

Subjective Evolution of Consciousness
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The concept of the subjective evolution of consciousness*, as contrasted with the objective evolution of bodies propounded in Darwin's hypothesis and other similar narratives of physical/material nature, is a fundamental idea in the whole Vedic system of knowledge. The spiritual/sentient dimension of Man and its significance in Nature is rather ignored and/or neglected in a science based merely upon bodily or physical considerations. However, the most current biological research of the 21st Century demonstrates that the mechanical and chemical laws of physical bodies cannot account for the sentient behavior that is characteristic of living organisms even at the sub-cellular bio-chemical level. [1] This calls for a re-examination of the older systems of knowledge that ground their scientific knowledge on a sentient/spiritual foundation and how that is related to matter or the material world.

A parallel to the ancient wisdom of the Vedic view comes surprisingly from a modern interpretation of Quantum Mechanics called the Copenhagen interpretation. A basic tenant of this view is that quantum theory presents us with a knowledge of the world, but not knowledge of the world itself as really existing outside our knowledge. Jammer quotes a 1952 letter from Einstein to Besso:

"The present quantum theory is unable to provide the description of a real state of physical facts, but only of an (incomplete) knowledge of such. Moreover, the very concept of a real factual state is debarred by the orthodox theoreticians." [2]

In other words, quantum theory is a science of our conscious experience of the world, rather than of the world itself. The emphasis here is on 'consciousness' whereas classical physics ignored any relation to or implication of conscious experience. Science in the Vedic perspective takes conscious experience as the foundation of its conception of knowledge, so a comparison of this view with quantum theory may be helpful.

The idea that conscious experience or knowledge of the world is basic makes this approach epistemological rather than ontological in nature, although the two as distinct/different cannot be logically separated from each other. In other words, quantum theory is about what could be said about nature rather than a theory about what nature is. Bohr is quoted as saying:

"There is no quantum world. There is only an abstract quantum physical description. 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..." [3]

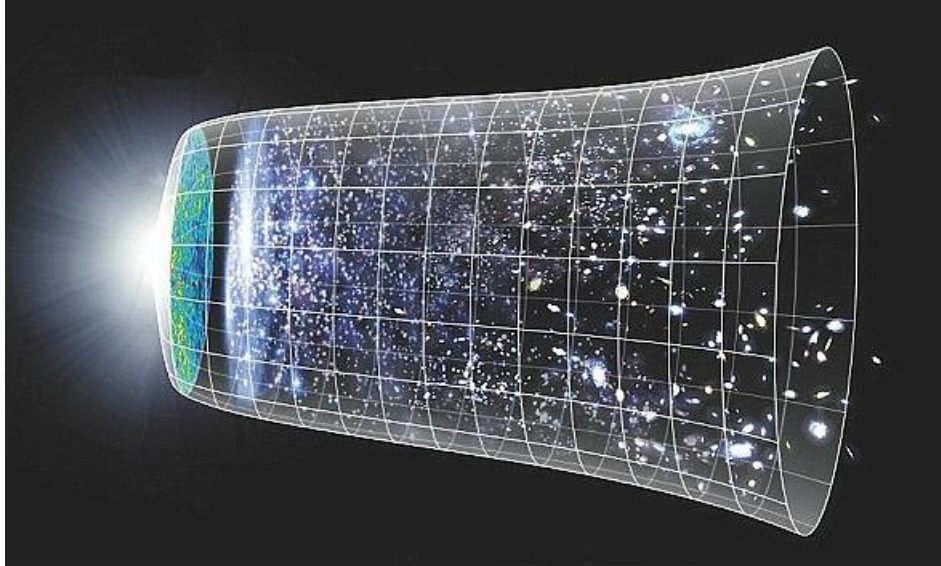
Some, however, think we can deduce the quantum state from knowledge of the ontic state, yet they cannot provide any mechanism for what goes on at the quantum level. Even with the discovery of DNA the experimental ability to discover

genes therein proved elusive and now leading biologists agree that the gene has more of a heuristic value as a calculative device than a mechanistic reality.[4] In general we may say that Thought and Being are related as determinate and indeterminate concepts, or as particularity and generality. Thus Being can describe all things in general as 'that' they are, but to describe 'what' they are requires specific/particular thought determinations.

