida), the endeavour has found support among others (such as Habermas and Halbfass) who lean away from the totalizing pretensions of deconstructionism and argue rather that deconstructionists' concerns may be integrated with meaningful dialogue and intercultural rapprochement into a pragmatic approach to communication and understanding across the traditions.[14]

This present study joins this on-going discussion concerning the efficacy of postulating "patterns" or "structures" as examples of the "pragmatics of communication"[15] in the study of religion.

Before going further in our discussion I should clarify what is meant by the term "structure" in the discipline of integral phenomenology. Despite resonance with the term as found in structural linguistics (where the structure of language—determined by morphological, phonological, syntactic, and semantic rules—is a necessary and sufficient condition for linguistic meaning),[16] our interests in hermeneutical issues draws more upon the later Husserl (e.g., *Ideas* [1969]) and his idea of transcendental phenomenology. ("Transcendental" here is used in a Kantian sense to refer to the view that our experience and knowledge of the world is dependent on the structure and activity of our mind.) In Husserl's attempt to establish a basis for a "critical philosophy," he situated phenomenological method within the transcendental sphere of "pure logic," and his notion of "structure" corresponded to this sphere in contradistinction to the empirical world available to our senses (this parallels his distinction between "formal" and "material" ontology). The task of the phenomenologist was to develop the faculty of "eidetic vision" or "intuition" (*Wesensschau /Wesensschauung*) whereby the Eidos (idea) or essence of phenomena could be apprehended. For Husserl, such "intuiting of essence" equates with the "seeing of structure," and constitutes the necessary condition in phenomenological analysis whereby the "meaning" of phenomena becomes logically self-evident.[17]

Also contributing to the notions of "structure" and "meaning" in phenomenological studies were Dilthey's concepts of *Erlebnis* ("intentional experience"), *Verstehen* ("emphathetic understanding"), and *Nachleben* ("re-experiencing" or "reliving"). Mac Linscott Ricketts states: "For Dilthey, *Erlebnis* was the peculiar human faculty by which man, as distinct from animals, perceives the universe. It is the posture of the artist before the universe which enables him to feel a oneness with its essence. In order for the historian to grasp the inner meaning and purpose of history, Dilthey said that a preliminary act of sympathy or *Erlebnis* was necessary. The inner states of the human subject being studied by the historian must

first be relived or re-experienced before history can be written" (Ricketts [1988], 105). In Dilthey's view, "we understand an expression by re-experiencing (*nach-erleben*) in our consciousness the experience from which the expression arose."[18]

Eliade's teacher Nae Ionescu was also influenced by the notion of a structural level of phenomenological description. However, Ionescu went beyond the intentions of Husserl and Dilthey and developed a metaphysic that imbues the "hidden meaning" of phenomena with an unique ontological status. According to Ionescu, the "structural level" of phenomena is composed of two different *types* of structures. In the realm of logic and ratiocination there are various conceptual categories (st 1), and in ontological reality there exists a realm of "essences." Such essences corresponding to the second type of "structures" (st 2), are not merely functions of our minds but rather metaphysical realities which manifest through concrete phenomena. Though these structures parallel their conceptual correspondents in the mental realm, they exist independently and are not to be confused with nor reduced to structures in the "realm of logic" (st 1). Along the vein of van der Leeuw who believed that the structural level of phenomena is to be discovered by the hermeneut through first discerning their non-linguistic meaning,[19] Ionescu taught that the metaphysical reality of the ontological structure of essences (st 2) must be discovered by an intuitive insight into reality, or what he called *traire* , "mystical lived-experience."[20]

To the scholar willing to learn the discipline, this way of mystical intuition represented the hermeneutical method *par excellence* , for just as the recognition of patterns (st 1) helps the scholar discern the meaning of various religious phenomena, so the intuitive experience of structural essences (st 2) facilitates the understanding, expression, and explanation of metaphysical realities through conceptual formulations (i.e., in the form of "knowledge").

Eliade combined these notions with a more Jungian understanding of structure and envisioned a discipline called "metapsychoanalysis" for the phenomenologist of religion. According to Eliade, "The symbol is not a mere reflection of objective reality. It reveals something more profound and basic. Therefore, religious symbols are capable of revealing a modality of the real or a *structure of the world* that is not evident on the level of immediate experience."[21] Here symbols are seen as the conceptual representations of essences within the organizing structure of categories (st 1), and mediate metaphysical realities to the receptive mind of the scholar—the actual realities behind the phenomena the scholar attempts to understand (st 2). Consequently, the apprehension of the symbol is not merely an academic, intellectual endeavor, but rather "the cause of the creation in [the scholar] of a spiritual state analogous with the object it represents (Ionescu)."[22] Eliade states: "For this [metapsychoanalysis] would lead to an awakening, and a renewal of consciousness, of the archaic symbols and archetypes whether still living or fossilized in the religious traditions of mankind."[23] In other words, the study and apprehension of religious symbols provide the scholar with a unique "spiritual path" and mental discipline which opens a means of cognition that includes but is not limited to theorizing and reasoning.

The study of mysticism according to integral phenomenology accentuates and further develops this notion of the intuitive apprehension of the "hidden meaning" behind religious symbols and mystical phenomena. In this sense it acquires a wealth of experience or first-hand encounter often assumed the exclusive privilege of the religious practitioner. However, it doesn't limit itself to subjective experience but draws upon the dynamics of the hermeneutical circle in the attempt to integrate such insight with the critical appraisal of the scholar. One engages the world of mystical phenomena with a more informed and open perspective (and therefore a less circumscribed capacity more able to "intuit" the meaning

of such phenomena), and every time one "returns" to the rational realm of critical reflection one brings an enhanced ability to understand and describe mystical phenomena in terms of conceptual categories. It is precisely this integration and mutual reciprocity of intuitive insight and critical reflection that is the hallmark of integral phenomenology.

This approach goes beyond mere sympathy in a method akin to what Robert Neville speaks of as the "tao-daimon discipline of the academic study of religion."[24] In his article entitled "The Emergence of the Historical Consciousness" Neville draws upon and develops Clifford Geertz's notion of "thick description" (i.e., a method combining "knowing about" religious phenomena with a participant-observer's understanding of how people existentially relate to such phenomena). The "tao-daimon" model acknowledges the importance of combining first-hand encounter with one's subject matter (the "Tao") with the critical reflection of the scholar (Socrates' "Daimon"). Neville's idea that "the study of religion has indeed given rise to a dimension of spirituality that stands alongside and supplements those of the world's great religions"[25] resonates well with the views explicated in this paper. However, while Neville's entry into "the Tao" was through "religious participation," the approach of integral phenomenology represents a unique path in and of itself—a path of "academic participation" or "spiritual scholarship."

Notes and References

1 *Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta* (Nolini Kanta Gupta Birth Centenary, All India Press, Pondicherry, 1989), Vol.5, p. 35.

2 Ibid., p. 38.

3 These notions continue a rich discipline of scriptural exegesis (*mamamsa*) in the Indian traditions. Compare, for example, the following statement of Smirat Anirvan from an article entitled *Vedic Exegesis* : "Interpretation always presupposes a *spiritual communion* between the interpreter and the subject he seeks to interpret. This becomes imperative when one seeks to interpret a culture, a way of thought, or a thing of the Spirit. A process of saturation, resulting in a *participation mystique* , must set in before the eyes are ready to see and the mind to grasp." (Italics added for emphasis. From S. Radhakrishnan et. Al., eds., *The Cultural Heritage of India* , Vol. 1, p. 326.) Compare also to the notions of *manana* and *nididhyasana* as described by Dr. Thomas Kochumattam in his article "Sanskrit Terminology and Christian Theology" in *Unique and Universal* (Bangalore: Dharmanam Pub., 1972), p. 62.

4 A.B. Purani, *Life of Sri Aurobindo* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1978), p. 236.

5 The importance of the study of mysticism was noted several decades ago in William James' landmark study *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York: Modern Library, 1929). In this work, James refers to our ordinary consciousness as but one special type of consciousness among many others, and he points to the possibility of mystical states as representing "superior points of view, windows through which the mind looks out upon a more extensive and inclusive world" (296; 418-19). More recently, in *Exploring Mysticism: A Methodological Essay* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), Fritz Staal states that "no theory of the mind which cannot account for mystical experiences can be adequate" (198). For a brief study summarizing the academic study of mysticism over the past two centuries see Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), Appendix.

6 For the following observations I am indebted to the work of Denise Carmody and John T. Carmody, *Mysticism: Holiness East and West* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996), chapter 1; see also Michael Stoeber, *Theo-Monistic Mysticism: A Hindu-Christian Comparison* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 7-38.

7 According to Stephen Katz, mystical experiences "are inescapably shaped by prior linguistic influences such that the lived experience conforms to a pre-existent pattern that has been learned, then intended, and then actualized in the experiential reality of the mystic." From S.T. Katz, "Mystical Speech and Mystical Meaning," in Stephen T. Katz (ed.), *Mysticism and Mystical Language* (New York: Oxford UP, 1992), 5. The full theoretical formulation of this contextual approach to the study of mysticism has been presented in "Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism" and "The "Conservative" Character of Mystical Experience" in Steven T. Katz (ed.), *Mysticism and Religious Traditions* (New York: Oxford UP, 1983), 3-60. For a recent, provocative exposition of the constructivist epistomological framework within the context of the synthesis of religions, see John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion* (London: Macmillan Press, 1989).

[8] For examples of this approach to the study of religion and religious experience see W.T. Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy* (London: Macmillan, 1961); Huston Smith*, Forgotten Truth: The Primordial Tradition* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976); M. Darrol Bryant (ed.), *Essays on World Religions* (New York: Paragon House, 1992); Alduous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy* (New York: Harper, 1945); Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism* (New York: New American Library, 1974); and Caroline Franks Davis, *The Evidential Force of Religious Experience* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990). For a good secondary treatment of the primordial tradition (which is often associated with essentialist views) from the perspective of a contemporary process theologian see David Ray Griffin, *Primordial Truth and Postmodern Theology* (Albany, NY.: SUNY Press, 1989).

[9] See, for example, Peter Moore, "Mystical Experience, Mystical Doctrine, and Mystical Technique," in Steven Katz (ed.), *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* (London: Sheldon Press, 1978), and Robert Gimello, "Mysticism and Its Contexts," in Katz (1983). For critiques of the approaches and "neo-Kantian" epistemology exemplified by the authors in the Katz volumes, see Robert K.C. Forman (ed.), *The Problem of Pure Consciousness: Mysticism and Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), and *idem* . *Mysticism, Mind, Consciousness* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999). See also Deirdre Green, "Unity in Diversity," *Scottish Journal of Religious Studies* , vol. 3, 1 (Spring 1982), 53-60; and Donald Evans, "Can Philosophers Limit What Mystics Can Do? A Critique of Steven Katz," in Bruce S. Alton (ed.), *Religions and Languages: A Colloquim* (Toronto Studies in Religion; vol 13), (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), 125-34.

[10] – For related methodological studies on this matter see Eliade's article "Methodological Remarks in the Study of Religious Symbolism," in *The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology* (eds.), Mircea Eliade and Joseph Kitagawa (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1959); Mircea Eliade, *The Quest: History and Meaning in Religion* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1969); and Antonio Barbosa da Silva, *The Phenomenolgy of Religion as a Philosophical Problem* (Sweden: CWG Gleerup, 1982).

[11] – For examples of this type of phenomenological work, see Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* , translated by Rosemary Sheed (London: Sheed & Ward, 1958), and *idem* . (Ed.), *A History of Religious Ideas* 3 vols. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982).

[12] – "In the history of religions, as in other mental disciplines, it is knowledge of *structure* which makes it possible to understand *meanings* ." See Mircea Eliade, *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 191. See also Eliade (1969). For a study of Eliade's use of "structure" and related terms see Antonio Barbosa da Silva (1982), 210 f.

[13] – The quote is from Michel Foucault and is taken from Thomas McCarthy, *Ideas and Illusions: On Reconstruction and Deconstruction in Contemporary Critical Theorists* (Cambridge, Ma.: MIT Press, 1991), 6.

[14] – See McCarthy, Ibid. For a related study of postmodernity and East/West dialogue see J.J. Clarke, *Oriental Enlightenment: The Encounter Between Asian and Western Thought* (London: Routledge, 1997), 95 f., 181-225. For a study concerning Eliade and postmodernity see Bryan S. Rennie, *Reconstructing Eliade: Making Sense of Religion* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996), 232-41.

[15] – The phrase is from Jurgen Habermas. See McCarthy, Ibid.

[16] – For the application of this approach to the study of religion, see Ninian Smart, *The Phenomenon of Religion* (London and Oxford: Mowbrays, 1978), esp. 45 ff.

[17] – Such notions greatly contributed to the philosophical background for Eliade's phenomenological method. See Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations* (The Hague; Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), especially 22, 62, 69-75; also *idem* ., *Ideas* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1969), esp. 379, 395 f.

[18] – The quote from Hodges is taken from the *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* (1960), Vol 4:185.

[19] – "Meaning" here for van der Leeuw follows along the trajectory of Heidegger (i.e., as *purpose* , *significance* , *value* , *importance* and *end*), which (for Heidegger) corresponds to the realm of transcendental-ontological "categories," as opposed to actual ontical phenomena (a distinction that parallels that of "existential / existentiell" in Heidegger's discussions of *Dasein* [man], and corresponds to Kant's "transcendental / empirical" distinction.) See Gunnar Skirbekk, *Truth and Preconditions* (Stensilserie No 4, Universitetet I Bergen, Filosofiskt Institutt, 1970), 17-21; see also da Silva, 95, 58-60.

[20] – This phrase, taken from Ionescu's *Metafizica* , 67-69, 71-72, 77-81, is a translation of *tr*  *ire* (which refers to *life* , *living* , *enduring* , *feeling* , *experience* , etc.) and approximates the German *Erlebnis* . In fact, the literary critic G. Clinescu (*Istoria literaturii rom**ne* , p. 866) believed that Ionescu derived his idea of *tr**ire* from Dilthey. Though there are distinct differences between the two thinkers (especially concerning their views of metaphysics and transcendence in general), Ionescu's notion of "lived experience" has deep resonances with Dilthey's concepts of *Erlebnis* ("intentional experience"), *Verstehen* ("emphathetic understanding"), and *Nachleben* ("re-experiencing" or "reliving"). As mentioned before, M.L. Ricketts states: " In order for the historian to grasp the inner meaning and purpose of history, Dilthey said that a preliminary act of sympathy or *Erlebnis* was necessary. The inner states of the human subject being studied by the historian must first be relived or re-experienced before history can be written" (Ricketts [1988], 105). Compare this view of Dilthey

with the following by Ionescu: "My whole effort at understanding and interpreting political events is based on a precise method .... This method proceeds with the identification of structure and it appeals, therefore, primarily to intuition, to the ability to see .... This is not so easy. It demands a certain maturity in observation, a certain amount of experience .... Once you've mastered the method, however, you see all." (From Ionescu's *Roza v**nturilor* [April, 1932], 300-01, as quoted by Ricketts [1988], 105-06.) Also, see Ionescu's comments below concerning the apprehension of symbols.

21 – (Italics added for emphasis.) See M.Eliade and J. Kitagawa, *The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology* (Chicago: Chicago University press, 1959), 98, 101.

22 – Ionescu, *Metafizica* , 134.

23 Eliade, *The Quest: History and Meaning in Religion* (Chicago: Chicago U P, 1969), 35.

24 – See Robert Neville's comments concerning the "secular spiritual disciplines of scholarship" in his article entitled "The Emergence of the Historical Consciousness" in Peter H. Van Ness (ed.), *Spirituality and the Secular Quest* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1996), 129-56; see esp. 130.

25 Ibid., p. 136.

Beside the "intentor" and the "integrator" Looking at two "faces" of consciousness

Sangeetha Menon

I. Introduction

Be it of the physical, mental or social world, understanding is always of something which is other than us, to which we are not acquainted. We *intend* to know the other. We understand the other by means of images, ideas, words and metaphors. All of these tools are involved in the building of institutions and organized knowledge systems. In the process of understanding we also try to *integrate* the knowledge we get into the larger system of our world-view, which in turn influences, consciously and unconsciously, our ways of responding to situations.

In the study of mind and consciousness the basic duality involved in understanding takes the interesting turn of integrating the understanding of the experiencer with experience itself. The experiencer itself becomes a factor in the process of intending to understand the experience.

If "definition" and "knowledge" are to be objective, with the potential for "predictability" and "repeatability", can we include the study of human mind and consciousness under classical ways of understanding? Can we define consciousness based on pre-experiential understanding of it? Can the experience be studied with the experiencer having minimal or no role? Conversely, can the self/experiencer be understood with experience having minimal or no role? In short will the definition of consciousness be exhaustive of its complexity?

I propose that these questions are as difficult or easy as asking "can I see my face". I can see my face as much as it is represented. But none of the representations can replace my original face. What we "see" is only the reported. The being of the reported cannot be confused with the being of the original. Whether they are two distinct duals is of course a metaphysical theme for discussion. However, I think, the most interesting issue is that though "the reported" and "that which is reported about" could not be reduced to one, "the reported" and "that which is reported about" can influence each other. I understand and define my self based on my experiences. At the same time, my experience depends upon the notion that I have of my self.

I intend to know.

I also integrate that which I know.

And this mysterious power of consciousness to both intend as well as integrate is the puzzle that we are all trying to solve!

2.Methods and approaches

2.1: "Name-ing" and "Form-ing" the Unknown

A common feature of many of the approaches to the study of "consciousness" is the distinctness in the method of defining the problem. The study of "consciousness" is

initiated by two parameters such as the "name" and "form" of consciousness. In other words "the what" and "the where" of consciousness (Menon, 1999) mark the starting point to address the complex issues involved of the unknown. The definition for "consciousness" would restrict the specific areas for investigation and also categorise them on the basis of related functions whether cognitive, physiological or even trans-mental. The classification of different approaches to consciousness studies could be based on this point itself. And, without this classification, there is not only the possibility of the absence of conceptual exchange between methods but also semantic confusion. This would also mean that "the perspective" is as important as the problem itself for interdisciplinary discussions on a complex phenomenon like consciousness. If the perspective itself is clearly laid down by means of the categories and concepts used, the "mystery" and "anonymity" generated during the discussions about "consciousness" could be avoided to a larger extent.

A major clash between discussions being how the subjective and/or objective (functional) nature of consciousness is accounted, an initial clarity and specificity in terms of the conceptual framework and extent of the applications of the method would be helpful as well as foundational in constructing theories and developing interdisciplinary exchanges.

2.2: Localisation of Conscious Experiences

To elaborate further on this contention, a wide spread "attitude" towards consciousness namely the "given-ness of the problem of consciousness" could be looked into. A taken for granted assumption that "consciousness" is something static and sedentary "sitting" *somewhere* to be understood has led to a major part of the research towards the localization of conscious experiences. Though the "unknowability" of "consciousness" as a complex phenomenon is conceded, it (the "unknown') has also encouraged the classical way of knowing which is by means of segregation and performance. Distinct performances of "consciousness" are taken and these are labelled as "conscious experiences" and their origin, function and localized area (neurophysical and neurochemical) identified as the problems to be solved. The understanding of "consciousness" is essentially the understanding of neuronal functions, cognitive or sensory-motor. The major trend beholden by this trend is the "building block approach" (Searle, 2000) which explains the conscious field as consisting of a series of building blocks each being a conscious experience. The knowledge about any one conscious experience would contribute to the understanding of other kinds of conscious experiences. The mystery of consciousness would finally be solved by the understanding of the interconnections between the causal mechanisms of different conscious experiences. Questions about continuity, uniqueness and nonphysical attributes of consciousness, by this approach become auxiliary or even redundant.

The building of consciousness from fewer characteristics to a larger number of characteristics is certainly an approach that would favour the Darwinian evolutionary advantage. This approach would also be able to forsake the need for a specific working definition of consciousness. Eventually the method (instrument, design, measurement etc.) for investigation becomes the crux of the study. The means to understand becomes the subject for analysis and focus. But "what" is to be understood, in the process, is either not defined, or ontologically reduced and pushed into an epistemological oblivion.

3. Is consciousness unknown like any other unknown?

3.1: A neighbour unnoticed and the "puzzle of consciousness"

Obviously it is the "why" of "consciousness" that has made it so interesting for us to know more about it. Why should discrete neuronal functions and neurochemical reactions "generate" a unified feeling of having physical sensations such as pain, or even mental dispositions such as sorrow, happiness etc.? Why should quantitative phenomenon have qualitative correlates? These two questions form the basis of the "puzzle of consciousness" distinguished as the "easy" and "hard" problem of consciousness (Chalmers, 1995). The "unknowablity" of consciousness, which is centred around the "hard" problem of consciousness, is not just about the subjective and qualitative nature of consciousness but also about the prior distinction between subject and object that precedes any theory formation or metaphysical discussion.

The distinction between the subject and object, that is, something which is near to me/part of me and something which is far away from/other than me, is fundamental to human thinking and experience (See *Drg-Drsya Viveka* of Adi Sankaracharya) whether physical, mental or socio-cultural. The mystery about consciousness is the mystery about the gap between two distinct "entities" namely the objective and the subjective. Can one be reduced to the other; or can the existence of one be caused by the other: explaining one in terms of the other seems to be also the way to solve the "disturbing" duality.

