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Sadhu Sanga

SPIRITUAL LIFE — A ONE WAY TICKET

by

Srila Bhakti Raksak Sridhar Dev-Goswami Maharaja



One should not approach the spiritual master “cutting a return ticket.” Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Prabhupada used to always say, “You have come here cutting a return ticket.” We must not approach the spiritual master with that attitude. Rather, we should think that we have seen everything, that we have full experience of this mortal world, and that we have nothing to aspire after here. With this clear consciousness, we should approach the guru. That is the only way for us to live. This world is mortal. There is no means, no possibility of living here, and yet the will to live is an innate tendency everywhere.

“I only want to live and to save myself. I am running to the real shelter.” With this earnestness, the disciple will bring his spiritual master the necessary materials for sacrifice. He won’t go to his spiritual master only to trouble the guru, but will approach him with his own necessities already supplied. He will go there with his own bed and baggage. Not that he will show some kindness to the spiritual master and give him name and fame by becoming his disciple.

And what will be the spiritual master’s position? He will be well versed in the revealed truth, not in ordinary information. Revelation in many shades has been spread in the world from the upper realm, but the guru must have some spacious, graphic knowledge. He must have extensive knowledge about the revealed truth. And he must always be practicing real spiritual life. His activities are all connected with spirit, not with the mundane world. He is concerned with Brahman, the plane which can accommodate everything, the fundamental basis of everything (*brahma-nistham*). Not that he is leading his life with any mortal, mundane reference. He always lives in the transcendental plane and keeps himself in connection with that plane his whole life. Whatever he does, he will do only with that consciousness. This is the version of the *Upanisads*.

And in the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (11.3.21) it is said:

*tasmad gurum prapadyeta
jijnasuh sreya uttamam
sabde pare ca nisnatam
brahmany upasamasrayam*

Maya means misconception. We are living in the midst of misconception. Our understanding of the environment is based on a completely misconceived set of ideas and thoughts. We have no proper conception of anything in the absolute sense. Our ideas are all relative. Provincial selfishness has been imposed on the environment, and we are living under that misconception. When one comes to the conclusion that everything around him is mortal and that everything will vanish, then, with that mood, he will feel the necessity of approaching the guru, the divine guide and preceptor, with the purpose of inquiry. “What is the

highest good for me?” With this inquiry, he will approach the spiritual master.

And who will he approach? One who is not only well-versed in the precepts of the revealed scriptures, but who has also come in contact with the revealed truth. One who is conversant with the very object of the scriptures, and who has practical experience, who is established in pure consciousness, is a genuine *guru*. One should approach such a guide for his own relief, to understand what is the highest benefit in the world and how to attain it. This is necessary. It is real. It is not imaginary. At the same time, it is difficult. The Absolute Truth must be sought out through a real process; otherwise we shall go the wrong way and then say, “Oh, there is nothing here; it is not real.” So, only if we follow this real process of understanding the truth will we experience the real nature of divinity.

COMPARISON OF THE VIEWS OF MODERN SCIENCE AND BHAGAVATA PARADIGM (Part: I)

by

Srila Bhaktisvarupa Damodara Maharaja (T. D. Singh, Ph.D.)



As discussed in the last issue (September, 2011), the modern scientific view appears to be far too restrictive to account for the phenomena of life. The author proposes an alternative view, which may provide a framework and an inspiration for further scientific research. This is essentially the view of the

absolute truth as presented in the ancient Sanskrit text *Bhagavad-gita*. [1] We would like to stress that this view is not being offered as a dogma or as a metaphysical explanatory device incapable of scientific testing. Although many of its features may appear difficult to verify empirically, others have very direct implications concerning what we may expect to observe. This view should serve as a stimulating challenge to the truly scientific spirit that wishes to go beyond the very restrictive framework imposed on our scientific understanding of nature for the past two hundred years.

In both these viewpoints, the absolute truth may be described as the ultimate cause, or causes, lying behind all the phenomena of nature. The Table in the next page contrasts the two views. The first three points indicate features common to both views of the absolute truth. A brief description of these features is given below:

Basic Feature 1. The Absolute Truth exists, but it is not fully conceivable to the human mind:

The first point is that the ultimate laws must exist in a fashion not fully comprehensible to the human mind. This is illustrated, for example, by the law of gravity. We cannot imagine how a force can act across empty space to pull one object towards another, and yet the law of gravity postulates that such a “force” exists. For this reason, the law of gravity, when first proposed by Newton, was rejected as “occultism” by Leibnitz and other European philosophers. We can see, however, that a law must have some unexplainable features if it is actually fundamental: if

... a law must have some unexplainable features if it is actually fundamental: if the law can be explained in terms of other laws, it cannot, by definition, be fundamental.

the law can be explained in terms of other laws, it cannot, by definition, be fundamental.

Basic Features 2 & 3. The Absolute Truth exists invariantly throughout space and does not change with time:

Points two and three are also characteristic of both views, and these also represent inconceivable features. In science, a natural

Basic Features of Absolute Truth	The View of Modern Science: The Laws of Material Nature	The View of Vedantic or Bhagavata Paradigm
1. The absolute truth exists, but it is not fully conceivable to the human mind.	Yes	Yes
2. It exists invariantly throughout space.	Yes	Yes
3. It does not change with time.	Yes	Yes
4. It controls & is the source of all manifestations.	Yes*	Yes
5. It exists as a unified whole.	No	Yes
6. It possesses the attribute of consciousness.	No	Yes
7. It corresponds with fixed mathematical expressions.	Yes	No
8. The perception of absolute truth is limited to matter and material energy only.	Yes	No

Table: Two alternative views of the absolute truth.