The wave function in quantum theory is considered to represent all the possible states in which a particular atomic entity can exist. It does not refer to the existence of the entity itself, but only to the states in which it can exist. As the possibility for all states it can be actualized or realized by the act of observation by a conscious being. In Eddington's opinion, the electron is "something unknown doing we know not what." [5] In the Vedic view there is an unknown and unknowable conscious soul who also exists in particular states, but is itself the possibility of all those states. By the free use of will or choice it realizes itself in one or the other of those possible states. A further criterion involves the sanction of *paramatma*, the localized, particular aspect of *Bhagavan*, the Absolute Individual or Truth.

The electron or other atomic particles are considered to be unconscious or impersonal matter, therefore their possibilities are limited to the framework of time, space, velocity, acceleration, weight, mass, momentum, spin, and so on. The soul, on the other hand, has far more personal attributes or states in which it can be determined in addition to the physical possibilities. Its conscious experiences that determine its states form a far wider and more relevant science than what modern quantum theory can offer.

The idea of what is called the 'block universe' conceives a reality that consists of all possible moments of existence, past, present, and future, of which we experience one moment at a time. This idea arises from the Minkowski formulation of the four dimensional space-time theory of special relativity. It is a model that is a necessary conclusion consistent with that theory due to the assumption of the unchanging laws of nature over time - a variable that is passively included in such laws.



In this model the existent reality does not move, but the experiencer moves in a trajectory or world line across the various possibilities that appear in that line. What this says about evolution is that the different bodies are all co-existing, so that they don't evolve in the timeless block universe. Rather, as the Vedic conception of evolution holds, the soul changes or moves from one body to another as the individual's conscious state progresses. This progression may be called the subjective evolution of consciousness. In other words, species do not change, the soul constantly changes from one body to the next as described in *Bhagavad-gita* 2.13 from childhood to old age and even at the time of death *Bhagavad-gita* 2.22. [6]



Note that there are a number of interpretations of the block universe: eternalism which is the philosophical interpretation of the ontological nature of time that considers all existence in time is equally real, is opposed to presentism or the growing block universe theory of time, in which at least the future is not the same as any other time.

The movement of experience is described very vaguely in the block universe model as being like a spotlight that illuminates one piece of the universe at a time. The illumination may actually be considered to be the consciousness of the soul.

Movement of matter seems to occur in the material realm, and physicists have made laws that apparently describe such movement. However, if the description of movement of a reflection in a mirror is offered, the whole reasoning will be based on a fundamental mistake because the reflection doesn't move at all; the original object being reflected is what is moving. Whatever movement they are calculating is not due to the reflected image but to the original image/object.

Modern science in the classical model of the universe considers the electron to be moving through space. The electron is presumed to maintain a permanent identity in its movement so that its particular position in space and time at any moment is actually a particular state of the electron having specific properties of position and so on. This identity-in-difference is an essential conception associated with the idea of 'states' of such entities. In the Vedic conception the soul retains its permanent identity while its states change in progressing through different bodies. The changes are due to the development of the consciousness associated with the soul or its subjective evolution.

There seems to be no end or purpose in the physicists' model of the block universe, but in the Vedic conception a soul can become liberated from identification with changing bodies, the world line, time line, or trajectory it traces in the block universe, by turning its consciousness inward and toward the absolute which is as personal as the soul, of which the soul is but a subordinate yet personal part. The unity of the conscious soul with sentient Absolute is love. This is different from the monistic conception of oneness with the Absolute that is espoused by the abstract intellects of the *kevala advaitins*.

The major fault in the kevala (only) or **only** oneness, monistic thought is that the Absolute, which signifies the highest truth, is actually demoted to a secondary truth capable of being covered by illusion (*Maya*). Consequently this unwittingly exalts Maya to being a superior truth to the Absolute. Thus those who hold such a theory are rightly called Mayavadis or those who hold Maya to be a truth (*vada*) higher than the Absolute, even though they unknowingly make this blunder. The problem is avoided when the soul or finite living entity is properly considered as qualitatively having the same spiritual nature as *brahman* (*tat tvam asi*) but not as being numerically the same as the Absolute.

