

Yoga, Physics and Consciousness

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In spite of our wish to reconcile science and spiritual insight, we are very far from even having clear questions to raise about the two approaches to reality. We wish these disciplines to be reconciled because they both appear to us to be significant and profound manifestations of the human psyche, and we imagine that somehow in modern times we have found a reconciliation. Both yoga, which is an expression of spiritual insight, and physics are interested in objective knowledge. However, the two ‘knowledges’ are different from each other. We need to be aware of these differences if we are to avoid settling for an easy integration or a superficial reconciliation. Nothing is more misleading than to imagine that there is peace when there is no peace. The illusion that we have already found what we need will prevent us from seeking further.

Science assumes an abstract and purely rational construct underlying perceived reality. So what is experienced is called ‘appearance, and the mental construct is labeled ‘reality.’ The scientific pursuit speculates about the imagined reality and puts these speculations to experimental tests, which involve only certain limited perceptions. The so-called objective reality of scientific concern is in fact a conjecture—perhaps one of many that are possible. However—and this is where the importance and glory of science lie—these subjective projections of the mind are confirmed or falsified by inter-subjective experimental procedures.

Nevertheless, testing procedures are not wholly independent of the theoretical framework in which the observations are made. As scientific experiments become more and more elaborate, whether an observation is taken to be a confirmation of a given conjecture is increasingly a matter of interpretation. It is not possible to make a scientific observation without a prior theoretical system. In science,

any theory is better than no theory. Theorizing is fundamental to scientific activity; what scientists subject to experimental observations is not nature, but their conjectures about nature.

In an argument with Albert Einstein, Niels Bohr said, “It is wrong to think that the task of physics is to find out how nature is. Physics concerns what we can say about nature.”¹ The scientific revolution marks a shift not only from experience to experiment,² but also from seeking certain truth to theorizing about probable truths. In science, reality is theory.

Reality discovered through science is not necessarily something that is given, which we try to perceive more and more clearly and comprehensively by deepening or cleansing our perceptions, as one attempts, for example, in yoga. It is instead something postulated on the basis of data gathered through our ordinary perceptions, or perceptions that have been quantitatively extended through scientific instruments, but not qualitatively transformed.

The scientific assumption about human beings is that they are essentially rational cognizers, and that everything else about them is secondary and capable of explanation in terms of their basic rational nature. This view of a person as primarily a passionless, disembodied mind, which would be recognized as the rigorously intellectual point of view, is shared by all who claim to be scientific in their professional work, from Descartes to the modern analytical philosophers. Other human faculties—feelings and sensations—are not considered capable of either producing or receiving real knowledge. It is no doubt true that, as we are, our ordinary sensory and emotional experiences are limited and subjective. In science, an attempt is made to minimize the dependence on such perceptions by agreeing that the corresponding aspects of reality not be considered as objectively real and by dealing with only those aspects to which rational constructs can be applied.

¹ Moore, Ruth. *Niels Bohr*. New York: Knopf, 1966, p. 406.

² See “Experience and Experiment: A Critique of Modern Scientific Knowing,” in R. Ravindra: *Science and the Sacred: Eternal Wisdom in a Changing World*, Quest Books, Wheaton, Illinois, 2002.

The task of yoga, and of all spiritual disciplines, is not the same as the task of the scientific inquiry. Whereas science seeks to understand and control processes in the world, using the rational mind as the tool of exploration and explanation, yoga seeks to transform the human being so that the reality behind the world can be experienced.

According to Patañjali, the author of the classical text on yoga, “Yoga is the quieting of the *vruttis* (projections, turnings, movements, fluctuations) of the mind. Then the true or essential form of the seer is established. Otherwise, there is identification with the projections.”³ *Vrittis* of the mind, like Plato’s shadows in the cave, are chimeras, taken to be real. For Patañjali, the mind needs to be completely quiet in order to know the truth about anything. The quiet mind is the original state. However, there are obstacles (*kleshas*) which prevent one from seeing the truth. The *Yoga Sutra* speaks about what these *kleshas* are and about how to remove them. Patañjali’s yoga is a teaching to reach the still mind--one’s true nature. Only then can true knowledge about anything be obtained.