3.2: The changing and the abiding

The discussion on the "hard problem" of consciousness has generated a consensus on identifying the "puzzle of consciousness" as involving a qualitative duality. Whether this duality is apparent or real is the intractable question eluding neurobiologists and philosophers. If the ontological nature is taken as the defining and demarcating factor, the duality involved in consciousness could be seen as ontological too. The neurophysiological function and the sensory-motor response caused/triggered by an external stimulus are two distinct reals from a physical point of view of the brain/consciousness. From a personalistic/non-physical point of view the picture is different. It is *me* having an experience of pain; whether I am cognizant of the neuronal functions or not is not a deciding factor on which *my experience* is dependent. I may or may not be having the knowledge about the neuronal functions responsible for my specific conscious experiences. But for sure, I have the knowledge of/am aware of distinct conscious experiences relating to and abiding in me. The neuronal reactions and the sensory-motor responses are also not the significant signs of "my conscious experience" but it is the unified "identity feeling" of "me having such an experience" which is the significant sign of my conscious experience. Even if we look at the duality involved from this perspective it is that which is initiated by the identity of "me" (*I am* having an experience) and "mine" (*my experience*).

The duality problem of consciousness is of two kinds: one is of the "easy" and "hard" problem; and the other is within the hard problem. The duality within the "hard problem" is a phenomenological puzzle and raises a "harder problem" (Menon, 2001). The duality of the "easy" and "hard" problem is a neurobiological problem.

There are three distinct "features" known of "consciousness". At every instance of physical pain (physical-conscious experience), mental pain (non-physical-conscious experience) or any other (conscious) experience there is a "gestalt" of meaning brought out by a union of three units such as

i) experience (e.g.: pain)
ii) experiencer (e.g.: me *in* pain)
iii) — I-ness (me *having* pain)

The first two: "experience of pain" and "me in pain" are ontologically of a transient nature. Just as the "experience of pain" I can have many other distinct experiences. Correspondingly the "experiencer" also changes.

The third unit that is of a meta-experiential nature ("me *having* such an experience") is changeless, since it accrues to a continuing and abiding "I-ness". It is this unit that integrates both the distinct conscious experiences and the conscious experiencer and presents a meaningful continuity.

3.3: The other-ness and near-ness of the unknown

Experiences are mostly characterized by their "distance" and broadly divided as objective and subjective. We can have a range of experiences, a certain type pertaining to outside objects, and a certain type pertaining to inside objects. When my toe hits a stone, the pain I feel is "inside", but the stone, which has triggered the pain, is an object outside, which has its own distinct physical properties. The experience of pain is nearer to me than the experience of the existence of the stone. "Is the perception of the stone nearer to me and belongs to the same class of the pain" is another question to be looked into. At this juncture of our discussion, what is attempted is to see the broader classification of that which is outside the subject and that which is inside the subject.

Whether it is the existence of the stone, or the pain, both are given meaning, by relating them to a personal identity:

i) [I see that] the stone exists
ii) I feel pain

The feeling of pain is nearer [to me] than the existence of the stone. At the same time the pain as well as the stone are recognized as other than me. There is something unknown about both the pain as well as the stone. The stone as well as the pain are also "felt" as other than me.

Is consciousness "unknown" like the "other" unknowns? This question once again focuses on the "harder problem" of consciousness. The stone (object which has physical properties) or the pain (object which has mental properties) is experienced as other than me, changing and having meaning when related to an experiencer. They are unknown because they are *other* than me.

Consciousness is not totally unknown, since it is possible to know about it through the distinct experiences and also through the distinct experiencers. What is unknown and mysterious about consciousness is threefold:

i) *How* is a meaningful continuity of me having different and distinct experiences produced?
ii) *Why* is a meaningful continuity of me having different and distinct experiences produced?
iii) — *Where* is the meaningful continuity of me having different and distinct experiences produced?

The unknown-ness of consciousness is about, the "harder problem" of consciousness, the distinct and unique I-ness performing two functions different by their ontology: There is an intentional "outward" movement of consciousness; There is also an integral "inward" movement of consciousness.

4. Two faces of consciousness

4.1: What does consciousness "look like"?

Like causality, attributing a name and limiting to a form are also ways of the human mind to know the "unknown". It is also interesting that our minds (and institutions of knowledge creation) use history as a tool (may be because we essentially deal with relative time: past, present and future) to understand and classify new objects of knowledge, and therefore comparison is as important as uniqueness. To know something new, we first compare it with classified and validated knowledge (by accepted tests, measurements etc.) and then allocate them under a category. Therefore the "new" is always relative to the "old". In other words, the "unknown" is relative to the "known". It is this basic structure of duality embedded in our thinking that helps us to know, to relate and to have meaningful interactions and institutions.

In consciousness studies, we look for measurable physical correlates of qualitative non-physical conscious experiences. The contention is that discrete conscious experiences could be localized and identified by their neural correlates. Whether the neural correlates are also the neural causes of conscious experiences is an issue debated within this camp. This method also helps to trace the evolutionary path of consciousness starting from its primordial beginnings (in terms of functions).

How much of a conscious experience could be identified and localized by its neural correlate is an important question. The discussion on this question would bring forth the quantitative and qualitative distinctions vivid in a conscious experience. Whether brains need to be the centre of focus for understanding consciousness, might also emerge as a question to be looked into. At the same time, unless we identify cortical areas and limit to neuronal functions, a matching of cognitive abilities and degrees of consciousness cannot be possible. To match brain functions and degrees of consciousness is a major step towards understanding the complexity of not only human behaviour and intelligence but also life as a whole. But then, how far can we reach by such a ladder of linear and hierarchical steps? Will we be able to find all the missing links? Will we be able to understand the qualitative jumps made and the vast differences between kinds of consciousness (such as: waking, dream, deep sleep; conscious, unconscious, subconscious; attitude, personality traits, identity)?

4.2: Ways to Knowledge and Ways to Transformation

There seem to be two kinds of pursuits: The first kind is that which attempts to generate, classify and categorize knowledge for building institutions and understanding various levels of complexities in human behaviour. The second kind is that which does not follow a structured database, but which attempts to transform existing patterns of thinking and experience. The distinction between ways to knowledge creation and ways to transformation is well spelt out in the area of consciousness studies. Therefore, understanding consciousness in terms of degrees of intelligence and thereby degrees of self-awareness (based on cognitive and social functions) is as important as practices and philosophies that focus on the transformation of states of mind and experiences. Neural mechanisms and even their artificial simulations to cause specific experiences are indeed significant to be understood. Their understanding is considered significant since it leads to the removal of myths created about the ethereal continuity of consciousness. Reducing conscious experiences to their neural mechanisms, causes and cortical areas, according to this camp, is tantamount to reducing something (self) mistaken as qualitative to quantitative.

This reductionism is good enough to have a focal understanding about consciousness and, based on this, to have a better classification of intelligence ranging from humans to other animals to machines. But is the problem fully grasped and accounted for by that attempt? If we look a bit closer, the answer is "No". The problem about consciousness is not just about having different kinds of conscious experiences and their explanation in terms of neural causes and correlates. Had that been the case reductionism would have solved the mystery underlying the phenomenon.

The problem of consciousness is less about conscious experiences and more about the conscious experiencer. Based on the brain, we might be able to map the history of life and evolution of human intelligence. But, unfortunately, this mapping will not be sufficient to understand the principal nature of consciousness namely self-orientation (Menon, 1999). The problem of self is not even the problem of degrees of self-awareness (which is accounted by cognitive abilities and social intelligence) but is the problem of self in and by itself. Ways to understand neural mechanisms underlying conscious experiences and ways to transform states of mind and experiences are distinct by method as well their ultimate goals. The goal of the first being scientific knowledge about life and intelligence and the second being spiritual inquiry. The distinction between these methods and goals also brings forth two levels of complexity in consciousness, of the "I" and of the "experience".

4.3: The "who am I" question

Since it is not in accordance with the usual norms of scientific thinking, the question relating to the nature of consciousness pertains to its phenomenological functions (neural and cognitive) and physico-chemistry which can be specified and quantified, and not to its ontology. The ontology of consciousness necessarily involves qualitative factors and understanding, which would then emphasize not the many-ness of conscious experiences but the uniqueness of the conscious experiencer or what is easily available to us as our "I-ness". The "who am I" question (See *Saddarsanam* of Sri Ramana Maharishi) could open new avenues to the understanding of consciousness, and herald a different approach (from locating conscious experiences) to spiritual enquiry and transforming states of mind.

4.4: The One Face and Two Looks

If the question about "I-ness" is significant to understand consciousness, then what is the meaning of neurobiological and other locus-specific approaches to consciousness? Are they opposed to self-approaches or even redundant? We can say that the answer is negative. The two approaches, though distinct by their very nature and method, are equally meaningful. We might even consider that the complexity of consciousness would see some light of unravelling only in the corridors where the two approaches would meet and be complementary to each other.

The complexity of consciousness is such that it is simple in the context of the experiencer, but intricate when the experience is analysed. Therefore it is likely that the first person approaches would contribute to the growth and transformation of the human self and third person approaches to the generation and application of knowledge about human intelligence and life as a whole. In both the cases, we should remember that the complexity about consciousness lies not in its nature but in understanding its two distinct and different expressions of the "experiencer" and the "experience". The "Face" is simple. The two "Looks" are complex and difficult to understand.

4.5: Intention, Integration and the Irreducible I-ness

It is difficult to understand the two varied expressions of consciousness because they are different in terms of their production, function and evolution. Much of the discussion in the circles of philosophy and science is centred on the intentional mode of consciousness (Varela, 1999) and its production (or qualitative nature). For some reason it is forgotten that many a times human lives are guided by the habitual (social and psychological) ways of responding to situations and unintentional consequences of human actions (See *Brahmasutra Adhyasa Bhashya* of Adi Sankaracharya). The intentional act and thinking and the non-intentional act and thinking: both have meaning, when we look at the human mind, since they are co-coordinated, structured (Menon, 2001) and given a continuity by their belonging to an "I-ness". This "I-ness" is irreducible.

Intentional and non-intentional acts and thinking could as well come under the purview of philosophical and neurobiological analysis. But the "irreducible "I-ness" is transcendental to even a meta-level of understanding and is purely experiential and self-oriented.

Our conscious experiences could be the product of our intentional or non-intentional acts and thinking. Analytical knowledge about them also is the product of the intentional mode of consciousness. What is often missed in attempts to understand consciousness is the categorization of the "irreducibility" of consciousness in terms of "I-ness". Reductionism could work only on the level of intentionality. The irreducibility of "I-ness" could be appreciated better if we introduce the "integral" mode of consciousness (See *Bhagavad Gita Ch.13* Bhasya of Adi Sankaracharya). We not only (intend to) know and experience. We also integrate that which is known and experienced to a larger self. What is beside both the intending and the integrating is (your and my) "I-ness".

4.6: Self-exploration and the unavoidable mystery about consciousness

The mystery about consciousness is the mystery about its "belonging" to a self. This mystery is unavoidable to the extent we try to understand the integral mode of consciousness and the simple given-ness of your "I-ness" and mine. We can understand consciousness as far as it is represented and reported. It would be equal to saying that the

story is complete at its introduction, if we conclude that the problem of consciousness is answered by its representations. Representations cannot replace the original. And therefore the reported cannot be confused with the original. However intricate and interesting the reported is, it would be unwise to think that the original has nothing more to it than its representations.

Understanding consciousness is continuous self-exploration. Knowledge about consciousness does not work in a linear and causal fashion. Self-knowledge is transcendental. Therefore understanding consciousness would come by exploring the many possibilities of human self and mind, rather than by the convenient addressing of it as a figment of imagination. What is interesting and worthy of exploration is to look at what is beside both the intending and the integrating mode of consciousness. Focusing on the duality (intentional and integral mode) of consciousness might result in epistemological circularities until and unless we look at what is "beside" both the modes, which is the "I-ness". To see the "wave" is to see the "sea". To see the "sea" is to see the "wave". To see what is beside both is to become one with the non-dual.

5. Conclusion

What was attempted in this discussion was to look whether the duality involved in the understanding of consciousness is basic. Intentional and integral mode of consciousness could be better explained and the epistemological circularity involved in duality-approaches could be avoided if we include a third factor of "I-ness" which is non-linear, alocal and acausal, and hence metaphorically described as "beside" in this paper. The mystery about consciousness is that it is self-oriented. Breakthroughs in consciousness research could happen if we encourage self-exploration and spiritual enquiry as well as third person approaches.

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* For more details See www.sambodh.org

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Beyond postmodernism
Towards a future psychology

Kundan

Abstract

Impressed by the apparent potential of physics to explain, predict and control natural phenomena, psychology rooted in a Newtonian-reductionist framework embraced a methodology identical to what is employed by the natural sciences to generate universal, rational, objective and value-free laws of human behaviour. This gave psychology the much-coveted status of science. The emergence of a postmodern worldview has thrown into critical relief the notion of rational, objective and value-free science or for that matter any knowledge pursuit. This paper narrates the problem associated with the objectivity of psychological knowledge by drawing largely from the critique of science by Thomas Kuhn, which emerged from his analysis of the history of science. Kuhn's view leads one to identify the crucial role that paradigm plays in scientific research. An extension of his arguments, as well as some evidences from anthropological research, suggests that psychological knowledge is relative with respect to person, time, culture and paradigm. A meta-analysis of Kuhn leads one to conclude that his argument bites itself or swallows itself, giving birth to a peculiar situation where opposite categories like relative and absolute, objectivity and subjectivity, and the truth and falsity of facts co-exist.

Against this background, this paper explores certain means to resolve the impasse generated by the recognition of relativity and the aforementioned paradox. Postmodernism is not something that should be feared by academicians; rather it is a major pointer towards changing our modus operandi of knowledge pursuit. Mystics have long identified the pursuit of knowledge through mind culminating in the realization of its relative nature. Mind is not the final summit in the evolution of mankind. There can be faculties other than mind which can be used to uncover nature's truths, and it is not in the spirit of science to fall prey to scientism. The history of humanity has been a witness to countless instances where mystics have demonstrated that there exists a realm of knowledge which can be accessed by silencing and transcending the mind. This paper thus explores the connection between postmodern thought and mysticism in reference to psychology.

The origins of scientific thought in psychology

Psychology's identification with science is clearly revealed through a cursory examination of the contemporary conceptualization of the discipline. Throughout its history, psychology has been defined in myriad ways. The early psychologists defined it as the study of mental

activity. With the advent of Behaviourism at the turn of the century, and its central concern with studying only phenomena that could be objectively measured, psychology came to be described as the study of behaviour. This definition has been featured in most psychology textbooks of the 1930's through the 1960's. The cycle has come full circle with the development of cognitive and humanistic/transpersonal psychology, as most current definitions of psychology make references to both behaviour and mental processes (Henley, Johnson & Jones, 1989). Despite little variations most definitions of psychology describe it as science. While conducting a survey and an analysis of the definitions of psychology in psychology textbooks published between 1887 and 1987, Henley et al. (1989) report that "psychology is the study/science" appears in about 80% of the textbooks of psychology. It is thus apparent that mainstream psychology considers the discipline to be a science and uses a methodology similar to what is applied to the study of physical objects.

In the late nineteenth century, physics rooted in the Newtonian framework was solving puzzle after puzzle and this led philosophers like J.S. Mill to believe that by subjecting human beings to a similar kind of experimental setup, they would be able to isolate cause and effect relationships in quantitative terms, which would then allow them to generate universal laws of human behaviour. There is no reason why it should not have happened, for psychology is intricately entwined with the enigma of our existence. Any system, thought or methodology that harbours a promise to resolve this mystery ought to attract seekers of knowledge. But, more than a hundred years have elapsed since the first experimental lab was established by Wundt in 1879 and the outcome of this approach has been thousands of theories mostly at variance with each other (Proshansky, 1976). Confusion is what pervades this discipline. Consolidating this position, Bruner (1990) notes that "questions about the nature of mind and its processes, questions about how we construct our meanings and realities and questions about shaping of mind still remain largely unanswered"(p. ix).

An earnest review of these theories leads one to conclude that our approach towards the subject has been too narrow to embrace the complexity of human nature. How can we have so many theories of human nature and yet not be able to explain anything conclusively? But, before we talk about a new paradigm of psychology, it is important to review the central tenets of the methodology that has guided psychological research and generated these theories and consequently, the pitfalls of this approach.

Science was formalized by Francis Bacon in the seventeenth century when he wrote that in order to understand ourselves we have to stop consulting Aristotle and start questioning nature itself. Bacon gave two fundamental laws of science: induction and deduction which form the basic tenets of positivism, a school of thought which has dictated the conduct of psychology from the past to the present. Positivism later developed into logical positivism and together they are called the "received view of science". Though logical positivism and positivism differ in certain ways, induction and deduction form the bedrock of their methodology proposed for uncovering nature's truths.

The problem with induction and objectivity

Induction starts with observation, stemming from an unprejudiced mind. The observations lead to singular statements—referring to a particular state of affairs at a particular time—that

form the body of laws and theories from which scientific knowledge can be derived. For the singular statements to culminate in universal laws, an important condition that needs to be met is that the number of observation statements forming the basis of generalization must be large (Chalmers, 1982).

Following this, a finite set of singular statements would lead to a universal law. This was designated as inductive reasoning and the process as induction. Once the inductive laws are established, they can be tested at a different place and time. This is the process of deduction. The essential condition for the methodology of science is that the observation has to be value free, detached and objective. The subjective state of the observer, taste and expectation are not supposed to intrude in the act of observation.

As stated before, an important premise of induction is that the number of observations must be large. However, despite a large number of cases showing consistency, it is not guaranteed that the next event would not be contrary to it. Hence repeated observation cannot ultimately prove the validity of induction. For example, no matter how many white swans we may have encountered, it does not imply that all swans are white; the next that we encounter may be black (Popper, 1959/92). The inductive principle is considered the mainstay of science by positivists. They maintain that if it is removed from the canon of science, science will lose its power to determine the nature of Truth. But how does one logically prove that the principle of induction is true in the first place and not an assumption. In other words, how does one ascertain that the inductive principle helps uncover the truth? It is argued that since it seems to operate well in a large number of cases, the premise is correct. This implies that one uses induction to justify induction and thus the argument assumes circularity. This is called the *problem of induction* . (Popper, 1959/92)

The most serious drawback with induction is with respect to its claim of objectivity in observation. It is a very common experience that no two individuals register the same thing even if the respective images on their retinas are the same. One does not even require much knowledge of psychology to know that the observer's perception is determined by his or her expectations, belief, knowledge, inner state and psychological make-up.

The contention of an inductivist, that the true basis of scientific knowledge should proceed from an unbiased and unprejudiced mind, is further rendered absurd by the practice of the scientist to consider only such data which are relevant to his or her research. Since the idea of relevant and irrelevant is always present during the course of investigation, the possibility of an unbiased and unprejudiced observer disappears. The investigator or scientist cannot but be an integral part of the research work and his or her subjectivity is bound to play an instrumental role in the outcome of the research. Thus, it can be safely said that the data that are generated by the scientist are not objective but collected within the larger framework of theory. They do not have an independent existence, rather they are constructed within the confines and boundaries of a theory. In other words, data are theory-laden and objectivity is the last thing that scientists should claim. Expressing similar concerns, Feyerabend (1993, p. 12) writes:

> The history of science, after all, does not consist of fact and conclusions drawn from facts. It also contains ideas, interpretation of facts, problems created by conflicting interpretations, mistakes, and so on. On closer analysis, we find that science knows no "bare facts" at all but the "facts" that enter our knowledge are already viewed in a certain way and are, therefore, essentially ideational.

The problem of objectivity is further compounded by the fact that "we speak more about our observation of the world rather than of the world, and we do this through a less than fully adequate language system. The linguistic limitation, by itself causes problems even if we could overcome other limitations" (Baker, 1991, p. 12). This happens because language does not only describe events, but also creates a cosmology, a worldview that influences the thought, behaviour and perception of mankind. When a child begins to learn a language, the worldview of her ancestors is passed onto her. The pedagogic procedures used "both shape the 'appearance', or 'phenomenon', and establish a firm connection with words, so that finally the phenomena seem to speak for themselves without outside help or extraneous knowledge" (Feyerabend, 1993, p. 57). The human mind begins to take many facts of life as givens, and the entire process may be totally unconscious. Her worldview begins to create what she may observe. Also, in order to be unprejudiced, one will have to abandon language itself, which will remove all ability to perceive and to think, as a consequence of which the practice of science will stop before it begins. Writes Edward Sapir:

> Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language that has become the medium of expression of that society. It is quite an illusion to imagine that one adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language and that language is merely an incidental means of solving specific problems of communication or reflection. The fact of the matter is that the "real world" is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group.... We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation.
>
> [Cited in Whorf, 1962, p.134]

Even physics, which right from the beginning has provided a recipe for carrying out psychological research, has come to recognize that the observer is an inseparable part of the observation being made. In other words, reality is not independent of the observer. Thus, Capra (1992, p. 78) observes:

> The human observer constitutes the final link in the chain of observational process, and the properties of any atomic object can only be understood in terms of object's interaction with the observer. This means that the classical ideal of objective description of nature is no longer valid.