Helpful ideas about the nature of the material universe come not only from the Veda and corollary literatures but also from philosophers such as Rudolph Steiner. Steiner suggestively proposed that nature was Man's unconscious being.[7] In the *Mahabharata* and *Puranas* we find the *Maha Purusha* or *Maha Vishnu* lies down on *shesha-naga* in the Causal (*Karana*) ocean and creates the material world while in the sleep called *yoga-nidra*. [8] This sleep or dream of *Maha Vishnu* is thus the universal consciousness of all universes that forms the root substance of the

material worlds. Again the theme of sleeping universal consciousness is the chief characteristic description of matter.

Further emphasis of this idea is found in the German idealistic movement where the relationship of subject to object in consciousness is grounded at a deeper level in Spirit wherein subject and object are subordinate parts. Subject and object thus represent different degrees of consciousness and are not in immediate opposition.[9] Nature for Schelling is an 'immature intelligence' [10] or what Hegel calls a 'petrified intelligence' [11] that exhibits a continuum rather than an opposition between mind and matter or Nature. What are antinomies for Descartes and Kant are thereby reconceived in a higher Spirit as an original unity-in-difference. A similar idea is expressed by Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada who explained, "Matter is the symbol of undeveloped consciousness." [12]

If we consider matter to be possibility or potential of actuality, as Aristotle called it – *dunamis*, then the question arises how to actualize this possibility? Von Neumann did not elaborate on his proposal that consciousness by measurement collapses the wave function or actualizes the reality of the possibility that is determined by the wave function.[13] A true science of consciousness would consist in analyzing the activity of consciousness for realizing possibilities. Aristotle gave the Greek name *entelechy* to the actualizing process. The word implies an internal [en] teleological [telchy] process, or what Immanuel Kant named by the German word *Naturesweck*, or natural internal purpose.[14]

A very clearly presented idea in line with Vedic knowledge for scientifically explaining the activities of consciousness has been developed by Ashish Dalela [15] who describes the process as involving three parameters; personality expressed by choices [likes and dislikes], species based on behavior [mind], and ability [body].

Dalela's semantic theory of atoms.

"Semantic atomic theory or the semantic interpretation of atomic theory is the idea that atoms are symbols of meaning and instead of the classical physical properties such as energy, momentum, angular momentum and spin, these atoms possess semantic properties which are called beauty, power, wealth, and fame. Once we change the properties by which matter is described, we also change the nature of forces. Instead of the mechanical push and pull forces we have to now use the forces of consistency, competition, cooperation, and completion that operate between the meanings."

Vedic science is not about the world but about our conscious experiences of the world. "When you have conscious experience, you do not only have sensations. You also have thoughts, judgments, emotions, and morals. In fact, all these are simply aspects of our conscious experience. You cannot say that I will have sensation but not thought and judgment. In every perception, we have all of these aspects together. Therefore, when we study experience, we can speak about the many distinct aspects, but we study all of them."

Whether we study physics, chemistry, or biology, from the standpoint of conscious experience they all involve sensations, concepts, judgments, intentions, and morals. In this sense they are not different subjects of the world but varieties of conscious experiences. Material elements in Vedic science are various subjects of conscious experience.

"...[T]he material objects, the properties in terms of which we study these objects, the senses, the mind, intellect, ego, and morality – which are constituents of human experience – are built up from 'atoms'. These atoms are physically small. In fact, they are so small, that each atom constitutes a position or location in space. This position, however, is not an infinitesimal point. The atoms in Vedic philosophy are small vibrations, and these vibrations are termed *sabda* or 'sound'. To vibrate, each atom has to have a form because infinitesimal points cannot vibrate. Due to this form, the location it occupies also has the same form. In fact, the form of the object, and the form of the location are identical. Therefore, space location is not an infinitesimal point and space is not infinitely divisible into points. Each location has a form, so the position is only as big as it needs to hold the form of the symbol and no bigger."

The main point to note here is that "these atoms are symbols of meaning."

"If we study these symbols simply as vibrations, then we see them physically. However, when the symbols are embodiments of meaning given through the hierarchy of symbols, then the same world is understood as meaning. Therefore, the main difference between physical and semantic atomism is hierarchy. . . The physical particle and the force field of modern science changes into a theory of meaning and symbols."

Cognition itself, not an individual's cognition, as an abstract, universal or general idea is called *chit* in Sanskrit. For instance, the idea of color is a genus or universal idea that has particular species under it like red, blue, green, and so on. So the idea and its parts, genus and species, fall under what is called *chit*.