It should be stressed right at the outset that the point of view informing the theory and practice of yoga originates from above, that is to say, from the vision of the highest possible state of consciousness. It is not something which has been forged or devised from below, or which can even be understood by the human mind, however intelligent such a mind may be. Yoga is a supra-human (*apaurusheya*) revelation; it is from the realm of the gods. In the myths it is said that the great God Shiva taught yoga to his beloved Parvati for the sake of humanity. It cannot be validated or refuted by human reasoning; on the contrary, the relative sanity or health of a mind is measured by the extent to which it accords with what the accomplished sages, who have been transformed by the practice of yoga, say. It is a vision from the *third eye*, relative to whose reality the two usual eyes see only shadows.

However, it is important to emphasize that no mere *faith*, and certainly nothing opposed to *knowledge*, is needed in yoga. What is in fact required is the utmost exertion of the whole of the human being –mind, heart, and body– for the practice which would lead to a total transformation of being, a change not less than in a species mutation.

³ *Yoga Sutra*, 1.2-4. Please see R. Ravindra: *The Wisdom of Patañjali’s Yoga Sutras: A New Translation and Guide*, Morning Light Press, Sandpoint, Idaho, 2009.

Yoga brings the vision from the third eye of Shiva and of the sages for us to receive, and aims at helping us develop and open the third eye in ourselves so that we may see with the spiritual vision of Shiva and of the sages. The etymology of the word *yoga*--derived from the root *yuj*, meaning 'to yoke, unite, harness'—conveys the aim of yoga which is union with the highest level. When the human body-mind is harnessed to the Spirit (*Purusha, Atman, Brahman*), which is as much within a human being as outside, the person is in *yoga*. In that state, the person is free of all *kleshas* and sees the way it is.

The fulfillment of the aim of *yoga* requires the transformation of a human being from the natural and actual form to a perfect and real form. The *prakrita* (literally, natural, vulgar, unrefined) state is one in which a person compulsively acts in reaction to the forces of *prakriti* (nature, causality, materiality) which are active both outside as well inside a person. Ordinarily, a person is a slave of the mechanical forces of nature and all actions are determined by the *Law of Karma*, the law of action and reaction. Through *yoga* one can become *samskrita* (literally well-formed, cultured, refined), and thus no longer be wholly at the mercy of natural forces and inclinations. The procedure of *yoga* corresponds to the process of *education*. It helps to draw out what is, in fact, already present, but which is not available. The progressive bringing out of The Real Person (*Purusha*) in an aspirant is much like the releasing of a figure from an unshaped stone. A remark of Michelangelo "I saw an angel in the block of marble and I just chiseled and chiseled until I set him free"

The undertaking of *yoga* concerns the entire person, resulting in a reshaping of the mind, the body, and the emotions; in short in a *new birth*. The yogi—the one who practices *yoga* and who is transformed through this practice --is the artist, the stone, and the tools. But unlike in sculpting, the remolding involved in *yoga* is essentially from the inside out. Lest this analogy be misunderstood to suggest that *yoga* leads to a rugged individualism in which individuals are the makers of their own destiny, it should be remarked that the freedom that a yogi aspires to is less a freedom *for* the self, and more a freedom *from* the self. From a strict metaphysical point of view, yogis cannot be said to be the artist of their own lives; the real initiative belongs only to *Brahman* who is lodged in the heart of everyone. A person does not create a state of freedom; but with a proper preparation, an individual can let go of an attachment to the

surface and to the insistence to possess and control everything, and be possessed by what is deep within.

Yoga aims at *moksha* which is unconditioned and uncaused freedom. This state of freedom is, by its very nature, beyond the dualities of being-nonbeing, knowledge-ignorance, and activity-passivity. The way to *moksha* is yoga, which serves as a path or a discipline towards integration. Yoga is as much *religion*, as *science*, as well as *art* since it is concerned with being (*sat*), knowing (*jñana*) and doing (*karma*). The aim of yoga, however, is beyond these three, as well as beyond any opposites that they imply.*

The Body and the Embodied:

Yoga begins from a recognition of the human situation. Human beings are bound by the laws of process and they suffer as a consequence of this bondage. Yoga proceeds by a focus on knowledge of the self. Self-knowledge may be said to be both the essential method and the essential goal of yoga. However, self-knowledge is a relative matter. It depends not only on the depth and clarity of insight, but also on what is seen as the *self* to be known. A progressive change from the identification of the self as the body (including the heart and the mind) to the identification of the self as inhabiting the body is the most crucial development in yoga. Ancient and modern Indian languages reflect this perspective in the expressions used to describe a person's death: in contrast to the usual English expression of *giving up the ghost*, one *gives up the body*. It is not the body that has the Spirit, but the Spirit that has the body. The yogi identifies the person less with the *body* and more with the *embodied*.