Further, to be objective means that there should be an intersubjective agreement over an issue, thought or a sensory experience. Wertheimer (1972), one of the foremost critics of logical positivism states:

> The only way in which one can tell whether there is an agreement or not is for someone to observe this agreement. Hence, the criterion for the presence or absence of agreement is someone's (ultimately, my) cognition of the presence of absence of the agreement. Thus, making science public by striving for intersubjective agreement, can in no way yield the desired result of objectivity in the sense of independence from the subjective experience of scientists or a scientist or, better knowers or a particular knower. [Cited in Tolman, 1992, p. 37]

In short, objectivity was the cornerstone of the Enlightenment or the Modern era where it was presumed that science following a definite methodology would be able to solve all the mysteries of the world. The unarticulated assumption was that there is a world, which exists separate from the individual and it can be understood by wresting out its secret by a rational, unbiased and value-free observer. Consequently, it created dualism like subject–object and sharp divisions like fact and value, and objective reality and subjective feelings. As the above arguments indicate, for an individual to be without a bias or a value, he or she has to come from nowhere. Values and biases are implicit to the human condition and dichotomies like subject-object, and fact-value are a myth.

Sociology of knowledge: objectivity demystified

Apart from the values, inner expectations, knowledge, social position and observer's bias, science embraces other dynamics as well which can constrain an objective approach to reality. The spirit of science is to question, but science was losing its tenor by falling prey to scientism, a kind of dogmatism comparable to the fundamentalist aspect of any organized religion. Imbued with the spirit of questioning, Kuhn (1970) questioned the notion of science itself. His work is significant in that he has made it explicitly clear that science, like any other human activity, is a social activity which affects and is affected by the milieu in which it is embedded, and is guided by sociological, economic, historical and political forces. According to him, science is practised by communities of scientists and not by isolated men and women. To understand the workings of science, it is therefore imperative to understand the scientific community, its accepted and shared norms and beliefs. The complex nature of sociological factors that operate when any research is conducted can be appreciated with the help of Figure 1.

Figure 1 [Adapted from Danziger, 1990]

The innermost circle represents the immediate social condition in which research is conducted. The next circle represents the research community that has to accept the data as scientific knowledge. The outermost circle denotes the wider social context that embraces the research community. The investigators, the research community and the society are interconnected in a complex web of affairs, which has many dimensions. If we analyse the dynamics of the inner circle—the immediate research conducted for generation of psychological knowledge, we find that the objectivity of psychological knowledge and the rationale of the Newtonian framework for psychology are seriously challenged. The experiments that are conducted are done by human beings on human beings, in sharp contrast to physical sciences where experiments are conducted on inanimate objects. With the recognition of experimenter expectancy effects and demand characteristics, it can be inferred that the experimental results are codetermined by the social relationship between the experimenter and the subjects (Danziger, 1990).

As far as the research community is concerned, Kuhn (1970) points out that scientific practice is shaped by deep assumptions of the worldview of which the scientist may be unaware. For meaningful research to take place, the community must agree upon the goals, the methodologies, and the valid subject matter in the context of research. The agreement on all these issues would constitute a framework or a paradigm within which the investigation of nature can take place. The paradigm has two components—disciplinary matrix and shared exemplars. The disciplinary matrix consists of a certain fundamental set of assumptions that are often unstated and not subject to empirical test. These assumptions form the basis for testing specific hypotheses. For example, reductionism states that the world can be understood by breaking it into smaller units until we arrive at a set of fundamental units. This is an assumption that is not going to be subjected to any kind of an empirical test, and thus constitutes the part of disciplinary matrix of scientists who adhere to this belief. As an example, while analysing how Descartes influenced what was admissible in the scientific canon and what was not, Kuhn (1970, p. 41) writes:

> [A]fter the appearance of Descartes' immensely influential scientific writings, most physical scientists assumed that the universe was composed of microscopic corpuscles and that all natural phenomena could be explained in terms of corpuscular shape, size, motion, and interaction. That nest of commitments proved to be both metaphysical and methodological. As metaphysical, it told scientists what sort of entities the universe did and did not contain: there was only shaped matter in motion. As methodological, it told them what ultimate laws and fundamental explanations must be like: laws must specify corpuscular motion and interaction, and explanation must reduce any given natural phenomenon to corpuscular action under these laws.

> Most important still, the corpuscular conception of the universe told scientists what many of their research problems should be.

And again (p. 109, emphasis mine),

> Paradigm functions by telling the scientist about the entities that nature does or does not contain and about the ways in which those entities behave. That information provides a map whose details are elucidated by mature scientific research. And since nature is too complex and varied to be explored at random, that map is as essential as observation and experiment to science's continuing development. Through the theories they embody, paradigms prove to be constitutive of research activity.... In learning a paradigm the scientist acquires theory, methods, and standards together, usually in an inextricable mixture.

The other component of a paradigm is shared exemplars—the models for investigating new problems which include the methodology for pursuing the research. The disciplinary matrix and shared exemplars, by constituting the paradigm, unconsciously trains a researcher to approach a problem in a specific way which gradually becomes his/her natural way. In this vein, Leahey (1991, p. 14) writes:

> Neither source of data is comprehensible without training, yet once the scientist learns to interpret them, he or she will see them in those ways and no others. Thus training can act as a set of blinders, keeping the scientist from seeing in new ways. All observation and perception—whether scientific or not—is a matter of interpretation as numerous psychological examples have shown.

Weber (1946) similarly contests the notion that science can be free from suppositions ever. It presupposes that the rules of method and logic are valid, which cannot be tested by scientific means. Further, facts are meaningless and neutral in themselves; they become facts when interpreted against a theory comprising of *a priori* categories. For example, the measurements made with the Atwood machine would have meant nothing in the absence of Newton's *Principia* . Varied meanings can be ascribed to the same data. What once was a Leyden jar became a condenser, as there were changes in the electrical paradigms. Elucidating how the same entity can be interpreted in different ways under the influence of different paradigms or theories, Kuhn (1970, pp. 50-1) writes:

> An investigator who hoped to learn something about what scientists took the atomic theory to be asked a distinguished physicist and an eminent chemist whether a single atom of helium was or was not a molecule. Both answered without hesitation, but their answers were not the same. For the chemist the atom of helium was a molecule

> because it behaved like one with respect to the kinetic theory of gases. For the physicist, on the other hand, the helium atom was not a molecule because it displayed no molecular spectrum. Presumably both men were talking about the same particle but they were viewing it through their own research training and practice.

In short, Kuhn has shown that science is not as rational and objective as it had been supposed. Indeed, scientific rationality is a matter of consensus. It involves unexamined biases and social interests like fame, fortune, love, loyalty and power of the investigator. A choice of one paradigm over another may be induced by inner psychological causes or other sociological ones that cannot be defended by appealing to the office of reason. More often than not, scientists following the same norms of disinterestedness, objectivity and rationality arrive at different conclusions. The history of science reveals that there are many competing theories before one paradigm becomes dominant and all of them had arisen from experimentation and observation. Comments Kuhn (1970, p. 4):

> [E]arly developmental stages of most sciences have been characterized by continual competition between a number of distinct views of nature, each partially derived from, and all roughly compatible with, the dictates of scientific observation and method. What differentiated these various schools was not one or another failure of method—they were all "scientific"—but what we shall come to call their incommensurable ways of seeing the world and of practicing science in it. Observation and experience can and must drastically restrict the range of admissible scientific belief, else there would be no science. But they cannot alone determine a particular body of such belief. An apparently arbitrary element, compounded of personal and historical accident, is always a formative ingredient of beliefs espoused by a given scientific community at a given time.

The history of science also demonstrates that scientific knowledge is temporally relative. What was considered once as science has been later rejected as superstition. By the same token, what constitutes as scientific knowledge today, which has been extracted from nature by subjecting it to repeated investigation may turn out to be error tomorrow under the influence of a different paradigm. Kuhn (1970, p. 2) states:

> [H]istorians confront growing difficulties in distinguishing the "scientific" component of past observation and belief from what their predecessors had readily labelled "error" and "superstition." The more carefully they study, say, Aristotelian dynamics, phlogestic chemistry, or caloric thermodynamics, the more certain they feel that those once current views of nature were, as a whole, neither less scientific nor more the product of human idiosyncrasy than those current today. If these out-of-date beliefs are to be called myths, then myths can be produced by the same sorts of methods and held for the same sorts of reasons that now lead to scientific knowledge. If, on the other hand, they are to be called science, then science has included bodies of belief quite incompatible with the ones that we hold today.

A committed believer in science would say that the above stated phenomenon has taken place because science is cumulative and scientists have refined their theories in an effort to come closer to a truer and more accurate interpretation and description of nature. Kuhn disagrees and contends that instead of science being cumulative, it is revolutionary. A change in the paradigm changes the worldview of the scientist; or in other words the world comes to be viewed differently by the scientist. It involves a "reconstruction of the field from new fundamentals, a reconstruction that changes some of the field's most elementary theoretical generalizations as well as many of its paradigm methods and applications"(Kuhn, 1970. p. 85).

Kuhn holds that it is difficult to demonstrate the superiority of one paradigm over another purely on "logical" argument. The primary reason is that the proponents of the rival paradigms subscribe to a different set of standards and metaphysical assumptions. The rival paradigms are so incommensurable that no appeal to "rationality" can settle the issue as Feyerabend (1976) writes:

> Transition to criteria not involving content thus turns theory choice from a rational and "objective" and rather one dimensional routine into a complex discussion involving conflicting preference and propaganda will play a major role in it, as it does in all cases involving preferences.
>
> — [Cited in Chalmers, 1982, p.138]

To complete this discussion let us analyse the outermost circle depicted in Figure 1. The pursuit of knowledge is very intimately connected with the society in which it develops; the sociology of knowledge very aptly discusses the dynamics operating therein which determine the subject matter of psychology or any discipline for that matter. The anti-theistic ideas of scientific psychology are a case in point. Science in order to establish its identity had to struggle against the Church which had usurped all powers to arbitrate every activity of man and mankind. It had restricted the freedom of inquiry and held courts of inquisition to prosecute men like Galileo and Descartes and all those who differed from the scriptures. Moreover it had waged holy wars in the name of religion and caused much bloodshed. Against this backdrop, science dissociated itself from anything that had to do with God or with supernatural forms of existence. In conclusion, the social and historical forces do play a major role in the development of a subject (see Danziger 1990; Leahey 1991, for details).

It is being increasingly realized that each society has its own vision of reality that shapes the perception and thoughts of its inhabitants. This helps them to negotiate their life with different images, symbols, metaphors and institutions in a unique way that may be incommensurable with that of another society. It would be worthwhile to analyse the notion of the self in this light. Under the auspices of Cartesian metaphysics, self has been described by Western philosophers as universal, objective, ahistoric, non-contextual and authentic. This dominant paradigm suggests that the true and authentic self is atomistic, individualistic

and non-social. The universality of this view is seriously challenged when different cultures are studied on their own terms, without the preconception that they are inferior. For example, in India according to the *Bhagavad Gita* , the idea of a separate, individualistic, isolated and egoistic self is false and illusory. The egoistic self which creates selfish desires, hatred, attachment, craving, greed, conceit etc. is viewed as the cause of ignorance and suffering; and it is culturally expected that one transcend this egoistic self in order to be transported into a state of wisdom, knowledge, calm and peace.

Some Western philosophers too have contested this Cartesian idea of self and have argued that the self is situated and shaped by social, cultural, economic and historical contexts. For example, Marx argued that the nature of man (or woman) is the product of material conditions. Allen (1997) states that "[s]elf is not something abstract, static, ahistoric and given. On the contrary, self is dynamic, complex and relational; it is socially, culturally and historically constituted and developed through an ongoing dialectical process" (p. 22).

Anthropology has challenged the uniformitarian view of humans—emerging from the Enlightenment concept—that the essence and truth of human beings is universal and constant, independent of time and culture. For instance, the Oedipal complex espoused by Freud as universally valid did not hold ground when Malinowski (1927) tried to test its truth in matriarchal societies. Also, Mead (1928) challenged the psychologist G. Stanley Hall's view that adolescence is a period of "storm and stress" which he held to be universally true. Mead found that the adolescents of Samoa Island did not manifest a period of storm and stress. Geertz (1973, p. 35-6) comments:

> [A]nthropology... is firm in conviction that men unmodified by the customs of particular places do not in fact exist, have never existed, and most important, could not in the very nature of the case exist.... The circumstance makes the drawing of a line between what is natural, universal, and constant in man and what is conventional, local and variable extremely difficult.

What is intelligent, practical, viable and noble in one culture may be considered as foolish and lowly from the perspective of another culture. Torgovnick (1990) observes that it is very difficult to asses what is "modern," what is "primitive," what is "savage" and what is "civilized." Montaigne (1877) observes that we designate anything that is not in conformity with our habits and customs as barbaric, for we have no criterion for judging the customs of others other than our own. Levi Strauss (1979) comments that the minds of "primitives" are not inferior constitutionally; it is just that they are different, shaped according to the demands that their surroundings and environment present.

The above line of argument indicates that psychology and all forms of knowledge—there is an intimate connection between psychology and knowledge—are relative with respect to individual, time, culture and paradigm. But incidentally, this is a statement suggesting an absolute truth. Similarly, experimental psychology has devised experiments (for example, the duck-rabbit experiment), the results of which show that the perception of reality is

necessarily subjective. But while stating this, it also makes a statement which embodies an objective validity. So a fact discovered by psychology becomes subjective and objective at the same time leading to a paradoxical and a peculiar situation.

A meta-analysis of Kuhn's arguments culminates in a situation which is no different. One of the chief themes of his theses is that paradigms guide research in terms of observation and interpretation of data. If his premise is true—which of course, he has supported with a lot of evidence—then by extension it can be said that he has culled out data from the body of the history of science to support his theory that paradigms guide research. In other words, the data were collected with the theory—paradigm guides research— already in his mind. As soon as we recognize this, Kuhn's arguments turn on themselves, thus assuming a circularity. *A paradoxical situation emerges again: Kuhn's arguments are true and false at the same time* . They are true because there are evidences to support his claim and false because he contradicts himself by inviting his arguments on himself.

Secondly, Kuhn has cited evidence to show that facts and data have no meaning in themselves; they acquire meaning when interpreted against a theory or framework. There is an implicit circularity and paradox here too. By force of Kuhn's arguments, it can be argued that the evidence that he has used to demonstrate the truth of his arguments are meaningful only against his contention that evidence has no meaning in the absence of a framework. Evidence lends support to his theory whereas a similar kind of contradiction as described above and the fact of being oblivious to his own subjectivity, while attributing the crucial role of the scientist's subjectivity in guiding research, renders Kuhn's theory inadmissible. If the evidence of other scientists is not sacrosanct, it can as well be said that Kuhn's is not either.

In view of these circularities and paradoxes, does this mean that the pursuit of knowledge and psychology approaches a dead end? Does this mean that the impasse cannot be resolved? The answer is a resounding no if we begin to analyse the mystical traditions.

If not, then how does one reconcile to the relative truth of the postmodernists stated in an absolute way, which results in a modern *koan* (if *koan* can be loosely translated to mean a puzzle-like situation)?

Postmodernism is rejected by many on the ground that it leads to solipsism i.e. the self of an individual is the only reality; the only knowledge that he or she can have is about his or her own self and nothing else. An evaluation of mystical traditions allows us to perceive that solipsism is not as formidable as it has been made out to be. For all mystical knowledge starts when we start seeing the self. Let us examine how mysticism or spirituality, while offering the solution of extricating ourselves from the problem of relativity, the aforementioned *koan* and solipsism, can be an alternative paradigm to psychology research.

Beyond mind: a step ahead of postmodernism

The relativism to which postmodernism eventually culminates is not a new realization in the history of mankind. The mystics since time immemorial and across all cultures have recognized the pursuit of knowledge through mind resulting in agnosticism and relativism. References to mind, with reason and logic as its instruments, as an incompetent and inferior

tool for such an endeavour is a common feature in mystical literature. Referring to this limitation of knowledge pursued through mind, Sri Aurobindo states:

> A certain kind of Agnosticism is the final truth of all knowledge. For when we come to an end of whatever path, the universe appears as only a symbol or an appearance of an unknowable Reality which translates itself here into different systems of values, physical values, vital and sensational values, intellectual, ideal and spiritual values. Sri Aurobindo, The Life Divine, p. 12

The knowledge pursuit in the modernistic tradition is based on logic, reasoning and an objective agreement of evidences. Recognizing the limitation of such an approach and the relativity of reason, Sri Aurobindo writes:

> You believe according to your faith, which is quite natural, he believes according to his opinion, which is natural also, but no better so far as the likelihood of getting at the true truth of things is in question. His opinion is according to his reason... How is reasoning to show which is right? The opposing parties can argue till they are blue in their face—they won't be anywhere nearer a decision... But who can look at the world as it is and say that the trend of things is always (or ever) according to the right reason —whatever this thing called the right reason may be? As a matter of fact there is no universal infallible reason which can decide and be the umpire between conflicting opinions; there is only my reason, your reason, X's reason, Y's reason multiplied up to a discordant innumerable. Each reasons according to his view of things, his opinion, that is his mental constitution and mental preference.
>
> — Sri Aurobindo, Letters on Yoga, pp. 164-65

Mind according to the mystics cannot perceive the Reality as a whole. It tends to classify, discriminate, categorize, divide, compare and measure. This indeed can be validated if we examine the large body of what we call psychological knowledge. Two prevalent practices that underlie the pursuit of psychology are through the ceteris paribus clause, and models. Theories are built by varying some variables while keeping others constant in order to discover laws of behaviour. Common sense observation can tell us that our lives do not operate that way; there is a gamut of factors operating on us as individuals which cannot, by virtue of the scientific methodology applied, identify the laws. The other practice is the pursuit of psychology through models. Models as such do not represent the reality but take a few variables in disregard to others to create a picture of reality. Apropos to such a view, Sri Aurobindo writes:

> Mind cannot arrive at Truth; it can only make some constructed figure that tries to represent it or a combination of figures.... There have been hundreds of these systems

and formulas and there can be hundreds more, but none can be definitive.

— Sri Aurobindo, Letters on Yoga, p. 157

Minds build concepts and concepts are an integral part of prevalent psychology, which are defined and redefined by the psychologists during the course of their investigation of psychological phenomenon. The postmodern discourse has rendered all categories and definitions fluid, porous, vague, ambiguous and uncertain. We cannot talk about "personality", "identity", "sanity", "normality" etc. with as much certainty as we used to in the past. It has identified that all categories and definitions are not fixed but subject to change with time and place. There is a larger meta-structure on which these edifices are built.

It is here that a deep and intimate connection between postmodern thought and mysticism lies. The confusion generated by the discourse has the seed of a paradigm shift in the knowledge of ultimate reality and psychology. The mystics have stressed that the truth of our existence cannot be understood in terms of categories and concepts; knowledge lies beyond these. In the words of Thich Naht Hanh (1995, pp. 41-43):

> The world of concepts is not the world of reality. Conceptual knowledge is not the perfect instrument for studying truth. Words are inadequate to express the truth of ultimate reality... But if conceptual knowledge is fallible, what other instruments should we use to grasp reality? According to Buddhism, we can only reach reality through direct experience. Study and speculation are based on concepts. In conceptualizing we cut reality into smaller pieces that seem to be independent of one another. This manner of conceiving things is called imaginative and discriminative knowledge (Vikalpa) according to Vijnanavadin School of Buddhism. The faculty that directly experiences reality without passing through concepts is called non-discriminative and non-imaginative wisdom (nirvikalpajnana). This wisdom is the fruit of meditation. It is a direct and perfect knowledge of reality, a form of understanding in which one does not distinguish between subject and object. It cannot be conceived by the intellect or expressed by language.

Concepts and categories have the potential to imprison the mind. All mental knowledge binds the intuitive faculties which are better instruments for the perception of Truth. A Socrates-like position that the only thing one knows is that one knows nothing is a perfect condition for the higher reality to unfold.

With regards to the *koan,* the mystics say that a concept and its opposite are parts of a unified whole but it is not within the ambit of mind—rational and logical—to resolve it. It can be only done by opening up the intuitive faculties within or by going into higher levels of consciousness by silencing the thoughts and by becoming aware. The culprit opposing such reconciliation is the logical mind referred to as *Sem* by Tibetan Buddhists about which Sri Aurobindo writes:

> Truth is not logical; it contains logic but is not contained by it. A particular syllogism may be true, so far as it goes, covering a sharply limited set of facts, but even a set of syllogisms cannot exhaust truth on a general subject, for the simple reason that they necessarily ignore a number of equally valid premises, facts or possibilities which support a modified or contrary view. Sri Aurobindo, Essays Divine and Human, p. 10

According to the Buddhists, the world exists as an inseparable and reconciled whole of opposites. It is black which creates white; good that creates evil; valleys that create mountains; friends that creates enemies. All contradictions and oppositions, seen from a slightly different perspective reveal that they are one and essential whole. The opposites are not against each other but complement each other. Darkness is born out of light and day is born out of night. Buddhists maintain that existence is a synthesis of opposites but the transcendence of the discursive mind is a must for the unity to reveal itself and unfold. In the poetic words of Lao Tzu:

> Since the world points up beauty as such,
>
> There is ugliness too,
>
> If goodness is taken as goodness,
>
> Wickedness enters as well.
>
> For is and is-not come together;
>
> Hard and easy are complementary;
>
> Long and short are relative;
>
> High and low are comparative;
>
> Pitch and sound make harmony;
>
> Before and after are a sequence.
>
> Blackney, 1955, p. 2

Postmodernism, by thus acknowledging the relative nature of categories and concepts can allow us to perceive the limitations of mind and brings us to the portals from where we can glimpse the higher realities beyond mind. But the essential condition, which postmodernism has yet to achieve is to transcend this relativity of mind. It is still struggling to wriggle out of this impasse. An assimilation of postmodern thought into oneself permits the seeker of knowledge to make his or her mind fluid and plastic or in the words of the mystics “to empty

her mind". The empty mind or a mind devoid of all concepts is metaphorically compared to a sea which is absolutely calm. It is in this state, non-attached to conceptualized knowledge, that higher knowledge, called the wisdom mind by the mystics, manifests. Nyoshul Khe Rinpoche expresses this most beautifully:

Profound and tranquil, free from complexity,

Uncompounded luminous clarity,

Beyond the mind of conceptual ideas;

There is the depth of mind of the victorious Ones.