Each of these expand into the actual instances of the idea that are called *sat* or awareness of being. But this awareness does not begin from an object outside that produces the idea; rather it begins from inside the idea and goes outward or is externalized. Thus the senses go out to interact with the world, rather than objects coming in by interaction with the senses. Thus the senses are compared to a tortoise that extends its limbs outward to interact with the world. By converting ideas into objects they project whatever is already in the mind as being outside of it as objects we can sense.

With the arrival of things/objects comes perspectives of them as foreground or background, an ordering that requires a method of prioritizing based on degree of pleasure, called *ananda*. "So this *ānanda* forms a personal space in which things are situated. On the other hand *chit* is the objective space, and *sat* is relational space."

"Once we understand these three aspects of the soul, then we have to understand that each of these three aspects of the soul have many subdivisions. For example, there are many types of emotions or happiness, many types of relations to the object of knowledge, and many types of objects. There is a very complex and sophisticated theory regarding these types. For example, there are 64 types of pleasures, 72 types of knowledge, and 84 types of relations. These construct a typology of elementary types. Then these elementary types also combine with each other and create infinite types. So, the world is said to be created from all these types and their various combinations."

The theory of these ideas is the theory of consciousness in which everything in the universe is covered by conscious experiences. In this theory "the vibrations of *chit* are being described in atomic theory as the wavefunction" Ashish has written a number of books covering these topics that are worth reading to gain a better grasp of this scientific approach.

Another systematic (scientific) study of consciousness and Spirit which is highly developed is the *Science of Logic* by GWF Hegel, and his *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*. [16] He presents a very systematic development of Logic, Nature, and Spirit in their distinct spheres and as a complete integrated whole within its diverse spheres. Without knowledge of what has already been developed in the area of consciousness studies scientists are merely wandering in the dark. That is not the spirit of science. Collaboration with others in the field is the hallmark of scientific progress by building on the discoveries of others. It was Isaac Newton in 1675 who said: "If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants." [17]

References

* Inspired by the wisdom, teachings and affection of Swami B.R. Sridhar, *Subjective Evolution of Consciousness: Play of the Sweet Absolute*, Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math, Nabadwip, W. Bengal, India 1989.

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[2] The philosophy of Neils Bohr. Petersen, Aage. 1963, *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* Vol. 19, No. 7 (September 1963).]

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[7] Steiner, Rudolph, *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*, Anthroposophic Press, Hudson, N.Y., 1986

[8] *Brahma-samhitā* (5.47), *yaḥ kāraṇārṇava-jale bhajati sma yoga-nidrām ananta-jagad-aṇḍa-saroma-kūpaḥ*. "Govinda, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, lies sleeping unlimitedly on the Causal Ocean in order to create unlimited numbers of universes during that sleep. He lies on the water by His own internal potency."

[9] Beiser, Frederick, 'Hegel and *Naturphilosophie*', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2003, p.141.

[10]. Schelling, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, p. 42

[11]. Stone, Alison, *Petrified Intelligence: Nature in Hegel's Philosophy*, Albany, SUNY Press, 2005.

[12]. A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabupada letter to Madhava Das, 17 February, 1976. "Matter originally is spirit. And when spirit is not distinctly understood, that is matter. Just like a tree is also a manifestation of spirit soul, but the consciousness is covered. When the tree is cut, it does not protest. But the moving entity has stronger consciousness than the tree. There is consciousness in the tree though. Also consciousness in a dormant state is matter; consciousness in a completely developed state is spirit. Matter is the symbol of undeveloped consciousness."

[13] Von Neuman, John, *The Mathematical Foundations of Quantum Mechanics*, Princeton University Press; 1st edition (1955).

[14] Kant, Immanuel, *Critique of Judgement*, James Creed Meredith (trans.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007 (original publication date 1952), Oxford World's Classics. In the second part, Critique of Teleological Judgement, he writes a thing "exists as a natural end (*Naturzweck*) if it is cause and effect of itself" §64. This is followed by the conditions that "the parts... [are] possible only through their relation to the whole" and "the parts combine themselves into the unity of a whole by being reciprocally the cause and effect of one another's form" §65.

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