The identification of the person with something other than the body-mind and the attendant freedom from the body-mind is possible only through a proper functioning and restructuring of the body and the mind. Here it is useful to retain the Sanskrit word *sharira* in order to steer clear of the modern Western philosophic dilemma called the 'mind-body' problem. Although *sharira* is usually translated as *body*,

* In this connection, see R. Ravindra, "Is Religion Psychotherapy?—An Indian View," *Religious Studies* 14, 1978, 389–397; reprinted in R. Ravindra: *The Spiritual Roots of Yoga*, Morning Light Press, Sandpoint, Idaho, 2006.

it means the whole psychosomatic complex of the body, mind, and heart.⁵ *Sharira* is both the instrument of transformation as well as the mirror indicating it. Knowing the way a person sits, walks, feels, and thinks, can help in knowing the relatively 'realer' self; the knowing of this self is then reflected in the way a person sits, walks, feels, and thinks. *Sharira*, which is individualized *prakriti*, is the medium necessary for the completion and manifestation of the inner spiritual being, which itself can be understood as individualized *Brahman* (literally, the Vastness) whose *body* is the whole of the cosmos, subtle as well as gross. There is a correspondence between the microcosmos which is a human being, and the macrocosmos. The more developed a person is, the more the person corresponds to the deeper and more subtle aspects of the cosmos--only a fully developed human being (*Mahapurusha*) mirrors the entire creation. To view the *sharira* or the world, as a hindrance rather than an opportunity is akin to regarding the rough stone as an obstruction to the finished figure. *Sharira* is the substance from which each one of us makes a work of art, according to our ability to respond to the inner urge and initiative. This substance belongs to *prakriti* and includes what are ordinarily called psychic, organic, and inorganic processes. The view that *mind* and *body* follow the same laws, or the fact that the *psychic*, *organic*, and *inorganic* substances are treated alike, does not lead to the sort of reductionism associated with the modern scientific mentality in which the ideal is to describe all of nature ultimately in terms of dead matter in motion reacting to purposeless forces. *Prakriti*, although following strict causality, is alive and purposeful, and every existence, even a stone, has a psyche and purpose.

Seeing through the Organs of Perception:

⁵ *Sharira* here has the same import as *flesh* in the *Gospel According to St. John*, for example in *John* 1:14 where it is said that "The Word became flesh and dwelt in us." In this connection, see R. Ravindra, *The Yoga of the Christ* (Shaftesbury, England: Element Books, 1990) [This book has been reissued under the title *The Gospel of John in the Light of Indian Mysticism* by Inner Traditions International, Rochester, Vermont, U.S.A. in 2004]. The important point, both in the Indian context and in *John* is that the spiritual element, called *Purusha*, *Atman*, or *Logos* (*Word*) is above the whole of the psychosomatic complex of a human being, and is not to be identified with *mind*.

Although there are many kinds of yogas, such as *karma yoga* (integration through action), *bhakti yoga* (union through love), *jñana yoga* (yoking through knowledge), and others, the Indian tradition has in general maintained that there is only one central yoga, with one central aim of harnessing the entire body-mind to the purposes of the Spirit. Different yogas arise owing to varying emphases on methods and procedures adopted by different teachers and schools. The most authoritative text of yoga is regarded to be the *Yoga Sutra*, which consists of aphorisms of yoga compiled by Patañjali sometime between the 2nd century B.C.E. and the 4th century C.E. from material already familiar to the gurus (teachers) of Indian spirituality. It is clearly stated by Patañjali that clear seeing and knowing are functions of *purusha* (the inner person) and not of the mind. The mind is confined to the modes of judgment, comparison, discursive knowledge, association, imagination, dreaming, and memory through which it clings to the past and future dimensions of time. The mind with these functions and qualities is limited in scope and cannot know the objective truth about anything. The mind is not the true knower: it can calculate, make predictions in time, infer implications, quote authority, make hypotheses or speculate about the nature of reality, but it cannot see objects directly, from the inside, as they really are in themselves.