In this there is not a thing to be removed,

Nor anything that needs to be added.

It is merely the immaculate

Looking naturally at itself.

[Cited in Rinpoche, 1991, p. 49]

As stated earlier, Western psychology began the investigation of its subject matter with the notion of an observer and the observed where the observer and the observed, were distinctly presumed to be separate and it was the task of the observer to discover the truth. Postmodern discourse has identified that the observer and the observed are interdependent and the subject of their knowledge is a product of the interaction between the two. While this recognition has made the rigid categorization of subject and object vague, it is being perceived as a precipitator of crisis among the academicians. In contrast, according to Zen Buddhism, this is not the end of knowledge, rather the beginning. Buddhists argue that knowledge rooted in distinction and discrimination—like "subject" and "object", "knower" and "knowledge"—result in *Vikalpa* which is not the reflection of reality. Psychological knowledge following the modernistic (Newtonian-reductionist or Cartesian) paradigm can be said to be based on the principle of *Vikalpa* . Postmodern thought, which recognizes the interconnectedness and interdependence of the observer and the observed, reflects knowledge based on the principle of *Paratantra* . *Paratantra* is the true basis of knowledge which can lead to the transcendence of *Vikalpa* which will further guide the seeker to *Tathata* or Enlightenment where the true identity of things is revealed. Enlightenment is not an abstract state based on speculation and imagination but manifests a reality based on concrete experience. Sri Aurobindo while giving an account of his first major spiritual experience writes:

> ... to reach Nirvana was the first radical result of my own Yoga. It threw me suddenly into a condition above and without thought, unstained by any mental or vital movement; there was no ego, no real world—only when one looked through the immobile senses, something perceived or bore upon its sheer silence a world of empty forms, materialised shadows without true substance. There was no One or many even, only just absolutely That, featureless, relationless, sheer indescribable, unthinkable, absolute, yet supremely real and solely real. This was no mental realisation nor something glimpsed somewhere above,—no abstraction,—it was positive, the only positive reality,—although not a spatial physical world, pervading, occupying or rather flooding and drowning this semblance of a physical world leaving no room or space for any reality but itself, allowing nothing else to seem at all actual, positive or substantial. — Sri Aurobindo, On Himself, p. 101

Stressing that the reality experienced was without words or concepts, he further states:

> One has to arrive at spiritual knowledge through experience and a consciousness of things which arises directly out of that experience or else underlies or is involved in it. This kind of knowledge, then, is fundamentally a consciousness and not a thought or formulated idea. For instance, my first major experience... came after and by the exclusion and silencing of all thought—there was, first, what might be called a spiritually substantial or concrete consciousness of stillness and silence, then the awareness of some sole and supreme Reality in whose presence things existed only as forms but forms not at all substantial or real or concrete; but this was all apparent to a spiritual perception and essential and impersonal sense and there was not the least concept or idea of reality or unreality or any other notion, for all concept or idea was hushed or rather entirely absent in the absolute stillness. These things were known directly through the pure consciousness and not through the mind, so there was no need of concepts or words or names. Sri Aurobindo, On Himself, p. 87

Thus, it is increasingly clear that postmodernism is just a step short of a kind of knowledge pursuit which promises to reveal the deeper aspects of human existence; the levels of existence which lie beyond mind. In other words, postmodernism, if allowed to proceed unhindered, precedes the development of a paradigm where the exploration of the deeper and higher realms of mind will be taken up on a large scale by seekers of knowledge unlike in the past where mystics have been isolated instances. It is gradually leading psychology from a science of mind and behaviour to a science of consciousness. Consequently, "Psychology ought to be rather than is the science of consciousness" (Sri Aurobindo, *Essays Divine and Human* , p. 316). Identifying that the basis of human behaviour lies much deeper in the realm of consciousness and nothing much can be achieved by studying the outer aspects, Sri Aurobindo explains:

Psychology is the science of consciousness and its status and operations in Nature and, if that can be glimpsed or experienced, its status and operations beyond what we know as Nature.

It is not enough to observe and know the movements of our surface nature and the superficial nature of other living creatures just as it [is] not enough for Science to observe and know as electricity only the movements of lightning in the clouds or for the astronomer to observe and know only those movements and properties of the stars that are visible to the unaided eyes. Here as there a whole world of occult phenomena have to be laid bare and brought under control before the psychologist can hope to be master of his province.

Our observable consciousness, that which we call ourselves, is only the little visible part of our being. It is a small field below which are depths and farther depths and widths and ever wider widths which support and supply it but to which it has no visible access. All that is our self, our being,—what we see at the top is only our ego and its visible nature.

Even the movements of this little surface nature cannot be understood nor its true law discovered until we know all that is below or behind and supplies it—and know too all that is around is and above.

Sri Aurobindo, Essays Divine and Human, pp. 316-17

Contrary to the conventional practice in psychological research where one endeavours to discover laws by observation of others, this paradigm as enunciated by Sri Aurobindo and other mystics bases the study of one's own self as its subject matter. Psychology as the science of consciousness should be such where "one must proceed from the knowledge of oneself to the knowledge of others" (Sri Aurobindo, *Essays in Philosophy and Yoga* , p. 177). Solipsism thus assumes a central position in this research. But whereas solipsism refers to an individual self, mysticism goes much beyond. It speaks of the discovery of one Self which is present in all and transcendent to all. The Hindus call this as *Brahma* or *Purusha* , Christians as God, Muslims as *Allah* and Buddhists as *Dharmakaya* . The pronouncements of a few mystics will substantiate this:

All creatures have existed eternally in the divine essence, as in their exemplar. So far as they conform to the divine idea, all beings were, before their creation, one thing with the essence of God. (God creates into time what was and is in eternity.) Eternally, all creatures are God in God... So far as they are in God, they are the same life, the same essence, the same power, the same One, and nothing less. Suso

When is a man in mere understanding? I answer, "When a man sees one thing separated from another." And when is a man above mere understanding? That I can

tell you: “When a man sees All in all, then a man stands beyond mere understanding.”

Eckhart

Pursue not the outer entanglements,

Dwell not in the inner void;

Be serene in the oneness of things,

And dualism vanishes of itself.

.....

The two exist because of the One;

But hold not even to this One.

When a mind is not disturbed,

The ten thousand things offer no offence...

If an eye never falls asleep,

All dreams will cease of themselves;

If the Mind retains its absoluteness,

The ten thousand things are of one substance.

When the deep mystery of one Suchness is fathomed,

All of a sudden we forget the external entanglements;

When the ten thousand things are viewed in their oneness,

We return to the origin and remain where we have always been...

One in all,

All in One—

If only this is realized,

No more worry about not being perfect!

The Third Patriarch of Zen

One Nature, perfect and pervading, circulates in all natures,

One Reality, all-comprehensive, contains within itself all realities.

The one Moon reflects itself wherever there is a sheet of water,

And all the moons in the waters are embraced within the one Moon.

The Dharma-body (the Absolute) of all the Buddhas enters into my own being.

And my own being is found in union with theirs...

— Yung-chia Ta-shih

Behold but One in all things; it is the second that leads you astray. — Kabir

[All cited in Huxley, 1946/94, pp. 9-88]

It is the promise of the mystics that by knowing our self, we would know all. "Know thyself" is an age-old dictum. Mystics hold that all the operations behind our psychological self as well as that of the others will proceed from a sure ground of clear vision of things. They call this the opening of the third eye—an eye that sees even when the physical eye is closed. This can be done by the process of yoga—a conscious union with our Self. Sri Aurobindo writes:

> Since the Self which we come to realise by the path of knowledge is not only the reality which lies behind and supports the states and movements of our psychological being, but also that transcendent and universal Existence which has manifested itself in all the movements of the universal, the knowledge of the Self includes also the knowledge of the principles of Being, its fundamental modes and its relations with the principles of the phenomenal universe. This was what was meant by the Upanishad when it spoke of the Brahman as that which being known all is known. It has to be realised first as the pure principle of existence, afterwards, says the Upanishad, its essential modes become clear to the soul which realises it. We may indeed, before realisation, try to analyse by the metaphysical reason and even understand intellectually what Being is and what the world is, but such metaphysical understanding is not the Knowledge. Moreover, we may have the realisation in knowledge and vision, but this is incomplete without realisation in the entire soul-experience and the unity of all our being with that which we realise. It is the science of Yoga to know and the art of Yoga to be unified with the Highest so that we may live in the Self and act from the supreme poise, becoming one not only in the conscious essence but in the conscious law of our being with the transcendent Divine whom all things and creatures, whether ignorantly or with partial knowledge and experience, seek to express through the lower law of their members. To know the highest Truth and to be in harmony with it is the condition of right being, to express it in all that we are, experience and do is the condition of right living. Sri Aurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga, p. 374-75

To sum up, postmodern thought is qualified as being nihilist in nature and purpose. As it is apparent, it is not a negative nihilism; rather if properly interpreted posits and envisions a bright future for mankind. It would be very unsettling, anxiety provoking and tumultuous in the beginning but then the quest for knowledge has never been and never can be a smooth exercise. It warrants looking into ourselves and examining closely and intricately our biases, prejudices and assumptions. What postmodernism anticipates is the popularity of Eternal Religion or the Perennial Philosophy among academicians on a large scale. The study of consciousness is the future of psychology. In my opinion, this will happen in what Sri Aurobindo calls the Spiritual age. In his all encompassing spiritual vision, the Spiritual age is preceded by the Subjective age and this by an age dominated by anarchist thoughts. Since Postmodernism has already heralded the age characterized by anarchist and nihilist thoughts, the possibility of the study of a greater psychology through the yogic methodology is only a matter of time.

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This paper is dedicated to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, who have transformed my life.

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Beyond the cookie cutter paradigm

Ulrich Mohrhoff

Abstract

What makes it so hard to make sense of quantum mechanics (the theory at the heart of contemporary physics) is the cookie cutter paradigm (a fallacy that is both rooted in our neurophysiological make-up and inherent in the nature of mental consciousness) according to which the world's synchronic multiplicity derives from surfaces that carve up space in the manner of three-dimensional cookie cutters. When liberated from this fallacy, quantum mechanics not only describes the physical world as a manifestation of something very much like the Vedantic Brahman but also describes the process by which this manifestation is effected. It implies that the creative principle to which the physical world owes its existence is supramental rather than mental, in agreement with Sri Aurobindo's ontology.

The "cookie cutter paradigm" (or CCP, for short) is the idea that the multiplicity of the world at any one time rests on surfaces that carve up space in the manner of three-dimensional cookie cutters. This idea seems self-evident. The parts of any material object—including the material world as a whole—are defined by the parts of the space it "occupies", and the parts of space are defined by delimiting and separating surfaces.

We live in two worlds, at the least. There is the *phenomenal* world—the world as we perceive it,—and then there is the *physical* world—the world as described by present-day physics.

The phenomenal world conforms to the CCP, for two reasons. First, the CCP is hard-wired: The way in which the brain processes visual information guarantees that the result—the phenomenal world—is a world of objects whose shapes are bounding surfaces. Visual representations arise by way of an analysis of the visual field that capitalizes on contrast information. Data arriving from homogeneously coloured and evenly lit regions of the visual field do not make it into conscious awareness. Such regions are filled in on the basis of contrast information across their boundaries. (This explains, among other things, why the blind spot goes unperceived whenever it lies in such a region.) Thus the phenomenal world is assembled from boundaries, and its parts are bounded regions of space.

The second reason why the phenomenal world conforms to the CCP lies in the nature of mind, or mental consciousness. This is the deeper reason, for the brain works as it does because the mind works as it does—and not the other way round, as we are prone to think. In Sri Aurobindo's words, "the brain is not the creator of thought, but itself the creation, the

instrument and here a necessary convenience of the cosmic Mind". (Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* , p. 256)

In the Aurobindonian scheme of things, the world is an evolving manifestation of an ineffable original Reality, Brahman. Mind is the highest creative principle hitherto evolved but not by any means the highest. The original creative principle and dynamic link between Brahman and the world is supermind. The creative action of the supermind is primarily qualitative and infinite and only secondarily quantitative and finite. Mind is the agent of this secondary action—limiting, defining, dividing, individualizing. Here is how Sri Aurobindo describes the characteristic action of mental consciousness:

> Mind in its essence is a consciousness which measures, limits, cuts out forms of things from the indivisible whole and contains them as if each were a separate integer. Even with what exists only as obvious parts and fractions, mind establishes this fiction of its ordinary commerce that they are things with which it can deal separately and not merely as aspects of a whole.... It is this essential characteristic of Mind which conditions the workings of all its operative powers, whether conception, perception, sensation or the dealings of creative thought. It conceives, perceives, senses things as if rigidly cut out from a background or a mass and employs them as fixed units....
>
> — Sri Aurobindo, The Life Divine, p. 162, emphases added

This characteristic action of mental consciousness is the real reason why the phenomenal world conforms to the CCP: Mind conceives, perceives, senses things as if rigidly cut out from a background or a mass.

What about the physical world—the world as described by present-day physics? Interestingly, this does *not* conform to the CCP. If it did, the parts of matter would be defined by the parts of space; the parts of space would be logically prior to the parts of matter; and so they would exist independently of matter. Physical space would be *intrinsically* divided. Moreover, since it is in the nature of mental consciousness to deal with parts as if they were things that exist by themselves, rather than by virtue of some process of division or differentiation, physical space would be *infinitely* divided if it did conform to the mental outlook. The idea that *all* parts of space exist by themselves inevitably leads to idea that space is made up of indivisible parts, or points.

If physical space were intrinsically and infinitely divided, all conceivable spatial distinctions would have an unconditional reality (that is, they would be real for every material object at any time), and one of the following three statements would necessarily be true for any material object M contained in the union of two separate regions A and B:

(1) M is inside A;

(2) M is inside B;

(3) M has two parts, one inside A and one inside B.

Yet sometimes all three statements are false. This means that physical space cannot be something that is intrinsically and infinitely divided; and it also means that the physical world does not conform to the CCP. An object can be inside the union of A and B without being in A only and without being in B only and without being partly in A and partly in B.

The two-slit experiment with electrons is a case in point. The existence of interference fringes tells us that each electron goes through the two slits *without* going through the left slit, and *without* going through the right slit, and *without* being divided into parts that go through different slits.

The possibility of this strange behaviour rests on the fact that physical space is not something that is intrinsically divided. Spatial distinctions have a *contingent* reality. The distinction we make between two regions of space is real for certain objects at certain times and is nonexistent for other objects or at other times. If an actual event indicates the slit taken by an electron, the distinction we make between the regions defined by the slits is real for the electron, and the electron goes through the indicated slit. On the other hand, if there isn't any actual event from which the slit taken by the electron can be inferred, that distinction has no reality for the electron, and this is why the electron can and does go through the two slits without going through either slit in particular and without being divided by its passage through the slits.

The fundamental physical theory that correctly describes, among other things, the strange behaviour of electrons in two-slit experiments, is quantum mechanics. It is common knowledge that the interpretation of quantum mechanics is controversial, to say the least. Most physicists, tired of discussions of interpretational issues, take an instrumentalist stance. For them, quantum mechanics concerns statistical regularities in the behaviour of measuring instruments, and any attempt to go beyond the "brute facts", to give an account of how it is that the statistical regularities predicted by quantum mechanics come out the way they do, is idle metaphysics. This attitude appears justified by the bizarre views held by those who purport to give such an account. (One of the least bizarre of those views is the popular misconception that quantum mechanics involves the consciousness of observers in some essential way.)

As I see it, the root of the problem is the CCP, or the nature of mental consciousness, or the way our brains deal with visual information and visual imagery. (There is mounting evidence that the same neural processes are involved in the production of both visual percepts and visual images.) We are mentally as well as neurophysiologically disposed to interpret the mathematical formalism of quantum mechanics along lines laid down by the CCP, but this simply doesn't work; for the CCP makes us treat spatial distinctions as real *per se* , as having an *absolute* reality, whereas quantum mechanics tells us how spatial distinctions *arise* , and this cannot be understood without acknowledging their *contingent* reality, and thus without going beyond the CCP.

The contingent reality of spatial distinctions has far-reaching consequences for the spatial aspect of the physical world and for the shapes of the things it contains. Let us now to try to

conceive of the spatial aspect of the physical world and of the shapes of material objects in agreement with quantum mechanics and in defiance of the CCP.

Space first. Physical space, as distinct from phenomenal space, is a system of spatial relations between material objects. For "spatial relations" you may substitute "relative positions" (that is, positions of material objects relative to other material objects). Where physical space is concerned, there is no such thing as "empty space". Space is not a separate constituent of the world like an empty container but a system of relations between the world's material constituents. If there are no material objects, there are no spatial relations, and without spatial relations, there is no space.[1]

The shapes of things next. While the position of a material object M consists in its *external* spatial relations, the form of M consists in its *internal* spatial relations. (The external spatial relations of M are those between M and such objects as have no material constituents in common with M. The internal spatial relations of M are those between M's own material constituents.) Two extreme cases are of special interest. First, if M is the entire physical world, there are no spatial relations *external* to M. Hence the physical world as a whole lacks a position, which makes good sense. Second, if M is a fundamental particle—a quark or a lepton like the electron,—there are no spatial relations *internal* to M. Therefore a fundamental particle lacks a form. The basic constituents of matter are formless.

If the physical world were created along the lines laid down by the CCP, the shapes of things would be bounding surfaces, and matter would be an extended stuff bounded by surfaces. A material object would have as many parts as the space it occupies, and an object without parts—a noncomposite object like the electron—would be a bit of stuff with the form of a point.

In reality, as described by quantum mechanics, there is no extended stuff bounded by surfaces, and there are no bits of stuff with pointlike forms. A generic material object owes both its spatial extension and its form to its internal spatial relations, rather than to some extended stuff capable of being bounded by a surface. And a fundamental particle is neither extended nor does it have a form. If you nonetheless want to think of it as a bit of stuff, be prepared that this bit of stuff does not exist in space. Physical space is the totality of spatial relations that exist between formless particles. It contains, in the set-theoretic sense of "containment", the forms of all things that have forms—for forms are sets of spatial relations,—but it does not contain material objects over and above their forms; *a fortiori* it does not contain formless objects. Instead, physical space exists *between* the fundamental particles, inasmuch as it is constituted and spanned by their spatial relations.

So much for the formal aspect of the physical world. To bring out its substantial aspect, I will discuss another experiment, a two-particle collision. Initially we have two incoming particles, one heading northward and one heading southward, and after the collision we have, per assumption, two outgoing particles, one heading eastward and one heading westward.

To make sense of what happens in this experiment, you need to know that in the quantum world there are no causal links. What takes their place is statistical correlations. The mathematical formalism of quantum mechanics is an algorithm for calculating the corresponding probabilities. The calculation of quantum-mechanical probabilities is subject

to what we may call the *principle of the contingent reality of mental distinctions* . This says that if a process can be conceived as following several different routes or alternatives, the probability of the process depends on whether there is a fact of the matter about the alternative taken by the process. If there is such a fact of the matter, the probability of the process is the sum of the probabilities of the alternatives. In this case the process actually follows a particular alternative, and the only reason why we assign to it a probability is that we do not know or care which one it follows.

On the other hand, if there isn't any such fact of the matter, the probability of the process is *not* the sum of the probabilities of the alternatives, and this forbids us to assume that the process nonetheless follows a particular alternative. Instead, the process follows them all, but indistinguishably, in the sense that the distinction we make between the alternatives is a distinction that Nature does not make.

One example of this kind of situation is the two-slit experiment, where the distinction between "electron goes through the left slit" and "electron goes through the right slit" is a distinction that Nature does not make. Another example is our collision experiment. Here the first alternative is that the outgoing particle heading westward is the same as the incoming particle heading southward (in which case the outgoing particle heading eastward is the same as the incoming particle heading northward), and the second alternative is that the outgoing particle heading westward is the same as the incoming particle heading northward (in which case the outgoing particle heading eastward is the same as the incoming particle heading southward). (See Figure.)

If the two particles are of different types—say, a proton and a neutron,—there is a fact of the matter about the alternative taken—if the outgoing particle heading westward is of the same type as the incoming particle heading *southward* , the first alternative has taken place, and if the outgoing particle heading westward is of the same type as the incoming particle heading *northward* , the second alternative has taken place. On the other hand, if the two particles are of the same type (and also lack such distinguishing properties as antiparallel spins), there isn't any fact of the matter about the alternative taken. In this case the outgoing particle heading westward is neither the same as nor different from either of the incoming particles. It is indistinguishably both of them, for the distinction we make between the two alternatives corresponds to nothing in the physical world.

This distinction is based on the idea that the two particles are re-identifiable. The possibility of re-identification may exist for two reasons, either because the two particles possess distinguishing properties or because they are distinct substances to which proper names can be permanently attached. In reality the possibility of re-identification does not exist, and this means that at the time of collision the two particles lack distinguishing properties and are not distinct substances either.

What we are confronted with here is another instance of the inconsistency of quantum mechanics with the CCP. If things are conceived "as if rigidly cut out from a background or a mass", they occupy different regions of space at all times; there always is a fact of the matter that warrants their distinctness. This makes it possible to conceive of them as distinct substances, in conformity with the mind's pluralistic outlook. But Nature does not conform to this outlook. Two particles of the same type are not distinct substances. If the particles in our collision experiment were distinct substances, the probability for scattering at right angles could not be contingent on the existence of a fact of the matter about the alternative taken.