In order to allow direct seeing to take place, the mind, which by its very nature attempts to mediate between the object and the subject, has to be quieted. When the mind is totally silent and totally alert, both the real subject (*purusha*) and the real object (*prakriti*) are simultaneously present to it. When the seer is there and what is to be seen is there, seeing takes place without distortion. Then there is no comparing or judging, no misunderstanding, no fantasizing about things displaced in space and time, no dozing off in heedlessness nor any clinging to past knowledge or experience; in short, there are no distortions introduced by the organs of perception, namely the mind, the feelings, and the senses. There is simply the *seeing* in the present, the living moment in the eternal now. That is the state of perfect and free attention, *kaivalya*, which is the aloneness of seeing, and not of the seer separated from the seen, as it is often misunderstood by commentators on yoga. In this state, the seer sees through the organs of perception rather than with them.

It is of utmost importance from the point of view of yoga to distinguish clearly between the mind (*chitta*) and the real Seer (*purusha*). *Chitta* pretends to know, but it is of the nature of the known and the seen, that is, it is an object rather than a subject. However, it can be an instrument of knowledge. This misidentification of the seer and the seen, of the person with his organs of perception, is the fundamental error from which all other problems and sufferings arise (*Yoga Sutra* 2:3–17). It is from this fundamental ignorance that *asmita* (I-am-this-ness, egoism) arises, creating a limitation by particularization. *Purusha* says 'I AM'; *asmita* says 'I am this' or 'I am that.' From this egoism and self-importance comes the strong desire to perpetuate the specialization of oneself and the resulting separation from all else. The sort of 'knowledge' which is based on this basic misidentification is always coloured with pride, a tendency to control or fear.

The means for freedom from the fundamental ignorance which is the cause of all sorrow is an unceasing vision of discernment (*viveka khyati*); such vision alone can permit transcendental insight (*prajña*) to arise. Nothing can force the appearance of this insight; all one can do is to prepare the ground for it; it is the very purpose of *prakriti* to lead to such insight, as that of a seed is to produce fruit; what an aspirant needs to do in preparing the garden is to remove the weeds which choke the full development of the plant. The ground to be prepared is the entire psychosomatic organism, for it is through that organism that *purusha* sees and *prajña* arises, not the mind alone, nor the emotions nor the physical body by itself. One with dulled senses has as little possibility of coming to *prajña* as the one with a stupid mind or hardened feelings. Agitation in any part of the entire organism causes fluctuations in attention and muddies the seeing. This is the reason why in yoga there is so much emphasis on the preparation of the body for coming to true knowledge. It is by a reversal of the usual tendencies of the organism that its agitations can be quieted, and the mind can know its right and proper place with respect to *purusha*: that of the *known* rather than the *knower*. (*Yoga Sutra* 2:10; 4:18–20).⁶

⁶ In this connection, see. R. Ravindra, "Yoga: the Royal Path to Freedom," in *Hindu Spirituality: Vedas Through Vedanta*, ed. K. Sivaraman, Vol. 6 of *World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest* (New York: Crossroad Publ., 1989) pp. 177–191. [Also reprinted in *The Spiritual Roots of Yoga*, *ibid.*]

***Samyama* Attention as the Instrument of Knowledge:**

In classical Yoga, there are eight limbs: the first five are concerned with the purification and preparation of the body, emotions, and breathing and with acquiring the right attitude; the last three limbs are called inner limbs compared with the first five which are relatively outer. The last three are *dharana*, *dhyana*, and *samadhi*. *Dharana* is concentration in which the consciousness is bound to a single spot. *Dhyana* (from this word is derived the Japanese *Zen* through the Chinese *Ch'an* and Korean *Sôn*) is the contemplation or meditative absorption in which there is an uninterrupted flow of attention from the observer to the observed. In these the observer acts as the center of consciousness which sees. When that center is removed, that is to say when the observing is done by *purusha*, through the mind emptied of itself, that state is called *samadhi* –a state of silence, settled intelligence, and emptied mind, in which the mind becomes the object to which it attends, and reflects it truly, as it is.