The consequences are literally *mind* -boggling: If we consider particles of the same type, and if we consider them by themselves, out of relation to each other, we must consider them identical not just in the weak sense of exact similarity but in the strong sense of *numerical identity* . (Identical twins are genetically identical in the weak sense. The evening star and the morning star are identical in the strong sense.)

What is necessary for something to be *two* things is either the existence of distinguishing substances or the existence of distinguishing properties, and particles of the same type, considered out of relation to each other, lack both. (The properties by which such particles could be distinguished are relational; they do not exist when the particles are considered out of relation to each other.) This strong identity is not confined to particles of the same type. Since particles of one type can be converted into particles of another type, the property of belonging to a particular type of particle is an accidental or contingent property, rather than a constitutional one. Therefore even particles of different types are *intrinsically* identical in the strong sense of numerical identity.

We must accept that being one thing, or many things, or identical things, or different things is not something that has an absolute meaning. These are *relative* notions. Two particles can be one thing in one sense, two identical things in another sense, and two different things in yet another sense. Considered in themselves, all fundamental particles are the same thing. Because of the spatial relations that exist between this thing and itself, they are also many things. A multiplicity of relations implies at least the appearance—Shankara would say the illusion—of a multiplicity of relata. Because intrinsically the relata are the same thing, they are many identical things. And if they possess distinguishing properties, they are also different things.

So what is this one thing X that all fundamental particles intrinsically are? We will have the answer if we resolve the following apparent contradiction. A fundamental particle has no form. And considered out of relation to other particles, it has no position, it has neither energy nor momentum, it has neither mass nor charge nor spin, for all these properties only characterize how it behaves in relation to other particles; they tell us nothing about what a particle intrinsically is. In itself, therefore, a fundamental particle is nothing—nada. Call this Statement 1. Statement 2 is the assertion that intrinsically all fundamental particles are identically the same thing X.

These two statements are contradictory only in appearance, for Statement 2 ("intrinsically all fundamental particles are X") refers to *existing* particles—the actual ingredients of the physical world at any one time,—while Statement 1 ("in itself a fundamental particle is nothing") is about the *concept* of a fundamental particle. By considering *existing* particles

out of relation to each other, Statement 2 divests them of all properties but their existence. Statement 1 further divests them of their existence in the physical world. The fact that in this case nothing remains, reveals that the only intrinsic characterization of an existing fundamental particle is to say: It exists. Therefore that one thing X which all particles intrinsically are, is *existence pure and simple* . Since this is one of the possible characterizations of the Vedantic Brahman, the identification X=Brahman seems justified.

It might be instructive to contrast the traditional concept of instantiation with that instantiation of Brahman to which the fundamental particles owe their existence. Traditionally, instantiation runs parallel to predication: What gets instantiated is a predicable universal, a secondary substance in Aristotle's terminology, and the resulting instance is an impredicable individual, a primary substance. According to this view, what is responsible for the instantiation is something that is present in the individual but absent from the universal. This view conforms to the mind's inborn tendency of conceiving of individuals as existing by themselves, rather than by virtue of a process of division or differentiation: Primary substance serves the dual purpose of individuating the universal and of bestowing an independent physical reality on the individual.

The instantiation of Brahman that gives rise to the fundamental particles of matter is something else altogether. To create an instance of Brahman, nothing material or substantial needs to be added to Brahman. There is nothing present in a fundamental particle that is absent from Brahman. Nor can whatever it is that instantiates Brahman exist in advance of the instantiation. In advance of the instantiation of pure existence there is only pure existence. Only Brahman can instantiate Brahman, and this only by entering into relations with itself. This is the only way that respects the proper logical dependencies: The instances of Brahman exist because the instantiating relations exist; the instantiating relations exist because Brahman has entered into relations with itself; and Brahman exists because it is Brahman.

According to Sri Aurobindo, the world is a manifestation of Brahman. Quantum mechanics tells us how this manifestation is effected. The existence of the physical world is supported by a spatial differentiation of Brahman. By entering into spatial relations with itself, Brahman acquires the aspect of a multiplicity of formless particles. Along with the particles, physical space and forms come into existence, for physical space is the totality of existing spatial relations, and forms are particular sets of such relations.

Again, since what exists at either end of each spatial relation is Brahman, spatial relations are *internal* to Brahman. Fundamental particles, recall, do not exist in space. Instead, space is a web of relations spun *between* fundamental particles. Add to this the fact that intrinsically all fundamental particles are Brahman, and you arrive at the conclusion that space is internal to Brahman. The physical world is both constituted by Brahman and suspended within Brahman, in full accord with Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of Brahman.

The manifestation of a world calls for another differentiation of Brahman, a temporal differentiation. This is effected by change, for time and change are coimplicates: A timeless world cannot change, and a changeless world is temporally undifferentiated and therefore timeless.

In my opinion, the quintessential message of quantum mechanics is that there are limits to both the spatial and the temporal differentiation of Brahman. The physical world is only finitely differentiated. This too conflicts with the CCP, inasmuch as the latter implies a world that is infinitely differentiated both spacewise and timewise. This conflict is what makes it so hard for us mentally conscious beings to make sense of quantum mechanics. Quantum mechanics tells us how and to what extent the world is spatially and temporally differentiated. As long as our thinking adheres to the CCP and we assume, accordingly, that the world is infinitely differentiated to begin with, we cannot but fail to get the message.

In an infinitely differentiated world, spatial relations are determinate quantities; they possess definite values. In a finitely differentiated world, spatial relations are indeterminate quantities; they possess fuzzy values. The proper conceptualization of indefiniteness requires the use of statistical concepts, and this is why quantum mechanics is formally a statistical theory. But why is the world only finitely differentiated? Why do spatial relations have fuzzy values? The answer is that, for all we know, this is the only consistent way to "fluff out matter", to create finite-sized material objects using a finite number of particles, or to manifest finite forms using a finite number of spatial relations. What makes material objects occupy finite volumes of space is the fuzziness of their internal spatial relations. If you are Brahman, and you want to create spatially extended objects by entering into countably many spatial relations, you have no choice but to let these relations have fuzzy values.

A slightly more general way of giving quantum mechanics in a nutshell is to say that there are limits to the objective reality of mental distinctions. Recall Sri Aurobindo's characterization of mind. Mind is the agent of division, of differentiation. When it is employed by supermind, the original creative principle, mind is used judiciously. The mind's tendency to divide *ad infinitum* is checked. But when mind is separated in its self-awareness from its supramental parent and left to run wild, as it is in us, it not only divides *ad infinitum* but also fails to recognize itself as the instrument of the division. It takes the resulting multiplicity for the original truth or fact. That is why mental consciousness is inherently reductionistic, atomistic, and therefore materialistic.

By conforming to the mental way of conceiving things, classical physics is conducive to a materialistic way of thinking. When taught without proper corrective, it instills a materialistic outlook. As physics is ordinarily taught, such a corrective is never given. Quantum mechanics is introduced with a materialistic world view already firmly in place, and with apologies for its failure to make sense. Let me give you an example. In classical physics mass is quantity of matter. As long as you have a quantity of matter, you have a materialistic world view, no matter what other ideas you may entertain. When quantum physics is introduced, mass is rarely redefined. But the meaning of mass in quantum physics is totally different. The mass of a fundamental particle is essentially a universal unit of time. Its function is to provide a standard for the measurement of distances and durations. It has nothing to do with the quantification of matter. In a world governed by quantum mechanics, there is no quantifiable matter. You can count particles, but you can't measure them. A particle isn't so and so much matter.

According to quantum mechanics, the original truth or fact is unity, rather than multiplicity. Multiplicity is contingent and emergent. Quantum physics thus is the opposite of

materialistic, which is something for which I don't have a satisfactory word. Quantum mechanics describes a world that is created top-down, by a process of differentiation, rather than bottom-up, by a process of aggregation. And in doing so it reveals that the creative principle to which the physical world owes its existence is supramental rather than mental, for supermind, characteristically, proceeds from the One to the Many by differentiation or particularization, while mind proceeds from the Many to at best a semblance of unity by aggregation.

There is yet another differentiation of Brahman, its differentiation into subjects and objects. Sri Aurobindo endorses the Vedantic characterization of Brahman as being at once pure existence, or Sat, and pure consciousness, or Chit. We may characterize Brahman as an intrinsically indeterminate existence with the power to determine itself, or we may characterize it as an intrinsically contentless consciousness with the power to give itself content. There is a supreme way of being, or of being conscious, to which these two characterizations are equally adequate. Up there there isn't any difference between Brahman qua existence and Brahman qua consciousness. (Hence there also isn't any difference between ontology and psychology.) The differentiation of Brahman into subjects and objects arises as a result of another individuation or instantiation of Brahman, one that gives rise not to a multiplicity of formless particles but to a multiplicity of conscious beings. But this is a different story. I mention it here in order to indicate how this story connects with the story I told you today. On the one hand Brahman is, indistinguishably, pure existence and pure consciousness. On the other hand, each fundamental particle is Brahman. Therefore each fundamental particle is, indistinguishably, a pure existence and a pure consciousness. I suppose this brings the mystery of how anything material can be conscious into the realm of solvable problems.

Note

[1] The ordinary, substantival view of space not only is inconsistent with quantum mechanics but also leads to an inconsistent attribution of two contradictory properties to the same thing, space: continuity and discreteness. We have learned to gloss over this inconsistency by a clever use of ambiguous terminology. The relational view of space required by quantum mechanics gets rid of this inconsistency, for it attributes continuity and discreteness to different things: While continuity is a qualitative property of every spatial relation, discreteness —not the discreteness of a so-called "continuous set" but a countable discreteness—is a property of the entire system of spatial relations. The synchronic multiplicity of the physical world therefore is countable. It is, depending on whether you prefer to think in terms of substances or in terms of relations, either the multiplicity of material objects that exist at any one time or the multiplicity of their spatial relations.

Further reading

Ulrich Mohrhoff, "What quantum mechanics is trying to tell us," *Am. J. Phys.* 68 (8), 728-745 (2000); e-Print <http://xxx.lanl.gov/abs/quant-ph/9903051>.

Ulrich Mohrhoff, "Quantum mechanics and the cookie cutter paradigm," ePrint <http://xxx.lanl.gov/abs/quant-ph/0009001>.

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Insight dialogue session

Jan Maslow

Insight Dialogue is a meditation practice that includes listening and speaking, and, in an on-line format, reading and writing. Since the best way to understand a practice is to experience it, I'd like to invite you to begin engaging in the reading aspect of the practice right now by settling in... slowing down... and becoming aware of the changing sensations of the body as you sit reading this article. Notice any tensions ... and invite them to relax... Take the time to do this without striving... without judgement... Make sure you pause from time to time as you read... to observe whether you've gotten caught up in your reactions to the words or in a passing thought or feeling... and take a moment to step back from that involvement.

Now bring your awareness to the activities of the mind and vital... notice any expectations which may be there regarding what you're about to read... any biases... any thoughts or feelings still percolating from whatever activity preceded this one, any thoughts or feelings about what you'll be doing next... and begin to step back from these movements, relaxing into a deep and wide listening space.

As you continue to read, observe any responses that may arise... any reaction of attraction or aversion, like or dislike... without becoming involved in them. When you find yourself becoming involved, then without judgement, simply let go and step back once again into a wide and calm receptivity and attentiveness.

Background

The practice of Insight Dialogue was originally developed by Greg Kramer and Terry O'Fallon in 1994. At that time, Greg had been meditating and teaching insight meditation for over 10 years and was concerned and intrigued by his observation that the clear, calm and compassionate states he experienced in meditation did not readily endure when he arose from his cushion to engage in relating to others. He sought a way to expand his meditation practice that would include the challenge of interaction. While completing his doctoral studies in psychology at the California Institute of Integral Studies, he became involved in the practice of dialogue developed by physicist David Bohm. This practice is designed to make conversation the vehicle for something truly creative and transformative-creative in the sense that something brand new and totally unanticipated might emerge into awareness, and transformative in the sense that those who participated might leave the encounter somehow widened or deepened by virtue of it.

While Bohmian dialogue can be a profound practice unto itself, Greg found that when he deliberately brought to it his practice of insight meditation, something yet more profound and more interesting began to happen. Insight dialogue emerged as an offspring of this integration and has become the means he sought for bringing the calmness and clarity of solitary meditation into the realm of interaction. This article will offer a brief glimpse into Bohmian dialogue and insight meditation, and a brief description of their merging in the guidelines for Insight Dialogue.

At this point, you might wish to check in with your experience... becoming aware of thoughts... feelings... sensations that have arisen... and if you find yourself attached to or

involved in any of them... take this moment to relax... step back... and re-gather the strands of your awareness into a one-pointed poise in the present moment.

Bohmian dialogue

What does it take to have a conversation from which we emerge with new understanding, unexpected insight, a larger or deeper perspective—a conversation which is free from the tendency to recycle the cherished beliefs, assumptions and opinions with which we enter into it? How do we collectively learn to look out through fresh and unconditioned eyes so as to be able to see whatever truth is wanting to be born in each unfolding moment?

In Bohmian dialogue, the process is one of becoming more fully aware of the mental and vital habits that prevent us from being fully present and open to what's emerging in the moment, habits that keep us tethered to familiar patterns of thinking and feeling. Such habits include occupying a particular role, needing to be right, leaping to judgement, jumping to conclusions—all of which tend to close us off from hearing anything that might disprove, or even enhance our own point of view. Once we become aware of these habits, we can suspend them so that they do not limit or distort our thinking, feeling and speaking.

Insight meditation

> ...in the calm mind, it is the substance of the mental being that is still..... If thoughts or activities come, they cross the mind as a flight of birds crosses the sky in a windless air. It passes, disturbs nothing, leaving no trace. Even if a thousand images or the most violent events pass across it, the calm stillness remains as if the very texture of the mind were a substance of eternal and indestructible peace. A mind that has achieved this calmness can begin to act even intensely and powerfully, but it will keep its fundamental stillness.
>
> *Sri Aurobindo, Letters on Yoga, p. 637*

It is difficult to become aware of deeply ingrained mental and vital habits, no less to suspend them, without cultivating the capacity to stay focused on our present experience, as well as to disidentify from it. Thus, the Bohmian challenge is one which many have found difficult to meet in the absence of some sort of explicit meditative practice. Insight meditation happens to provide an excellent complement to Bohmian dialogue because it is precisely about being fully present and attentive to the changing nature of thoughts, feelings and sensations as they arise and pass away moment by moment, and releasing any tendency to get caught up in them.

The “insight” in insight meditation refers to becoming aware of the shift that takes place as the sense of a limited and separate self which is identified with the changing movements of the nature, yields to the sense of a vast and unchanging awareness which gives rise to and contains all movements without being affected by them.

The following guided meditation is offered with the hope of imparting a sense of the experience of insight meditation. If you have already been reading in a state of meditative awareness, this may simply offer an opportunity to deepen your experience.

Allow yourself to settle into the sensations of the physical body... noticing any tensions that may be there and inviting them to relax... noticing the panorama of thoughts, feelings and sensations rising and falling, moment to moment... allowing yourself to drift inward to a place of stillness and calm from which you can witness the passing show without being moved by it.

Begin to get a sense of the physical boundary of the body, and a sense of the separate self which it seems to enclose... allow that boundary to gradually soften and dissolve so all is now floating in a vast, unbounded field of conscious awareness... very calm, very still, and infinitely compassionate.

Noticing the movement of energy in this field of awareness... movement which we experience as thoughts, feelings, sensations... arising out of stillness.... moving through stillness... and merging again back into stillness.

Notice the tendency to grasp on to these movements as "my" thought, "my" feeling, "my" sensation, and notice how the sense of a solid, separate self begins to congeal around that grasping, recreating "my" self-image.

Notice the shift between grasping and letting go... between the tension and suffering that accompanies the grasping, and the freedom and joy of letting go. And let it all be held with great tenderness, kindness and compassion for the suffering of that apparent self which experiences itself as separate from the Divine and from the Divine in all beings and all things.

In the depths, at the core of this vast and still field of awareness, perhaps you can sense a warmth, a softness, a sweetness, gently and quietly radiating, suffusing that infinite ocean of conscious awareness with ananda, and loving kindness for all living beings.

The guidelines for insight dialogue

Having touched briefly on the methodology of Bohmian dialogue and the practice of insight meditation, we now turn to the methodology and practice of Insight Dialogue by offering a brief description of its guidelines. Each guideline, in its own way, invites us into an experience of being truly open and receptive to whatever is wanting to emerge fresh in each moment. At the same time, each serves as a reminder, shining light on a particular form of conditioning which might stand in the way of that openness and receptivity, confining us to the re-creation of past experience.

As you read through each guideline, I'd like to invite you to reflect on how it might be relevant to your experience in the moment.

Guideline 1. Commit to the process

The first guideline invites us to be fully awake to the nature of our moment-to-moment experience, noticing the changing flux of thoughts, feelings and sensations as they arise and pass away in each new moment. At the same time, it is a reminder to become aware of moments when we find ourselves lost in a passing thought or emotion, or in reaction to what someone has said or written... and to gently bring our awareness back into the moment, calling to mind the guidelines which follow. Ultimately, it is an invitation to bring the fullness of our being and concentration into the moment, with the faith that in so doing

lies the joyful possibility of freedom from reactivity—a freedom to relate to each other from the inner depths with wisdom and compassion.

I invite you, in this moment, to notice how fully present you are to your experience, to notice whether you've become absorbed in a movement of the nature, and if so, to bring your awareness back to its poise in the present moment.

Guideline 2. Pause-Relax-Contemplate

This guideline describes the rhythm and overall choreography of an Insight Dialogue session. "Pause" refers to the practice of pausing between comments to step back from the onrush of experience into the stillness and calm within, and from there to take note of what is arising in response to what others are saying, or to hearing or seeing our own words ringing in the silence. It also suggests the generally slower pace of an insight dialogue session, a pace necessary, at least in the early stages of the practice, to allow for that stepping back and detection of automatic responses which might otherwise escape our conscious awareness.

"Relax" is an invitation to release any inclination to identify with the automatic responses that arise, as well as the tendency to construct a limited self around them, and to rest in the breadth and calm of the inner being from which they can be seen in the all-gentle light of loving kindness and are known to be but rising and falling waves of universal nature.

From that place of stillness and calm, "contemplate" invites us to sit quietly with what's been said, to see the rhythm and shape of what is emerging, and allow a sense of deeper or larger meaning to intuitively emerge.

I would invite you, once again, to notice any tendency to rush headlong into the next moment, next sentence, or next unexamined reaction, propelled by the force of habit, and to slow down... pausing from time to time to observe your experience... relaxing inward... and opening to intimations of a deeper understanding.

Guideline 3. Trust emergence

This guideline invites us relax into the freedom of not needing to know what will be happening in the moment which follows, the freedom of "doing" nothing more than being fully present to the truth that is wanting to emerge in each new moment. It is also a reminder to be aware of any preferences or demands we may have, subtle or overt, with regard to what should or should not be happening either in our individual experience or the collective unfoldment... and to let them go. In its fullest sense, this guideline points to a deep and abiding trust in the Divine Will as it manifests through ourselves and each other, moment by moment.

Once again, I invite you to look at your present experience, to notice any preferences or demands you may have on the truth of this unfolding moment, and to let them go.

Guideline 4. Speak the truth, listen deeply

This guideline reminds us to discern, of all that is arising in the moment, what wants to be offered into the collective process, what will help to nurture the truth that is taking shape. It

refers to listening from the depths of stillness, with a sense of spiritual inquiry in search of what is beautiful, noble and true behind all appearances, while continuing to notice the passing flux of the outer nature and being mindful of its potentially distorting influence.

Guideline 5. Release roles

This guideline asks us to be mindful of the roles or self-concepts by which we tend to construct a false and limited sense of self, concepts which determine what we allow ourselves to hear, think and say... and to let them go. These can be enduring roles like teacher, sadhak, elder, psychologist—or transient ones that arise in the context of a particular interaction, like speaker and listener. It is a reminder to take note as an arising movement of sadness, shyness or envy begins to congeal into the concept of a *person* who *is* sad, shy or envious, and to let that sense of a solid person soften and dissolve.

In its most profound sense, this guideline points to the dissolution of what Sri Aurobindo calls the "ego sense" or "ego idea" which permeates our consciousness with that sense and notion of a separate self that underlies all our self-concepts. The invitation to release roles thus offers the possibility of freedom from all fixed and limited images of ourselves and others; and a freedom to know each other as the vast, eternal, all-blissful One.

You may wish to pause for a moment to reflect on any roles or images you hold of yourself or others that might limit what you allow yourself to experience, and to allow for an experience that is blossoming newborn into each unfolding moment.

Guideline 6. Seek out assumptions

Here we are invited to become aware of the shades of meaning we read into what someone is saying or how they are saying it, their motivation, the words they use, the gestures they make, or the tone of their voice. We are being asked to hold these interpretations lightly, and, with a curiosity that aspires only for truth, to subject them to inquiry—whether in the privacy of our own mind, or aloud where we can benefit from the perspective of others.

In a more profound sense, this guideline invites us to look into the assumptions we make about the nature of who we are and the world in which we live. The possibility to which it points is one in which the thick and tangled web of mental and vital formations that stands between "us" and "what" we know, becomes progressively refined and ever more translucent to the light of the Real at the heart of all experience.