The insight obtained in the state of *samadhi* is truth-bearing (*ritambhara*); the scope and nature of this knowledge is different from the knowledge gained by the mind or the senses. The insight of *prajña* reveals the unique particularity, rather than an abstract generality, of an object. Unlike a mental knowledge, in which there is an opposition between the object and the subjective mind, an opposition that inevitably leads to sorrow, the insight of *prajña*, born of the sustained vision of discernment, is said to be the *deliverer*. This insight can be about any object, large or small, far or near; and any time, past, present, or future, for it is without time-sequence, present everywhere at once, like a photon in physics in its own frame of reference.

The Natural Science of Yoga:

It is wrong to suggest that yoga is not interested in the knowledge of nature and is occupied only with self-knowledge. From the perspective of yoga, this is an erroneous distinction to start with, simply because any self, however subtle, that can be known is a part of nature and is not distinct from it. The deepest self, to which alone belongs true seeing and knowing, cannot be known; but it can be identified with. One can become that self (*Atman*, *Purusha*) and know with it, from its level, with its clarity. In no way is *prakriti* considered

unreal or merely a mental projection; she is very real, and though she can overwhelm the mind with her dynamism and charms and veil the truth from it, yet in her proper place and function she exists in order to serve the real person (*purusha*).

However, it is certainly true that the procedures, methods, attitudes, and perceptions involved in yoga are radically different from those in modern science, as are the aims of the two types of knowledge.⁷ In a summary way, one can say that in contradistinction to modern science the knowledge in yoga is a third eye knowledge, transformational in character. It is a knowledge which does not bring violence to the object of its investigation; it is a knowledge by participation, rather than by standing apart or against the object. Knowledge in yoga is primarily for the sake of true seeing and the corresponding freedom.

The basic research method of the science of nature according to yoga is to bring a completely quiet mind and to wait without agitation or projection, letting the object reveal itself in its own true nature, by colouring the transparent mind with its own colour. This science is further extended by the principle of analogy and isomorphism between the macrocosmos and the microcosmos which is the human organism. Therefore, self-knowledge is understood to lead to a knowledge of the cosmos. An example of this isomorphism is to be found in the *Yoga Darshana Upanishad* (4:48–53) where the external *tirtha* (sacred ford, places of pilgrimage, holy water) are identified with the various parts of the organism: “The Mount Meru is in the head and Kedara in your brow; between your eyebrows, near your nose, know dear disciple, that Varanasi stands; in your heart is the confluence of the Ganga and the Yamuna...”

A large number of aphorisms in the *Yoga Sutra* (3:16–53) describe the knowledge and the powers gained by attending to various objects in the state of *samyama*. The three inner limbs of yoga, namely, *dharana*, *dhyana*, and *samadhi*, together constitute what is called *samyama* (discipline, constraint, gathering). It is the application of *samyama* to any object which leads to the direct perception of it, because in that

⁷ In this connection, see R. Ravindra, “Perception in Physics and Yoga,” *Re-Vision: Jour. Knowledge and Consciousness*, 3, 1980, 36–42. [Also reprinted in *Science and the Sacred: Eternal Wisdom in a Changing World*. *Ibid.*]

state the mind is like a transparent jewel which takes on the true colour of the object with which it fuses (*Yoga Sutra* 1:41). The special attention which prevails in the state of *samyama* can be brought to bear on any thing which can be an object of perception, however subtle, that is, on any aspect of *prakriti*. For example, we are told that, through *samyama* on the sun, one gains insight into the solar system, and, by *samyama* on the moon, knowledge of the arrangement of the stars (*Yoga Sutra* 3:26–27). Similarly, many occult and extraordinary powers (*siddhis*) accrue to the yogi by bringing the state of *samyama* to bear upon various aspects of oneself: for example, by *samyama* on the relation between the ear and space, one acquires the divine ear by which one can hear at a distance or hear extremely subtle and usually inaudible sounds. Many other powers are mentioned by Patañjali; however, none of them are his main concern. There is no suggestion that there is anything wrong with these powers; no more is there a suggestion that there is something wrong with the mind. The point is more that the mind, as it is, is an inadequate instrument for gaining true knowledge; similarly, these powers, however vast and fascinating, are inadequate as the goal of true knowledge.

Necessity of Transformation:

It cannot be said too often that higher levels cannot be investigated by, or from, a lower level. What can be studied by the mind in the modern scientific mode is only that which can in some senses be manipulated and controlled by the mind and is thus below the level of the mind. In the presence of something higher than itself, the mind needs to learn how to be quiet and to listen.

Another remark needs to be made about the various practices of yoga: what is below cannot coerce what is above. One cannot force higher consciousness or Spirit by any manipulation of the body, mind or breath. A right physical posture or moral conduct may aid internal development but it does not determine it or guarantee it. More often external behavior reflects internal development. For example, a person does not necessarily become wise by breathing or thinking in a particular way; but a person breathes and thinks in that way because he or she is wise. Actions reflect being more than they affect it.

A very important heuristic principle in modern science interferes with the knowledge of a radically different and higher level. This

principle enters as the Copernican Principle in Astronomy and Cosmology and as the Principle of Uniformitarianism in Geology and Biology, one to do with space and the other with time. According to the former, any point in the universe can be taken to be the centre, for in each direction the universe on the large is homogeneous and isotropic. The latter principle says essentially that the same laws and forces have operated in the past as in the present. Neither of these principles have anything to say about levels of consciousness. But in practice one consequence of these principles has been a denial of a radical difference not only in terms of regions of space and time, but also in terms of levels of being among humans. One of the important aspects of modern science, starting with the great scientific revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, has been a scientifically very successful idea that the materials and laws on other planets and galaxies, and in the past and future times, can be studied in terms of the laws, materials and forces available to us now on the earth. But, almost by implication and quite subtly, this notion has done away with the analogical and symbolic modes of thinking according to which a fully developed person could mirror internally the various levels of the external cosmos.

A Science of Consciousness Requires Transformed Scientists:

When the ancients and even the medieval thinkers in Europe, China or India –in their sciences of alchemy, astronomy and cosmology– spoke of different planets having different materials and different laws, at least in part it meant that various levels of being or consciousness have different laws. From this perspective higher consciousness cannot be understood in terms of, or by, a lower consciousness. The subtler and higher aspects of the cosmos can be understood only by the subtler and higher levels within humans. True knowledge is obtained by participation and fusion of the knower with the object of study, and the scientist is required to become higher in order to understand higher things. As St. Paul said, things of the mind can be understood by the mind; things of the spirit by the spirit. The ancient Indian texts say that only by becoming Brahman can one know Brahman. The *Gandharva Tantra* says that “no one who is not himself divine can successfully worship divinity.” For Parmenides and for Plotinus “to be and to know are one and the same.”⁸

⁸ Parmenides, *Diels, Fr.* 185; Plotinus, *Enneads* vi. 9.

This has implications for any future science of higher consciousness which would hope to relate with what is real. Such a science would have to be *esoteric*, not in the sense of being an exclusive possession of some privileged group, but because it would speak of qualities which are more subtle and less obvious, such a science would demand and assist the preparation, integration and attunement of the body, mind and heart of the scientists so that they would be able to participate in the vision revealed by higher consciousness. In the felicitous phrase of Meister Eckhart, one needs to be 'fused and not confused.' *Tatra prajña ritambhara* (there insight is naturally truth-bearing), says Patañjali in the *Yoga Sutra* (1.48-49; 2.15; 3.54). This preparation is needed in order to open the third eye, for the two usual eyes do not correspond to the higher vision. It is only the third which can see the hidden Sun, for as Plotinus says, "to any vision must be brought an eye adapted to what is to be seen, and having some likeness to it. Never did the eye see the sun unless it had first become sun-like, and never can the soul have vision of the First Beauty unless itself be beautiful."⁹

The important lesson here from the perspective of any future science of consciousness is the importance of knowledge by identity. We cannot remain separate and detached if we wish to understand. We need to participate in and be one with what we wish to understand. Thus Meister Eckhart: "Why does my eye recognize the sky, and why do not my feet recognize it? Because my eye is more akin to heaven than my feet. Therefore my soul must be divine if it is to recognize God."¹⁰ Similarly Goethe:

Waer' nicht das Auge sonnenhaft,
Die Sonne koennt' es nie erblicken.
Laeg' nicht in uns des Gottes eigene Kraft,
Wie koennt' uns Goettliches entzuecken?