Guideline 7. Observe judgements

With this guideline, we are reminded to notice the judgements that are continually arising with respect to almost anything—thoughts, feelings, images of ourselves and others... sounds, sights or smells in the environment... the nature of what's taking shape—and to step back... to meet those judgements with compassion and loving kindness for the suffering they cause, while refusing to limit our awareness according to their narrow constructs. Thus, we are invited to experience the possibility of an awareness which sees and appreciates the *rasa*, the taste of things as they present themselves in the moment... unfettered by the filter of habitual attractions and aversions.

Once again, you may wish to pause... to observe any judgements arising in your experience... to suspend them in loving kindness... and look out anew through eyes untainted by mental or vital preference.

Guideline 8. Share background thinking

This last guideline invites us to share, with discernment, some of the thoughts, feelings and reactions that arise which may not seem to be directly related to the thread of conversation but, when offered into the collective process, may shed light on some element that holds the key to a larger understanding. Sharing such background experience can be helpful as it may take someone with a perspective other than our own to either recognize the key, or see how to use it to unlock the collective meaning which is emerging.

Missteps and misconceptions

There are two primary ways in which an Insight Dialogue session can go astray. One lies in the tendency to become caught up in the sweetness of sharing and empathizing with another's emotional experience, perhaps offering kind and well-intentioned words of solace or advice. While an entirely worthy and often healing function of group engagement, this is not the purpose of insight dialogue. In insight dialogue we observe our tendency to get caught up in another's identification with the movements of their vital nature—whether higher or lower—and attempt to step back from them. By retreating into an inner stillness, we can be with the person in loving kindness, while seeing their experience as part of the ebb and flow of universal tides, thus inviting them to do the same. In this way, we continually support each other in choosing the path of freedom—turning away from the smallness and suffering of our reactive nature, toward the fullness and joy of our true being. And thus do we create an ideal setting in which purification and eventual psychic transformation of the outer nature can be nurtured.

The other tendency is to be drawn into an intellectual conversation, getting caught up in what may well be a fresh and compelling flow of ideas. Again, this is an immensely valuable and invigorating pursuit. However, if we do not engage these ideas with the calm mind, we may remain blind to a host of conditioned and largely subconscious habits which, from the shadows, control what we think, feel and say. It is bringing these habits to awareness in the interest of freeing ourselves from them that is the particular province of insight dialogue. From the depths of inner stillness emerges the possibility of a yet richer, more creative, and intuitive discourse liberated from the knots of karmic compulsion.

Having contemplated the guidelines which describe the Insight Dialogue practice, as well as two of the principle ways in which the process can be derailed, it will perhaps be useful to address some misconceptions that can easily arise.

Misconception 1:

Insight dialogue is simply a conversation in which everyone speaks more slowly and pauses often.

The intention of the guideline, Pause-Relax-Contemplate, is not to create a new, slower and apparently “spiritual” form of conversation. Rather, the pacing and pausing in an insight

dialogue session are a skilful means of creating the space most of us need in order to stay mindful of our moment-to-moment experience, and to repeatedly take refuge deep within.

As the guidelines become internalized, and as a group matures in the practice, a dialogue session can become more like a musical improvisation—fluid and playful, capable of accommodating a wide range of rhythms, themes and feeling tones—without losing its essential poise in the breadth and calm of the inner being.

Misconception 2:

In Insight Dialogue it is not permissible to tell stories, philosophize or speak in mental abstractions.

The essence of Insight Dialogue is the commitment to remain conscious of our moment-to-moment experience so that we can release the grasping around which a falsely constructed sense of self solidifies, thereby knowing the love and deep connection with others which effortlessly arise as a result. When recounting stories or engaging in philosophical discussion, there is a strong tendency to lose ourselves in the memories, feelings or ideas they embody. Since it is challenging enough for those who are new to the practice to stay mindful at all in the context of interaction with others, it can be helpful in the beginning, while new capacities are being nurtured, to keep the conversation focused, for the most part, on what is arising in the thoughts, feelings, sensations and intuitions of the moment. At a more advanced stage of practice, it may be possible to engage in storytelling or philosophical discourse while maintaining inner stillness.

Misconception 3.

Insight Dialogue is a strictly regulated conversation with rigid rules about the way you should talk and what you can or cannot say.

In spite of the high and pure experience to which they point, the guidelines are not intended as rigid rules that must be faithfully adhered to by everyone in every moment, lest they be judged in violation of the insight dialogue norm. Nor are they meant to eliminate all but the most perfect utterances of which human beings are capable. Rather, they are designed to support us in becoming conscious in each moment of the habits that ordinarily escape our awareness. When we pause to become more conscious in this way, we can step back into the wide stillness of the inner being where we are free from the impact of this outer reactive nature. Liberated from the tyranny of past conditioning, we are free to meet and engage, I with Thou, on the sacred ground of Love and mutual Self-knowing.

Journeying through worlds of splendour and calm
An experience of integral psychology

Don Salmon

> In the calm mind, it is the substance of the mental being that is still, so still that nothing disturbs it. If thoughts or activities come, they do not rise at all out of the mind, but they come from outside and cross the mind as a flight of birds crosses the sky in a windless air. It passes, disturbs nothing, leaving no trace. Even if a thousand images or the most violent events pass across it, the calm stillness remains as if the very texture of the mind were a substance of eternal and indestructible peace. A mind that has achieved this calmness can begin to act, even intensely and powerfully, but it will keep its fundamental stillness—originating nothing from itself but receiving from Above and giving it a mental form without adding anything of its own, calmly, dispassionately, though with the joy of the Truth and the happy power and light of its passage.
> — Sri Aurobindo, Letters on Yoga, p. 637-38

I'd like to invite you to pause.... to go back and once again read through the passage on the calm mind... reading very slowly... allowing for the experience that Sri Aurobindo describes to unfold in your consciousness.... allowing even a glimpse of that 'eternal and indestructible peace' to enter into your awareness....

I'd like now to invite you, as you proceed to read through the text below, to see to what extent you are able to remain with a calm mind, aware of thoughts, sensations, feelings, etc. arising and passing away in awareness, without getting caught or absorbed; open and receptive to whatever intuitions may emerge from within or descend from Above....

And of course, it is best to do this in remembrance, receptive to the Force of the Mother:

> Aspire to the Mother for this settled quietness and calm of the mind and this constant sense of the inner being in you standing back from the external nature and turned to the Light and Truth.
> — Sri Aurobindo, Letters on Yoga, p. 635

> Faith... is indispensable to the action of the being and without it man cannot move a single pace in life, much less take any step forward to a yet unrealized perfection. It is so central and essential a thing that the Gita can justly say of it that whatever is a man's [faith], that he is... and, it may be added, whatever he has the faith to see as possible in himself and strive for, that he can create and become.
>
> *Sri Aurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga, p. 771*

> It is what we see and believe with our whole active nature ourselves to be and our relations with the world to mean, it is our faith, that makes us what we are. But the consciousness of man is of a double kind and corresponds to a double truth of existence; for there is a truth of the inner reality and a truth of the outer appearance.

> According as he lives in one or the other, he will be a mind dwelling in human ignorance or a soul founded in divine knowledge.
>
> *Sri Aurobindo, Essays on the Gita, p. 573*

I'd like to invite you on a journey with me, a journey through inner worlds, to the innermost center of Consciousness. Before we embark together on this exploration, you may wonder whether it is possible to enter into these seemingly remote domains. But consider—if Being is One, then all that you experience—even at this very moment—is but a reflection, though perhaps a distorted one, of the Supreme Reality.

In fact, if your work involves helping people to grow and develop in any way, possibly the best thing you could do for them is to instill a faith in That which is deepest and highest in them, whether or not they are yet capable of knowing it directly. The ultimate purpose of this journey is to inspire the development of a new way of training integral researchers, therapists and teachers. As you come to know in a more intimate fashion the workings of the various domains of consciousness, your faith in your own Divine possibilities will be strengthened, and you will thus develop a greater capacity to strengthen the faith of your patients and students in their greater development, and ultimately in the possibility of contact with their innermost Divine Being.

I'm going to focus particularly on the different ways of 'knowing' which characterize each domain. In the outer consciousness, we are separate from what we know—this is the consciousness in which 'Ignorance' is most clearly manifest. Sri Aurobindo describes Ignorance as the perception of ourselves as separate from the world, which itself is perceived as being made up of so many separate, material objects, existing entirely independent of any form of consciousness. By contrast, as we awaken in the inner worlds, we come into direct contact with whatever we perceive. Centred in the consciousness of the soul, we recognize our oneness with whatever we know.

There are several potential difficulties in a presentation of inner experience to a large audience. The first problem is that each reader is at a different stage of development in terms of the experience of inner realities. How is it possible to speak to a large audience (at the IP conference, there were nearly 100 individuals) and find some kind of common understanding? The key, it seems to me, is that all of us have, in the midst of the most apparently mundane circumstances and experience, aspects of the inner and innermost Reality reflected in our ordinary experience. We aren't generally aware of this, but in special moments, when we are struck with wonder at the beauty or majesty of a particular event, person or object, the reflection of a greater Reality becomes most apparent:

> Awe is itself an act of insight into a meaning greater than ourselves... Awe enables us to perceive in the world intimations of the Divine, to sense in small things the beginning of infinite significance, to sense the ultimate in the common and the simple; to feel in the rush of the passing the stillness of the eternal.
> – Abraham Heschel, God in Search of Man

Here are two examples of deeper realities reflected in our outer nature:

* Our desires, our discontent and restlessness, are themselves a sign that there is something in us aware of and aspiring for a deeper reality. This recognition is perhaps fundamental to the Integral Yoga, because by recognizing the seed of aspiration in all of our experience of desire,

discomfort and discontent, we have a means by which we can sustain and deepen the flame of aspiration in our lives.

* The perception of beauty is perhaps initially a response of our surface nature, but in quieting our surface reaction it is possible to trace the feeling of wonder and adoration at the sight of a beautiful flower or the sound of a beautiful musical composition into a psychic perception.

To consider another potential concern, there is an ancient prohibition against revealing one's inner experiences to others. On the Integral Psychology forum, we have discussed this problem at great length. We realized that a science of consciousness would be impossible without the sharing of inner experiences. From this we concluded that the only remaining question was not whether we *would* share experiences, but rather, *how*. The simplest and shortest answer would be, whenever it is appropriate in a legitimate scientific context to share inner experiences with other integral psychologists, we would do so to whatever extent possible with an attitude of offering, reverence, devotion, sincerity and humility.

Another problem is the use of words to convey experiences which by their nature are beyond words. Sometimes, when talking about 'planes and parts of the being', the idea might arise that somewhere on the astral plane there is perhaps a signpost labelled, '100 yards ahead, inner vital being, just south of the inner physical mind; turn left at the subtle physical'. If it weren't for Sri Aurobindo's writings, I wouldn't have thought it possible to convey inner experience with great clarity and specificity. However, even regarding his own writings, so clear and so solidly based on spiritual experience, he found it necessary to warn his readers:

> All this [description of inner experience] must not be taken in too rigid and mechanical a sense. It is an immense plastic movement full of the play of possibilities and must be seized by a flexible and subtle tact or sense in the seeing consciousness. It cannot be reduced to a too rigorous logical or mathematical formula.
>
> — Sri Aurobindo, Letters on Yoga, p. 253

Remaining mindful of Sri Aurobindo's cautionary note, I believe that even if the attempt to convey inner experiences were a complete failure, the effort to put them into words would nonetheless be a wonderful means of developing one's intuitive faculties. One result that I hope will come of sharing this presentation is to encourage others to engage in a disciplined and loving dialogue about inner experiences with the aim of rising above intellectual disputation to a level of intuitive communion. In this spirit, it seems to me that it may be possible to allow words to become transparent vehicles through which the Divine Light might shine.

In the live presentation, I brought a reddish-green mango to the Sri Aurobindo World Centre for Human Unity, a beautiful open-aired performance space. I had purchased it the previous week from a road-side stand along the Bay avenue in Pondicherry. I had no idea what I was going to use for the presentation, so I was just keeping my eyes open as I travelled through Pondicherry and Auroville. One afternoon, on the way to the Ashram, I came across a street vendor and a particularly colourful mango caught my eye. If you want to use this image, you might keep it in mind throughout your reading of the text. I will attempt to describe the mango first as seen with the outer consciousness, then through the 'eyes' of the inner being, and then, to whatever extent it is possible to do so in words, as

'seen' directly by the soul. Just to be clear, I'm not claiming (or denying!) direct knowledge here—I'm attempting, together with you, to 'see' with the inner eyes of intuitively-inspired faith.

In order to make this applicable to integral education and psychotherapy, I want to describe, however briefly, the way in which the Ignorance manifests in the outer and inner consciousness. In the outer consciousness, where we take objects to be separate from us, you might say, 'I am conscious *of* the mango'. In the inner consciousness, where knowledge is, as Sri Aurobindo says, in 'direct contact' with the object of knowledge, you could say, 'I am conscious *with* the mango'. Finally, the knowledge of the soul is described by Sri Aurobindo describes the knowledge of the soul as one of identity—you become what you see, or you might say 'I *conscious* the mango.' It is essential here to avoid trying to understand that sentence intellectually, but rather to understand it with a mind and heart full of Faith. I hope I am able to evoke a feeling for this intuitive Faith, at least to some extent, in the section on the innermost consciousness.

In *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo speaks of two 'roots' of the impurities of our nature. The first is the radical separation, which creates a division between our self and others, our self and the world, and between the different parts of our self. The second is an inappropriate intermixture of mental, vital and physical consciousness, an interference of one part of the being in the workings of the other.

Sri Aurobindo gives a graphic description of our divided consciousness in the Life Divine:

> The Life is at war with the body; it attempts to force it to satisfy life's desires, impulses, satisfactions and demands from its limited capacity what could only be possible to an immortal and divine body; and the body, enslaved and tyrannized over, suffers and is in constant dumb revolt against the demands made upon it by the Life. The Mind is at war with both: sometimes it helps the Life against the Body, sometimes restrains the vital urge and seeks to protect the corporeal frame from life's desires, passions and overdriving energies; it also seeks to possess the Life and turn its energy to the mind's own ends..., and the Life too finds itself enslaved and misused and is in frequent insurrection against the ignorant halfwise tyrant seated above it. This is the war of our members which the mind cannot satisfactorily resolve because it has to deal with a problem insoluble to it, the aspiration of an immortal being in a mortal life and body.
>
> But there is also that fundamental division within between force of Nature and the conscious being which is the original cause of this incapacity. Not only is there a division between the mental, the vital and the physical being, but each of them is also divided against itself. The capacity of the body is less than the capacity of the instinctive soul or conscious being..., the capacity of the vital force less than the capacity of the impulsive soul, the vital conscious being..., the capacity of the mental energy less than the capacity of the intellectual and emotional soul, the mental [being]. The principle of unity is above in the Supermind: for there alone is the conscious unity of all diversities; there alone will and knowledge are equal and in perfect harmony; there alone Consciousness and Force arrive at their divine equation. Man, in proportion as he develops into a selfconscious and truly thinking being, becomes acutely aware of all this discord and disparateness in his parts and he seeks to arrive at a harmony of his mind, life and body, a harmony of his knowledge and will and emotion, a harmony of all his members.

Regarding the interference between parts of the being, take the simple process of eating. The body has an instinctive recognition of what it needs, but the vital desire interferes, demanding what is pleasant to it rather than what the body needs. The mind establishes rigid rules conforming to its own logic which may not be the logic of the body. The inertia and sluggishness of the body similarly interferes with the workings of the mind, as it also limits one's receptivity to the influx of vital energy. You can, I'm sure, think of many more examples of the confused interplay of mental, vital and physical consciousness.

As I wrote above, my goal in presenting this inner journey is to suggest a new way of training integral teachers and therapists. Whatever stage you may be in the development of inner awareness, it is possible by recognizing the reflections of inner states in your surface consciousness to gain a glimpse of deeper realities. I think that by learning to recognize the workings of the Ignorance—the root separation between self and other, and the inharmonious workings of the mental, vital and physical consciousness, it may be easier to inspire that deeper Faith in your students and patients which is the ultimate healing power—whether it be the sattwic faith in one's highest ideal or the spiritual faith in the Divine Shakti, the Mother.

Before beginning the next section, look at a mango, or bring the image of one to mind, and ask yourself:

* 'Who' is it that is aware of the mango?
* 'What' is the 'mango'? What is the nature of the 'mango' or any 'object' or 'person' apart from the knowing of the inner or outer consciousness?

I. The outer consciousness

Separative consciousness

'I' am conscious of the mango—I am separate from the mango.

Once again, I'd like to ask you to pause briefly, reestablish your awareness of a calm inner being, untouched by passing thoughts, feelings and sensations:

> In the calm mind, it is the substance of the mental being that is still, so still that nothing disturbs it. If thoughts or activities come, they do not rise at all out of the mind, but they come from outside and cross the mind as a flight of birds crosses the sky in a windless air. It passes, disturbs nothing, leaving no trace. Even if a thousand images or the most violent events pass across it, the calm stillness remains as if the very texture of the mind were a substance of eternal and indestructible peace. A mind that has achieved this calmness can begin to act, even intensely and powerfully, but it will keep its fundamental stillness—originating nothing from itself but receiving from Above and giving it a mental form without adding anything of its own, calmly, dispassionately, though with the joy of the Truth and the happy power and light of its passage. Sri Aurobindo, Letters on Yoga, p. 637

I'd like again to invite you, as you proceed to read through the text, to see to what extent you can read while remaining calm within....

> Aspire to the Mother for this settled quietness and calm of the mind and this constant sense of the inner being in you standing back from the external nature and turned to the Light and Truth. Sri Aurobindo, Letters on Yoga, p. 635

What is the nature of the outer consciousness? One way to get a fresh sense of it is to look at the experience of a child.

Imagine you are an infant. Your older brother is holding up a mango about 5 feet in front of you, and is walking toward you. This is the first time in your life you have ever seen a mango. You've never touched one before, you've never heard the word 'mango', and you have no previous experience of its taste, smell. What do you experience?

(Remember, even though I'm using the word 'you' or 'yourself', as yet you have no sense of a 'self' apart from the world around you). Your attention is drawn to a reddish-green patch of colour. You hear a loud sound behind you—perhaps somebody dropped a plate—and you turn toward the sound. At this moment, the reddish-green patch has left your visual field, so for all intents and purposes, it no longer exists.

Your head turns, and the reddish-green patch of colour appears once again. Now it is growing larger. Seeing it as adults might see it, it is simply your brother, holding the mango, walking closer to you. But you have not yet developed what psychologists call 'size constancy'—that is, you don't know that objects appear smaller in the distance and appear to grow larger as that distance is reduced. Nor do you realize at this age that the large white circle just outside the window is not something that you can reach out and touch. Even though it seems hardly further than the apple tree whose leaves kiss the sides of your house, as yet you have no way of understanding that the moon is actually thousands of miles away.

If your brother decides to take the mango and place it behind his back, for you once again, the patch of colour no longer exists. You don't yet have the concept that something continues to exist when you no longer perceive it. You haven't yet developed what psychologists call 'object constancy'. For you, simply stated, 'out of sight, out of mind'.

The fact that as yet your experience of time is extremely malleable contributes to the sense of the 'world' as a mixture of ever-changing sensations. 'Things' seem to blend into one another; there is no clear sense of where 'you' end and the 'world' begins. 'Time' is not yet a relentless flow from past to future. Rather than living in a world of ever-changing objects it seems that change itself is what makes up your world.

And yet, there is more, far more than this, to your experience. There are feelings, images are starting to form in your mind. But more important than this—there are deeper dimensions to your experience which will begin to emerge when we explore the inner and innermost domains of consciousness.

The experiences described up to now are characterized by an incessant flow of changing sensations. Within the first few months of life, this indistinct field of sensory experience comes to be experienced as a relatively coherent and increasingly stable set of images—images which coordinate the various sensations of sight, sound, smell, touch and taste.

This process of coordination is done for the most part through memory, and by the sixth or seventh month begins to be centred around a specific reference point, a point which eventually is known as 'I'. The nature of this 'I' will only begin to become clear toward the end of this story. For now, it is enough to say that for you as an infant—in terms of the outer consciousness only—your sense of 'I' refers mostly to a set of physical and vital reflexes and reactions.

In order to avoid getting caught up in too much analysis, it will be helpful to pause and look once again at the image of the mango. See if you can get a feeling for the rich texture and fluid nature of your experience as an infant. The main point here is to get a sense of how thoroughly the mind is involved in the construction (not creation!) of what we take to be a solidly existing world 'out there'. Body workers often speak of focusing on 'pure sensation' as a means of getting away from 'the mind'. However, they don't realize the extent to which the mind is intimately involved in the very texture of the material world as we experience it. In case you find this hard to believe, try this: Look at the area on the page that follows this sentence, and see if you can experience nothing more than a simple set of visual sensations:

M A N G O

I'll ask it in the negative now: Can you look above this sentence and *not* see the word 'mango'? Actually, it is possible to do.

Perhaps it may be helpful to consider that it is not only external objects like mangos, but in fact, everything—people, animals, buildings, earth, air, water and fire—that is filtered through an 'image'. This filtering process brings together a chaotic assortment of sensations, feelings, desires, impulses, memories, concepts, ideas, judgments all of which are thoroughly 'embedded' in the image. In our outer consciousness, we have no direct contact with the 'thing itself', with Reality. Rather, our ordinary experience is full of abstractions—the image is something which is abstracted from our direct experience, which itself is a distorted perception of Reality. What we take to be the Reality is merely this mind-constructed image. It is all we know and all we can know with our outer consciousness. One might even say that the 'mango' that is experienced by means of the outer consciousness *is* this mind-constructed mixture of physical, vital and mental consciousness.

Here's a simple experiment you can do to get a sense of how you do this with people. Try this the next time you are going to be introduced to somebody. When you first see the person, try to get a clear sense of the image that you are forming based merely on their appearance—man, woman, tall, short, white, black, etc. Be alert to all the past impressions that are embedded in that image, an image which may have no basis in 'external' reality. Notice, if you are observing the person interacting with somebody else, how this image shifts and changes as you add new information based on your observations. See if you can be especially alert after you have talked to this person for the first several minutes of your interaction. Look and see how dramatically the image of this person changes as you incorporate new information—what they do, how old they are, where they live, their interests, desires, etc. See how much more complex the relationship becomes within just a few minutes, as you move even further away from your direct experience, relating to this person through an increasingly multi-layered image.

This image through which everything in the world is filtered, is related , in our experience, to a separate 'I'. This 'I' is itself only a constructed image. One image is projected 'out there' as the world, another is taken to be 'in here', a 'me' which is separate from the world. In our ordinary experience, these separate images are then engaged in a mostly conflictual relationship. This separation is the root cause of desire, anger, grief, fear, etc. Since this constructed image is not well-integrated, there is strife and division within the 'I' image as well as between the various images of the world. As noted previously by Sri Aurobindo, there is division and conflict between the mind, life and body, as well as within the mind itself. This fact of separation, division and conflict is the fundamental characteristic of the outer consciousness, and the cause of most human difficulties. While there is something deeper, a Reality which underlies, embraces and pervades the images of the world and the 'I', it is not possible to know this Reality by means of the ordinary, outer consciousness.

The experience of apparent separation is not true—it is the mark of the Ignorance. The material world as experienced by our outer consciousness is felt to be separate from us. Similarly, other people are felt to be separate from us. We feel that the world would exist—exactly as we perceive it—in our absence. But the experienced world exists only in relation to the experiencer. Even in our ordinary experience, the world and the knowing of the world are inseparable. But to know what the 'world' is apart from our ordinary consciousness, and to realize how the world comes to exist in Reality, is impossible by means of the outer consciousness.

Even science—which is, for the most part, simply a highly disciplined use of the outer thinking mind—tells us nothing of Reality. In fact, in a sense, science takes us even further away from direct contact with Reality. The scientist, without fully recognizing that the 'rock' or 'brain' he studies is an image or abstraction, further abstracts aspects of that image which are measurable, and then leaving behind both the 'real' object as well as the image of it, analyses the nature of the measured abstraction. It is impossible to know Reality through the mind. However, by examining the nature of this outer, mental consciousness with precision and discipline, it is, perhaps paradoxically, possible to come to such a clear sense of the limitations of the mind, that an awareness may dawn of something beckoning from beyond.

> The only really important thing modern science has discovered is that from the purely outer and physical point of view things are not what they seem to be. When you look at a body, a human being, an object, a landscape, you perceive these things with the help of your eyes, your touch, hearing, and, for the details, smell and taste; well, science tells you: 'All that is illusory, you don't see things at all as they are, you don't touch them as they really are, you don't smell them as they really are, you don't taste them as they really are. It is the structure of your organs which puts you in contact with these things in a particular way which is entirely superficial, external, illusory and unreal.
>
> From the point of view of science, you are a mass of—not even of atoms—of something infinitely more imperceptible than an atom, which is in perpetual movement. There is absolutely nothing which is like a face, a nose, eyes, a mouth; it is only just an appearance. And scientists come to this conclusion—like the uncompromising spiritualists of the past—that the world is an illusion. That is a great discovery, very great... One step more and they will enter into the Truth... So, by diametrically opposite roads they have come to the same result: the world as you see it is an illusion.

The Mother, Questions and Answers 1957-58, p. 239

As you move into exploration of the inner and innermost domains, you will begin to get a glimpse of that Reality which underlies the separate 'images' which present themselves to the surface consciousness. However, before moving on, ask yourself:

* 'Who' is it that is aware of the mango? 'Who' is aware of all of these images, including the image referred to here as 'I'?
* 'What' is the 'mango'? What is the nature of the 'mango' or any 'object' or 'person' apart from the knowing of the outer consciousness?

II. The inner consciousness

Knowledge by direct contact

I am conscious with the mango; I am in direct contact with the mango.

Once again, I'd like to ask you to pause briefly, reestablish your awareness of a calm inner being, untouched by passing thoughts, feelings and sensations:

> In the calm mind, it is the substance of the mental being that is still, so still that nothing disturbs it. If thoughts or activities come, they do not rise at all out of the mind, but they come from outside and cross the mind as a flight of birds crosses the sky in a windless air. It passes, disturbs nothing, leaving no trace. Even if a thousand images or the most violent events pass across it, the calm stillness remains as if the very texture of the mind were a substance of eternal and indestructible peace. A mind that has achieved this calmness can begin to act, even intensely and powerfully, but it will keep its fundamental stillness—originating nothing from itself but receiving from Above and giving it a mental form without adding anything of its own, calmly, dispassionately, though with the joy of the Truth and the happy power and light of its passage. Sri Aurobindo, Letters on Yoga, p. 637-38

I'd like again to invite you, as you proceed to read through the text, to see to what extent you can read while remaining calm within....

> Aspire to the Mother for this settled quietness and calm of the mind and this constant sense of the inner being in you standing back from the external nature and turned to the Light and Truth. Sri Aurobindo, Letters on Yoga, p. 635

Before reading on, ask yourself this question:

Are you awake or dreaming? If you think the answer is easy, how do you know? Is there anything you could point to, which would make it absolutely clear, without a trace of doubt, that you were awake or in a dream?

You may be familiar with the section in Sri Aurobindo's book, *The Life Divine*, where he makes a great effort to refute the idea that the world is an illusion, the idea that the world is 'only a dream'. I want to emphasize I am not making a philosophic statement of any kind here, I'm only asking a question about experience without drawing any theoretical conclusion or asking you to draw one. I'd like you to consider it with some intensity, as though it really mattered to you—at least as much as it mattered to a friend of mine who related to me the following genuinely harrowing experience. The purpose of this question is not to set you off on a course of intellectual speculation, but to awaken a glimpse of a different kind of consciousness. Here, more than ever, it will be helpful to read with a calm mind:

My friend told me how, one morning, she walked into her bathroom and was struck with sheer terror when she looked in the mirror and saw her face dissolving. She suddenly 'woke up' and was enormously relieved to find that she had only been dreaming. She got out of bed, went into the bathroom, looked in the mirror and was again struck with terror as she saw her face dissolving. Abruptly, she woke up. Only this time, she remembered the sequence—a terrifying dream followed by a false awakening—that is, she thought she was awake when she was actually dreaming.

Now, she didn't know whether she was awake or asleep. The feeling of great fear was still with her, filling her with a sense of dread. 'Am I awake or asleep I have to figure this out, but how can I do that?' This was a real, living question for her, not a merely intellectual query. The question filled her whole being with a tremendous intensity. She decided she would walk into the bathroom and look in the mirror. She did so, and her face looked normal. Greatly relieved, she walked back into her bedroom. As she passed the fulllength mirror next to her bedroom closet, she saw, to her horror, her entire body dissolving. Once again, she awoke to find herself in her bed. This time, she was awake.

Or was she?

Ask yourself again, are you awake, now, in this moment, or are you dreaming?

How do you know?

Imagine that you *are* dreaming, and you are aware that you are dreaming. Stop and look around your environment. The objects you see are dream-objects, your body is a dreambody, all sounds are dream-sounds, your thoughts, feelings and sensations are arising in dream-consciousness. Do you notice any difference in the texture of things in the world? Do you feel a difference at all in the sense of time, of space, the texture of your body, the quality of thoughts and feelings? Is there perhaps any sense of an increased fluidity in the objects around you, a sense of your awareness extending beyond the limits of your body, 'touching' in a way the 'things' around you? Is there an increased feeling of aliveness and vitality in yourself and the world? Is it perhaps easier to feel a quality of inner stillness, and a sense of a vast awareness without bounds?

Sri Aurobindo speaks quite explicitly of the connection between the dream state and inner consciousness. In one letter, he relates the word 'dream' to the inner consciousness:

> The terms waking, dream, sleep are applied because in the ordinary consciousness of man the external only is awake, the inner being is mostly subliminal and acts directly only in a state of sleep when its movements are felt like things of dream and

vision; while the superconscient (supermind, overmind, etc.) is beyond even that range and is to the mind like a deep sleep. Sri Aurobindo, Letters on Yoga, p. 256

In case it's not clear from the preceding paragraph, I want to emphasize the fact that the way Sri Aurobindo is using the word "dream" (consistent with the Indian tradition) he does not mean something illusory or unreal. On the contrary, the "dream state" as a symbol of the inner or subliminal domain of consciousness, is often experienced as more "real" than the ordinary waking state. The exercise given above is not in any way meant to imply that the waking state is somehow illusory.

In another letter, Sri Aurobindo makes clear the relationship between the inner and outer consciousness:

> At first the inner consciousness seems to be the dream and the outer the waking reality. Afterwards the inner consciousness becomes the reality and the outer is felt by many as a dream or delusion, or else as something superficial and external. The inner consciousness begins to be a place of deep peace, light, happiness, love, closeness to the Divine or the presence of the Divine, the Mother. One is then aware of two consciousnesses, the inner one and the outer which has to be changed into its counterpart and instrument—that also must become full of peace, light, union with the Divine.
>
> *Sri Aurobindo, Letters on Yoga, p. 307*

In *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo further distinguishes between ordinary dreams and Yogic dreaming:

> There is a complete difference between... the dreamstate of Yoga and the physical state of dream. The latter belongs to the physical mind; in the former the mind proper and subtle is at work liberated from the immixture of the physical mentality. The dreams of the physical mind are an incoherent jumble made up partly of responses to vague touches from the physical world round which the lower mindfaculties disconnected from the will and reason, the buddhi, weave a web of wandering phantasy, partly of disordered associations from the brainmemory, partly of reflections from the soul travelling on the mental plane, reflections which are, ordinarily, received without intelligence or coordination, wildly distorted in the reception and mixed up confusedly with the other dream elements, with brainmemories and fantastic responses to any sensory touch from the physical world. In the Yogic dreamstate, on the other hand, the mind is in clear possession of itself, though not of the physical world, works coherently and is able to use either its ordinary will and intelligence with a concentrated power or else the higher will and intelligence of the more exalted planes of mind. It withdraws from experience of the outer world, it puts its seals upon the physical senses and their doors of communication with material things; but everything that is proper to itself, thought, reasoning, reflection, vision, it can continue to execute with an increased purity and power of sovereign concentration free from the distractions and unsteadiness of the waking mind. It can use too its will and produce upon itself or upon its environment

mental, moral and even physical effects which may continue and have their after consequences on the waking state subsequent to the cessation of the trance.

Sri Aurobindo,
— The Synthesis of Yoga, pp. 521-22

The main point of these comparisons is to contrast the separative character of the outer consciousness to one of the main characteristics of the inner consciousness: you are in direct contact with whatever you are aware of. Things feel and look quite different. Mother, for example, describes the perception of subtle-physical energy as resembling the waves of heat you may see rising from a road in the distance on a very hot day. But there is a profound difference—in the ordinary consciousness, you feel yourself to be 'here' and the heat waves are over 'there'. By contrast, in the inner consciousness, the 'space' between you and the subtle-energy is different. You feel as if 'you' are in some way 'there' as well as 'here'. Another way of saying this is that in the inner domain, your consciousness is universalized. You are no longer wholly confined to a particular location, separate from all that is around you. You begin to have a perception of a vital consciousness which is all-pervasive; you can walk through a forest and feel a powerful Force of Life which is One though manifesting in a myriad of trees, insects, birds, flowers and rocks.

Your way of knowing is different. Rather than observing the mango as an object separate from you, there is a close, even an intimate knowing of it, characterized more by intuition than intellectual reasoning. The ancients did not trace out a pattern in the stars and then by some primitive logic declare 'Capricorn' to be a Force determining the behaviour and personality of a human being. They experienced a direct communion, a direct knowing of an inner Reality which manifests to our human senses as the stars in outer space. To this inner knowing, the 'mango' which you are exploring is not merely a separate object, out 'there', but the appearance of an aspect of a larger Force, a focus of a universal consciousness appearing in a certain way to the outer awareness.

Several years ago, I attended a two-week retreat with a community of Tibetan Buddhists. Late one evening, I was sitting outside with one of the monks, a joyful and dedicated practitioner with many years of meditation experience. At one point, we were sitting in silence, contemplating an immense and beautiful tree which had many branches which were curved in various intriguing ways. As we sat there immersed in a delicious Silence and Presence, we began describing the 'meaning' of the tree—the way the shape of the leaves expressed an aspect of the being of the tree, the way in which the gentle swaying of the tree in the light breeze communicated to us a communion of the tree with the surrounding elements. After awhile, there was little or no sense of 'us' watching something 'out there'; rather, it seemed as if the very words that arose were inseparable from the Being of the tree and the total environment. While making no attempt to analyse what happened, we both recognized that we had entered together into a subtle plane of awareness, which in the Integral Yoga is known simply as the inner consciousness.

It is important to keep in mind that in awakening to this inner domain, you are still in the realm of the Ignorance. Ego still plays a part; separation is not yet eliminated. Though the gross division between parts of yourself as well as between yourself and the world which characterizes the outer consciousness has been lessened, a separation remains. There is a yet deeper and more profound form of knowing which can only be realized by entering into the innermost consciousness, that of the psychic being, the soul.

In the outer consciousness, we are conscious 'of' the world, conscious 'of' the mango. Though it may be somewhat awkward, you might say with the awakening of this inner awareness, you are now conscious 'with' the mango; you are in such direct intimate contact with it, it is no longer felt as something separate from you.

Before proceeding, call up the image of the mango, and ask yourself once again:

* 'Who' is it that is aware of the mango?
* — 'What' is the 'mango'? What is the nature of the 'mango' or any 'object' or 'person' apart from the knowing of the outer consciousness?

III. The innermost consciousness, the psychic being:

Knowledge by identity

'I' conscious the mango; I am one in being with the mango.

Once again, I'd like to ask you to pause briefly, reestablish your awareness of a calm inner being, untouched by passing thoughts, feelings and sensations:

> In the calm mind, it is the substance of the mental being that is still, so still that nothing disturbs it. If thoughts or activities come, they do not rise at all out of the mind, but they come from outside and cross the mind as a flight of birds crosses the sky in a windless air. It passes, disturbs nothing, leaving no trace. Even if a thousand images or the most violent events pass across it, the calm stillness remains as if the very texture of the mind were a substance of eternal and indestructible peace. A mind that has achieved this calmness can begin to act, even intensely and powerfully, but it will keep its fundamental stillness—originating nothing from itself but receiving from Above and giving it a mental form without adding anything of its own, calmly, dispassionately, though with the joy of the Truth and the happy power and light of its passage. Sri Aurobindo, Letters on Yoga, p. 637-38

I'd like again to invite you, as you proceed to read through the text, to see to what extent you can read while remaining calm within....

> Aspire to the Mother for this settled quietness and calm of the mind and this constant sense of the inner being in you standing back from the external nature and turned to the Light and Truth. Sri Aurobindo, Letters on Yoga, p. 635

> If once [the soul] can succeed in remaining in constant communion with its own larger occult reality,—and this can only happen when we go deep into our subliminal parts,—it is no longer dependent, it can become powerful and sovereign, armed with an intrinsic spiritual perception of the truth of things and a spontaneous discernment which separates that truth from the falsehood of the Ignorance and Inconscience, distinguishes the divine and the undivine in the manifestation and so can be the luminous leader of our other parts of nature. It is indeed when this happens that

there can be the turningpoint towards an integral transformation and an integral knowledge. Sri Aurobindo, The Life Divine, p. 539

We now enter a realm in which words are but a weak and frail substitute for experience. In this section, I'm only going to speak long enough to invite you into a momentary consideration, a brief glimpse of the possibility of a different kind of knowing, one which is intimate, profound, direct, a knowing which is inseparable from loving and being. In this knowing, there is an awareness of the all-pervading, all-containing Divine Presence. There is a 'smile' which is felt at the heart of things, and a feeling—which is more than a 'feeling'—of utter devotion and love for the Divine.

There is a clarity in regard to the workings of the outer nature which is impossible even from within the consciousness of the inner being:

A guidance, a governance begins from within which exposes every movement to the light of Truth, repels what is false, obscure, opposed to the divine realization: every region of the being, every nook and corner of it, every movement, formation, direction, inclination of thought, will, emotion, sensation, action, reaction, motive, disposition, propensity, desire, habit of the conscious or subconscious physical, even the most concealed, camouflaged, mute, recondite, is lighted up with the unerring psychic light, their confusions dissipated, their tangles disentangled, their obscurities, deceptions, selfdeceptions precisely indicated and removed; all is purified, set right, the whole nature harmonized, modulated in the psychic key, put in spiritual order. This process may be rapid or tardy according to the amount of obscurity and resistance still left in the nature, but it goes on unfalteringly so long as it is not complete. As a final result the whole conscious being is made perfectly apt for spiritual experience of every kind, turned towards spiritual truth of thought, feeling, sense, action, tuned to the right responses, delivered from the darkness and stubbornness of the tamasic inertia, the turbidities and turbulences and impurities of the rajasic passion and restless unharmonised kinetism, the enlightened rigidities and sattwic limitations or poised balancements of constructed equilibrium which are the character of the Ignorance. Sri Aurobindo, The Life Divine, p. 907-08

Through this purification of the inner and outer nature, the possibility of new experiences emerges:

[There] is a free inflow of all kinds of spiritual experience, experience of the Self, experience of the Ishwara and the Divine Shakti, experience of cosmic consciousness, a direct touch with cosmic forces and with the occult movements of universal Nature, a psychic sympathy and unity and inner communication and interchanges of all kinds with other beings and with Nature, illuminations of the mind by knowledge, illuminations of the heart by love and devotion and spiritual joy and ecstasy, illuminations of the sense and the body by higher experience, illuminations of dynamic action in the truth and largeness of a purified mind and heart and soul, the certitudes of the divine light and guidance, the joy and power of the divine force working in the will and the conduct. These experiences are the result of an opening outward of the inner and inmost being and nature; for then there comes into play the soul's power of unerring inherent consciousness, its vision, its touch on things which is superior to any mental cognition; there is there, native to

> the psychic consciousness in its pure working, an immediate sense of the world and its beings, a direct inner contact with them and a direct contact with the Self and with the Divine,—a direct knowledge, a direct sight of Truth and of all truths, a direct penetrating spiritual emotion and feeling, a direct intuition of right will and right action, a power to rule and to create an order of the being not by the gropings of the superficial self, but from within, from the inner truth of self and things and the occult realities of Nature. Sri Aurobindo, The Life Divine, p. 908-09

Entering into the stillness of the inner being, we may have the experience of a quiet, self-existent awareness, calmly observing the various workings of the outer nature. But the 'knowing' of the soul is not that of a witness, separate from what it observes. Rather, it enters into the very Self of what it knows.

Sri Aurobindo describes this knowing from a transcendent 'perspective' here:

> The half enlightened say, 'Whatever form is built, the Lord enters to inhabit', but the seer knows that whatever the Lord sees in His own being, becomes Idea and seeks a form and a habitation. Sri Aurobindo, The Upanishads, p. 512

Stepping back from the noise of the surface consciousness, a still, calm awareness, deep and vast, is touched. From there, it is possible to be a witness, to observe, not mentally, not as an entirely separate entity but with an intuitive, direct awareness of the movements of the outer nature.

Becoming more deeply conscious, it is possible to become aware of 'That' in us (and beyond us) which is the true Source of these outer movements. You can see, with great clarity, how a pure mental, vital or physical vibration becomes distorted by the ego, by the separative Ignorance in which we live. The result is a confused imperfect manifestation of the true underlying vibration. As you become still more conscious, you start to see that you are not merely a passive witness, liberated and free while watching a mechanical and subjugated play of nature. You can recognize that it is only by your permission, your sanction, that the movements of the outer nature take place at all. There is something within that takes an interest in the arising of fear, desire, greed, etc., otherwise it would not take place at all. With this deepened and widened consciousness, you now have the ability to withdraw the permission, the sanction which provides the life-blood for these movements. Awakening to this relationship of the 'sanctioner' to the play of nature, Sri Aurobindo's words take on a yet deeper meaning:

> The half enlightened say, 'Whatever form is built, the Lord enters to inhabit', but the seer knows that whatever the Lord sees in His own being, becomes Idea and seeks a form and a habitation. Sri Aurobindo, The Upanishads, p. 512

Returning to our initial exploration of the mango, I described the experience as being conscious 'of' the mango. In the inner consciousness, I spoke of the feeling of direct contact as being conscious 'with' the mango. In this innermost domain, you might say You

are 'consciousing' the mango, bringing it into being. It is only possible to say this, though, when there is an awareness of this 'You' as an 'eternal portion of the Divine', gazing the world into being, newly arising in this moment and this moment and this moment. This participation in the Divine act of creation partakes of the play of the Divine Ananda or Delight.

It is very important to remember, as stated earlier, that the "I" which can "Conscious" the mango, much less anything else, is not the ordinary ego. In Truth, it is only at the supramental level it is possible to experience this in its utter fullness, but through faith (Sraddha) and intuition it is possible to at least gain a glimpse of this Divine Creative process - to discover what it is to be a co-creator with the Divine.