If the eye were not sensitive to the sun,
It could not perceive the sun.

⁹ Plotinus, *Enneads* I. 6.9.

¹⁰ Quoted by Klaus K. Klostermaier in his *A Survey of Hinduism*, State University of New York Press, second edition, 1994, footnote no. 20, p. 533.

If God's own power did not lie within us,
How could the divine enchant us?

In the well nigh universal traditional idea of a correspondence between a human being and the cosmos, the microcosmos-macrocosmos homology, it is easily forgotten is that this idea does not apply to every human being. It is only the fully developed person (*Mahapurusha*) who is said to mirror the whole cosmos. Such developed persons are quite rare. The idea of inner levels of being (or of consciousness) is absolutely central, as is the question 'What is a person?' It is difficult to convince oneself that the various spiritual disciplines for the purpose of transformation of human consciousness can be dispensed with by developing concepts or instruments from relatively lower levels of consciousness. But unwillingness to accept the need for radical transformation and to subject oneself to a spiritual discipline is ubiquitous. Even when the idea of transformation has an appeal, one wishes to be transformed without changing –without a renunciation of what one now is and with an attitude of saying, "Lord, save me while I stay as I am."

It is important to remark that it is not possible to come to a higher state of consciousness without coming to a higher state of conscience. The general scholarly bias tends to be towards a study of various levels of consciousness –which are much more often spoken of in the Indic traditions– and not so much towards various levels of conscience which are more frequently elaborated in the Biblical traditions. It would be difficult to make much sense of Dante's *Divine Comedy* without an appreciation of levels of conscience. In many languages, such as Spanish, French and Sanskrit, the word for both conscience and consciousness is the same. This fact alone should alert us to the possibility of an intimate connection between the two. The awakening of conscience is the feeling preparation for an enhancement of consciousness. It is not possible to come to a higher state of consciousness without coming to a higher state of conscience. On the other hand, those who are in touch with higher levels of consciousness naturally manifest largeness of heart. Inclusiveness and compassion bespeak a sage as a particular kind of fragrance indicates the presence of a rose.

The search for Truth--when it becomes more and more mental and divorced from deeper and higher feelings such as compassion, a sense of the oneness of the all, and the like--leads to feelings of

isolation and accompanying anxiety. In this sense of isolation of oneself from all else--from other human beings as well as from the rest of nature--fear and self-importance enter. The silence of the vast spaces frightens us if we do not feel deeply that we belong to the entire cosmos. Then one wants to control others and conquer nature. Much of our modern predicament arises from this very dedication to truth in an exclusively mental manner. Feelings of alienation of ourselves as isolated egos naturally follow.

The First Person Universal:

In our attempts to find objective knowledge, which is the great aspiration of science, we cannot eliminate the person. What is needed in fact is an enlargement of the person--freed from the merely personal and subjective--to be inclusive. In order to comprehend one needs to be comprehensive--not as a horizontal extension of more and more knowledge, but as a vertical transformation in order to participate in the universal mind.

The well-known physicist John Wheeler summarized a profound perspective in one of his classical quips: 'It from bit.' That is to say that reality as known by us is derived from bits of information. Thus a consideration of consciousness, and various levels of it becomes immediately relevant right at the foundation of any theory of knowledge as well as Physics. Not surprisingly, this is very reminiscent of the remark of Bohr quoted earlier in this essay.

It is true that we humans know and think, the question is what or who thinks. During a conversation with the author, J. Krishnamurti said quite simply, "You know, sir, it occurs to me that K does not *think* at all. That's strange. He just *looks*."¹¹ We know from association that *K* was a short form of *Krishnamurti*. But what is *Krishnamurti* a short form of? Of the entire cosmos? Not him alone, potentially so each one of us. If this is true, what looks and knows through thought rather than with thought?

The purpose of spiritual disciplines such as yoga is the realization of the First Person Universal, rather than the first person singular. The

¹¹ See R. Ravindra: *Centered Self without Being Self-centered: Remembering Krishnamurti*, Morning Light Press, Sandpoint, Idaho, U.S.A., 2003.

One manifesting itself in myriad and quite unique forms. Only such a person can know without opposition and separation, freed from any desire to control or to manipulate. Then one loves what one knows.