One last time, ask yourself,

* 'Who' is it that is aware of the mango?
* 'What' is the 'mango'? What is the nature of the 'mango' or any 'object' or 'person' apart from the knowing of the outer consciousness?

Looking with the outer, the inner, and the innermost consciousness

> Aspire to the Mother for this settled quietness and calm of the mind and this constant sense of the inner being in you standing back from the external nature and turned to the Light and Truth. Sri Aurobindo, Letters on Yoga, p. 635

In the first three sections of this essay, I invited you to look at a mango from the viewpoint of the outer, inner and innermost consciousness. In this part of the final section, we will be looking at several different kinds of events and interactions from the same three perspectives—that of the outer consciousness, the inner consciousness, and the innermost consciousness. First, we'll look at a personal experience. Next, we'll explore a psychotherapy session. Finally, we'll look at an international event. In each case, I'm going to try to evoke an experiential sense of what it would be like to look at these from the vantage point of these three very different ways of knowing. I'll be using, as a guide to this process of exploration, an exercise that the Mother gave to the children of the Ashram for reviewing their daily experiences in the light of the psychic being. The text is fairly lengthy, so I've put it at the end of this essay.

Basically, the exercise involves first, finding the light of the deepest and highest consciousness to which you have access—a mental ideal in the outer consciousness if that is all that is accessible, but preferably an inner consciousness, or the light of the soul if that is possible. Then, to foster a spirit of disidentification, you imagine you are looking at a movie screen, and see projected on that screen your actions of the day. You look and discern what goes against your highest ideal, and what seems to be out of place, as if to see what might be creating a kind of shadow against the images on the screen Then, you search—try to find if the action was the result of some level of inattention or lack of awareness (tamas). You may, on the other hand, find there was some hidden egoistic movement distorting the truer vibration deep within. You might even come to realize that something in you was secretly enjoying the play of forces, sanctioning the distorted physical, vital and mental movements. Finally, you attempt to put everything in order—sort out the various

inappropriate mixtures of physical, vital and mental consciousness, and arrange everything so it is harmoniously organized around the light of your highest ideal. In this way, you discover the truer vibration, the undistorted expression of your true nature, and arrive at a real and deep integration. This leads to a purification of the nature. If the psychic light is awakened, it will lead to the subsequent psychic transformation which Sri Aurobindo describes as the first phase of the three-part psychic, spiritual and supramental transformation.

To summarize:

1. — Find the light of the deepest consciousness (mental ideal, inner light or the light of the soul)
2. — Step back—project your actions on a screen
3. — Look closely at actions which are contrary to your highest ideal: what is behind them—unconsciousness, egoism? Look at how the physical, vital and mental consciousness are mixed together in inappropriate ways.
4. — Organize everything around the light of your highest ideal

Please don't read the following descriptions through a lens of 'right or wrong'. In a way, I consider it almost irrelevant whether my interpretation of the inner and outer events is correct. This may be an especially good section to read with a calm mind. In particular, strong feelings, beliefs and attitudes may be aroused in regard to the third topic, the current political situation in Israel. What I'm attempting to do is simply suggest a way of looking and knowing. I'm just beginning to get a feel for how this might be done. In fact, it may even be best to read without being concerned whether it all makes 'sense' or not; just skim through it, if need be, and perhaps you may find a much better way of describing the inner and outer perspectives. In the future we may all help each other in developing this process further.

So, I'll be looking at the individual, psychotherapeutic and international events from the outer, inner and innermost perspectives, using Mother's process of inner investigation. At the end of Her description of the exercise, the Mother notes that this process can be used for world affairs as much as for the growth of the individual:

> It is quite evident that if a similar procedure were adopted by a nation or by the earth, most of the things which make men unhappy would disappear, for the major part of the world's misery comes from the fact that things are not in their place. If life were organized in such a way that nothing was wasted and each thing was in its place, most of these miseries would not exist any longer. An old sage has said: 'There is no evil. There is only a lack of balance. There is nothing bad. Only things are not in their place.' If everything were in its place, in nations, in the material world, in the actions and thoughts and feelings of individuals, the greater part of human suffering would disappear.
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> *The Mother, Questions and Answers 1950-51, p. 40*

A. Looking at an event in your life

1) Having a credit card refused when purchasing food

Scenario: Having just selected some fruit and vegetables, Lisa brings them to the check-out counter. She gives her credit card to the cashier, but the card is rejected by the machine. Lisa's first reaction is irritation, and convinced that the machine must have made an error, speaks to the cashier in a somewhat condescending voice, telling him he needs to be more careful. The card is again rejected, and now, realizing that she has no other way of paying for the food, Lisa starts to feel anxious. At this moment, she becomes self-conscious, recognizing that her comments were inappropriate, and feels somewhat guilty and shameful for overreacting. Not knowing what to say, she simply takes the card from the cashier and walks out of the store.

a) Looking with the outer consciousness

What is Lisa's ideal? The lowest, tamasic ideal might simply be a predominantly extraverted one of maintaining physical security. With this in mind, all she would care about is making damn sure she never runs out of money again. A more rajasic ideal might be to keep an outer appearance of calmness and self-possession in order to impress others. I'm going to consider here how she might look at her actions in the light of a higher, sattwic ideal—wishing to meet people with an open heart and calm mind, ready to give of herself whenever the situation calls for it.

Examining her responses, she looks closely at her initial reaction of irritation, followed by anxiety and then self-consciousness. Underlying the feeling of irritation she becomes aware of a judgment of the cashier: 'You are screwing up, and you're interfering with *me*, with the fulfilment of my desire; desires not just to get food but to be respected.' She sees herself holding on to this identification with a separate self in order to feel important; more than that, to feel solid, real. Looking still more deeply, she sees that the way she presents herself to the world is with this kind of assertive stance. 'I hold on to this, it seems, out of my feeling of myself as a separate being, attempting to maintain the integrity of myself in the face of all that seems to threaten it. I get angry often, because of an assumption that things are supposed to go my way.'

Lisa looks at the relationship between these various reactions, and sees how her assumptions bring tension to the body, and suppress her vital energy. In turn, her vital feelings, shaped by egoistic reactions, cloud her thinking and make it hard for her to maintain calmness and respond in a more appropriate fashion. She begins to see herself acting differently—letting go of assumptions, she can feel an increase in energy. Stepping back from identification with the need to fulfill her desires, the movement of irritation slowly changes to a quality of strength.

Attempting to discern a truth underlying the various reactions, she sees that the guilt and shame she felt was related to a subconscious awareness of her unwillingness to face and deal with her financial affairs. At the same time, she recognized the value of an ideal she held of not being too attached to money. Comparing these two apparently conflicting ways of dealing with money, she resolved to keep that her ideal of maintaining a simple lifestyle would not become distorted into fear of attachment to possessions.

Finally, she looks at her feeling of powerlessness which did not dissolve even after she had become conscious of her reactions of irritation and anxiety. She saw the power of these reactions—the chain reaction of irritation turning into anxiety, leading to feelings of guilt and shame. She saw how, in spite of her attempts to be more mindful, these reactions

prevented her from stepping back and getting a clearer, less self-involved view of what was happening. She then sees herself again at the check-out counter, acting now with a strong yet relaxed body, open and clear emotions, and a calm and discerning mind, all emerging in the light of her highest ideal.

b) Looking with the inner consciousness

Taking time to become inwardly calm, letting the play of the surface consciousness come to rest... the scene—food, counter, cashier, refusing the credit card—becomes intensified, more alive....

...Seeing the fruits and vegetables—nourishment for the mind, body and soul....

...the cashier—recognized by Lisa as, in part, an impersonal reflector of her inner state... coming to the check-out counter to play out the ritual of mutual give-and-take, a reflection of the universal rite of sacrifice, making sacred...

...Recognizing Lisa herself also as an actor in the cashier's karmic dance... inseparable from the play of the whole environment, and from the play of the yet larger Whole...

...Looking 'within' the scene, seeing the machine refusing the credit card as a manifestation of Lisa's fear and ambivalence toward dealing with money...

...Seeing a deeper truth—aspiration of soul to relate to money with non-attachment, mixed up with ego, distorted by confused interaction of universal movements of mental, vital, physical consciousness, becomes irritation, anxiety, fear...

...Becoming still more calm, allowing the deeper truth to unfold wordlessly.... letting egoistic interference fall away.... the body, heart and mind following out the truth of the inner nature, the aspiration to give and take money freely....

c) Looking with the innermost consciousness

The Divine Dance; Inconscience progressing toward Ignorance progressing toward Truth; all the Divine Play... nourishment appearing as fruits and vegetables; universal flow of Shakti manifesting as credit; the refusal of credit the touch of the Mother, teaching (Herself in the form of Lisa) the need to relate to the energy of money from wisdom, not fear.

2) A therapist with a patient who has an emotionally abusive, alcoholic husband

Scenario: Tom, a psychotherapist, is talking with Joan. It is their sixth therapy session, and Joan is telling Tom about a fight she had the day before with her husband Eric. Previously, if Eric broke anything while in a drunken rage, Joan would calmly and without complaint clean it up. Yesterday morning after a typical bout with Eric, Joan refused to pick up the broken remnants of china which Eric had thrown against the wall. Eric finally apologized to her after walking around for several hours in a state of sullen moodiness. Joan found herself comforting him, while feeling ashamed of herself for being weak. Listening to this,

Tom found himself struggling with conflicting desires—to empathize with Joan or to berate her for taking so much emotional abuse from Eric.

a) Looking with the outer consciousness

Tom takes some time to settle in and become calm. He steps back, and looks at the whole scene as if projected in front of him. He considers Joan's inner state first. What does she want from the relationship, and from therapy? It appears to Tom that Joan is wedded to several seemingly contradictory ideals. She is seeking simple physical security (Eric is quite wealthy), as well as emotional satisfaction through helping someone who appears to need her. But Tom wants to be careful not minimize what he perceives to be Joan's genuine concern for Eric's best interests. He focuses in on the moment when she calmly tells Eric she is not cleaning up after him.

He sees this as signifying the emergence of a deeper strength in Joan. Her egoistic need for security had distorted her judgment and her sense of self-worth. Her emotional needs had distorted her care for Eric into a manipulative dance, sapping her of the courage to speak openly and truthfully about his drinking as well as his emotional abuse and neglect. Tom looks closely at the level of egoistic distortion which yet has hold of Joan's physical, vital and emotional consciousness. He reflects on the means of instilling in her a stronger faith in her greater possibilities and how best to bring out the underlying truth of unattached selfless caring which he recognizes as a sign of her deeper wisdom and compassion.

Tom then looks at what Joan's story brings up in him. Though he had previously been reluctant to acknowledge it, hearing of Joan's experiences forces him to confront his own egoistic needs to be recognized as a 'good person' who cares for others. He sees how this need distorts the expression of his own deeper resources of care and compassion. He looks at the possibility of bringing together the strength of non-attachment with appropriate expressions of concern. As he continues his reflections, his detachment from the various egoistic distortions increasing, he is able to see himself acting with greater wisdom, refusing to indulge inappropriate emotional demands while finding greater inner resources for responding to the legitimate needs of his patients.

b) Looking with the inner consciousness

Taking time to become inwardly calm, letting the play of the surface consciousness come to rest... Tom begins to become aware of subtle currents of feeling and thought within which the therapeutic relationship is taking place...

He comes to recognize how his inner aspiration for dealing sincerely with the potential complexities and inequalities of being in a 'helper' relationship brought him into contact with Joan... Stepping back further, he sees—not with an outer intellectual seeing, but through a direct intuition—this particular therapist-patient relationship reflecting a larger cultural search for a deeper and truer means of facilitating growth and development...

Looking more closely at his reaction to Joan's refusal to help Eric; Tom sees a variety of internal responses; wanting to take credit for her newfound strength; annoyance at her continued wish to take care of Eric; annoyance and judgment about his own need for Joan to recognize his helpfulness.... Stepping back again, he sees—with a direct intuitive gaze,

not as an intellectual interpretation—these responses as individual formations of a universal movement in consciousness; he sees the formations which have led Joan's soul to choose these very circumstances to work out the karmic knots left from experiences of past lives...

Tom begins to recognize the therapeutic process as a modern expression of the ancient shamanic journey through the inner worlds, the shaman/therapist helping the magician/patient to unlock the hidden powers of her being; he comes to feel a great loss resulting from the contemporary lack of recognition of greater universal powers—'Gods' in the language of the ancient—to call on for aid in this sacred process, powers that would help the helper maintain a spirit of receptivity and humility...

Tom slowly comes to see with greater clarity his role as helper—inseparably intertwined with those he helps, though with non-attachment rather than dependence—grounded in the experience of being an instrument of That which is greater than himself. Wordlessly giving gratitude to That, he resolves to become more mindful of his need to be a channel of a deeper and higher wisdom.

c) Looking with the innermost consciousness

Psychotherapy, therapist and patient: a movement in Consciousness unfolding and developing mental, vital expression, purifying the nature to allow for the emergence of a deeper and higher awareness... the duality of helper and helped, looked at with a calm and unflinching gaze, forces the mind beyond itself to a greater wisdom; the suffering of a conflicted relationship between the outer personalities resulting in a purification of the nature and the growth of the soul... souls of the Divine, one in diversity... diversity manifesting an underlying unity...

All revealed as That in play with Itself, with Himself, with Herself....

3) The Labour Party and the unity government in Israel

Scenario: In the *New York Times* of Thursday, February 22, 2001, Deborah Sontag wrote an article describing the ambivalence of Israel's Labour Party toward the proposal of Prime Minister-elect Ariel Sharon to form a unity government. This would involve a coalition between the Likud Party and the center-left Labour party. Part of Sharon's motivation in pursuing this is to maintain a tighter rein over a Parliament which is made up of 18 factions. The question facing Labour leaders is whether they can be a more effective voice opposing Sharon's potential militarism outside of the government or as a member of the coalition. There appear to be forces pulling Labour leaders in opposite directions. There is the desire to retain the privileges of power, and a perception that most Israelis, in despair over the apparent failure of peace talks, want a unified government. However, some feel it would be immoral to share power with a Parliament which included far right wing politicians who wish to expel the Palestinians from Israel.

There is a concern that a unity government may encompass so many viewpoints that it would result in 'diplomatic, political and social paralysis'. Colette Avital, a member of the Labour party and former Israeli consul in New York, described the situation this way: 'The country should be psychoanalyzed collectively. The idea is that a national unity government will solve our problems. But it will only worsen them.' One newspaper

columnist, Nahum Barnea, stated his belief that the best thing that could happen, given a normal process of transfer of power, would be for the Labour party to take the necessary time to recover from its losses and develop a real voice for the opposition. 'But', he said, 'this is not a normal country, and these are not normal times. There is a sense of such despair, and that combined with the depression in the Labour Party will somehow force it into the coalition.'

The remaining political forces which have decided not to join the unity government include several Israeli Arab parties, the secularist Shinui party and the leftist Meretz Party. In a comment on the labour vote to join the unity government, Meretz party member Naomi Chazan said 'It will be bad for the country. It will be terrible and disgusting, and someone will have to say it, and that will be us. We will form a real opposition.'

a) Looking with the outer consciousness

There appear to be a wide assortment of powerfully conflicting ideals underlying the various factions and parties in Israel. A gross need for physical security at any cost, even the destruction of people's homes and their very lives; a vital desire for economic expansion and political power; the sattwic mental ideal of peace, harmony, collaboration; and the spiritual—mixed in with varying levels of religiosity—wish for the creation of a sacred land symbolizing humanity's relationship to the Divine.

It seems that these ideas coexist not just within members of the same party or faction but in the psyches of many individuals as well. The wish for security opposes the desire for collaboration and peace; the quest for economic and political power runs into conflict with both the need for security and aspiration for greater harmony; and the religious egoism of 'My land, my country' runs directly counter to the intuitive perception of Israel as a symbolic centre for the manifestation of the Light of the Spirit.

There are many 'egos'—the ego of the Right vs the Left; the ego of nationalism; the egos of the individual power-seeking politicians; the ego of the Palestinian people seeking a home; the ego of the Israeli people defined by their links to the diaspora as well as to both recent and ancient history.

Focusing on the sattwic mental ideal of peace with strength, the mind opens up to the possibility of drawing on inner resources of wisdom which can recognize at one and the same time the many conflicting needs of the people. At the same time, the recognition emerges of the need to create some means of communicating this higher ideal to those who are so frightened and so power-hungry they are unable to see past their own attachments and desires. Yet, limited to this surface way of looking, the doubt remains as to whether it is possible to develop a vision large enough to encompass these many conflicting needs and ideals. Stepping back as far as is possible to the outer mind, some tiny glimmer of faith begins to shine through.

b) Looking with the inner consciousness

Taking time to become inwardly calm, letting the play of the surface consciousness come to rest... a universal play of forces becomes visible; the search for a unity government in Israel is seen—directly, with an intuitive gaze, not a mental interpretation—as One with the larger movement amongst nations and peoples toward an ideal unity; one which is

founded not on a physical need, a vital desire or mental idea, but a spiritual vision of equality and unity-in-diversity...

Seeing the ego, the Ignorance, underlying the need for 'my' security...

Seeing the ego, the Ignorance, underlying the desire for economic and political power for 'my' country...

Seeing the ego, the Ignorance, underlying even the ideal of peace, harmony and collaboration for 'my' people...

Recognizing the incompatibility of the needs, desires and ideals as they presently stand; looking for the underlying Truth, in the light of a spiritual vision...

Recognizing that a spiritual homeland, in the world as it is, requires stable physical boundaries...

Recognizing that economic and political stability and growth are, within proper limits, appropriate, given the current level of consciousness predominant in the world...

Recognizing that the ideal of peace is a high ideal, however far beyond the current aspirations of many, shining as a beacon of light calling forth intimations of a deeper and truer vision....

– Recognizing the play of universal forces, individualized as the country of Israel, seeking to find the right Dharma, the right way, to become not just unified for the sake of 'our people' but in harmony and collaboration with the greater World-play.

c) Looking with the innermost consciousness

Moving in this critical era of transition and transformation from the separative egoism of nation-states and international institutions, a greater Force bringing out hidden conflicts, apparent incompatibilities to foster an ultimate Divine unity.... Israel as one Centre of Wisdom and Love; with its own Swadharma, its own way of being and true nature manifesting out of the current surface conflicts and disunity; the Time-Spirit calling for the emergence of a deeper consciousness in order to manifest a true Divine harmony and unity amongst human beings.

The Mother's exercise for reviewing the day in the light of the soul

> If this reviewing is to make you progress, you must find something within you in whose light you can be yourself your own judge, something which represents for you the best part of yourself, which has some light, some goodwill and which precisely is in love with progress. Place that before you and first pass across it as in a cinema all that you have done, all that you have felt, your impulses, your thoughts, etc.; then try to coordinate them, that is, find out why this has followed that. Look at the luminous screen that is before you: certain things pass by well, without throwing

a shadow; others, on the contrary, throw a little shadow; others yet cast a shadow altogether black and disagreeable. you must do this very sincerely, as though you were playing a game: under such circumstances I did such and such a thing, feeling like this and thinking in this way; I have before me my ideal of knowledge and selfmastery, well, was this act in keeping with my ideal or not? If it was, it would not leave any shadow on the screen, which would remain transparent, and one would not have to worry about it. If it is not in conformity, it casts a shadow. Why has it left this shadow? What was there in this act that was contrary to the will to selfknowledge and selfmastery?

Most often you will find that it corresponds to unconsciousness –then you file it among unconscious things and resolve that next time you will try to be conscious before doing anything. But in other cases you will see that it was a nasty little egoism, quite black, which had come to distort your action or your thought. Then you place this egoism before your 'light' and ask yourself: 'Why has it the right to make me act like that, think like that...' And instead of accepting any odd explanation you must search and you will find in a corner of your being something which thinks and says, 'Ah, no, I shall accept everything but that.' You will see that it is a petty vanity, a movement of selflove, an egoistic feeling hidden somewhere, a hundred things. Then you take a good look at these things in the light of your ideal: 'Is cherishing this movement in conformity with my seeking and the realization of my ideal or not? I put this little dark corner in front of the light until the light enters into it and it disappears.' Then the comedy is over. But the comedy of your whole day is not finished yet, you know, for there are many things which have to pass thus before the light. But if you continue this game–for truly it is a game, if you do this sincerely– I assure you that in six months you will not recognize yourself, you will say to yourself, 'What? I was like that! It is impossible!'

You may be five years old or twenty, fifty or sixty and yet transform yourself in this way by putting everything before this inner light. You will see that the elements which do not conform with your ideal are not generally elements which you have to throw wholly out of yourself (There are very few of this kind); they are simply things not in their place. If you organize everything–your feelings, your thoughts, your impulses, etc.–around the psychic centre which is the inner light, you will see that all inner discord will change into a luminous order.

It is quite evident that if a similar procedure were adopted by a nation or by the earth, most of the things which make men unhappy would disappear, for the major part of the world's misery comes from the fact that things are not in their place. If life were organized in such a way that nothing was wasted and each thing was in its place, most of these miseries would not exist any longer. An old sage has said:

'There is no evil. There is only a lack of balance.

'There is nothing bad. Only things are not in their place.'

If everything were in its place, in nations, in the material world, in the actions and thoughts and feelings of individuals, the greater part of human suffering would disappear.

The Mother, Questions and Answers 1950-51, p. 38-39