* The natural laws of science must be supplemented by initial and boundary conditions in order to completely determine the course of events.

law is taken by definition to be invariant with respect to both space and time. If it were not invariant, then one could inquire by what law it varies, and that law would be taken instead as the fundamental law.

Basic Feature 4. The absolute truth controls all manifestations:

Point four should ideally be “yes” in both columns. We should expect the ultimate cause to determine all phenomena completely. The natural laws of modern science, however, must be supplemented by initial conditions describing the state of affairs in nature at some arbitrary point in time. This is a rather unsatisfactory feature of the modern scientific view, and theories such as the Darwinian theory of evolution and the “Big Bang” theory of cosmology may be viewed as attempts to circumvent it. For example, if we were forced to account for the existence of life forms by postulating initial conditions in which life forms already existed, then we could hardly say that our natural laws had explained life. The theory of evolution avoids this by positing a

POSSIBLE TYPICAL FEATURES OF ‘HIGHER ORDER’ LAWS:

- (i) The laws cannot be reduced to the known laws of physics and chemistry.
- (ii) They cannot be expressed mathematically at all, and relate to entities not amenable to numerical description. They should also have spiritual content.

natural mechanism whereby life forms could arise from a chaotic cloud of gas or a “primordial soup.” In this way, the required initial condition is rendered as simple as possible, and all significant phenomena are attributed to the operation of the laws themselves. As we have already pointed out, however, this theory cannot be expected to hold true: it is absurd to suppose that simple pushes and pulls alone could organize a chaotic, seething mass of atomic particles into a system of life forms capable of exhibiting so many remarkable qualities and activities.

Another feature of the modern scientific view is that of chance, which enters the theory of quantum mechanics as a kind of repeated initial condition in the so-called “reduction of the wave packet.” The role of chance in modern physics has many highly unsatisfactory features that we shall not discuss here. The basic point is that chance enters modern physical theory as an arbitrary yet unavoidable correction factor that modifies the behavior of the system under the natural laws. It is thus another aspect in which the mathematical formulations of natural laws fail to completely specify the phenomena of nature.

These drawbacks of the modern scientific view suggest the existence of natural laws of a higher order. Such laws would serve to provide the missing information needed to account for the origin of life, and would also serve to fill in the missing causal determination represented by “chance” in modern physics. By “higher order” we shall refer to one of the following sets of progressively stronger properties:

- (i) The laws cannot be reduced to the known laws of physics and chemistry.
- (ii) They cannot be expressed mathematically at all, and relate to entities not amenable to numerical description. They should also have spiritual content.

The simple push-pull laws of modern physics and chemistry are certainly inadequate to account for the phenomena of life, and the dilemmas of quantum theory suggest that they are not even adequate to account for the phenomena studied in physics. The very elaborate structures and activities manifested by living beings are particularly indicative of laws of type (ii).



The phenomenon of consciousness indicates that consciousness exists, and there is every reason to believe that it is qualitatively irreducible to mathematical description of any kind. An array of numbers, no matter how elaborate, can tell us nothing about a person's conscious awareness. Therefore, if we are to entertain the idea of a

complete description of reality, we must consider point (ii).

Our alternative view is based on the idea that the fundamental laws of nature must account for all phenomena, and that a cause must be at least as great as its effect in terms of information content. Thus we propose that an unlimited reservoir of fundamental laws lies behind nature, and that they determine all the features of nature, including living organisms. Understanding

... a cause must be at least as great as its effect in terms of information content.

the existence of such higher laws and principles and inclusion of them in scientific research works will clearly provide unlimited possibilities for future scientific investigation, which should prove to be much more fruitful than the many past invocations of "natural selection" and "chance."

To be continued...

Reference:

1. His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. *Bhagavadgita As It Is*. New York: Macmillan, 1972. This is a complete scientific text describing the nature of life, spiriton (*atma*). Our paradigm is to translate this description into modern scientific language.

SCIENTIFIC PLATFORM OF KNOWING OR ABSOLUTE KNOWING

by

Sripad Bhakti Madhava Puri Maharaja, Ph.D.



Early Greeks and Aristotle

The early Greeks conceived the universal as that which is permanently existing; thus they considered Earth, Water, Fire and Air as universals that were very much part of the existing world. But the senses perceive only the changing

aspect of things, while the permanent is apprehended by mind. Thus when Socrates got up and walked around or sat down and spoke he did not become something different in each situation. He remained the same Socrates in the various changing conditions. Here the permanent and the changeable (thought and thing) are implicitly considered together even in our ordinary perception of things. Water, according to Greek philosophy, was in all things liquid. Thus the Forms, as these universals were called, were not existing in some other world as is often erroneously conceived, but present in that which they determined – giving them the specific determinations by which they are understood.

Socrates did not emphasize the concept of thought as explicitly as did Plato, his student. And Plato did not comprehend the activity of Spirit as explicitly as Aristotle. Spirit means essentially knowing subjectivity or self-knowing. As such it must become

other to itself, i.e. knowing must become the known. Aristotle understood and explained that things become in this way other to themselves, and this is fundamental to his whole philosophy. [Note that becoming involves negation or overcoming being (synthesizing the contradiction of being and non-being) and is to be distinguished from mere 'being' where contradiction is held fixed, e.g. that a man is not a ship.]

Aristotle was a student of Plato, and he maintained the Platonic Idea (Forms) as the basis of his whole system of philosophy, but



he also made a substantial contribution to philosophy beyond Plato. For Plato the Real merely "participated" in the Forms. This was more or less a metaphorical explanation of the relationship between the two. Aristotle delved more deeply into this relationship and brought attention to the movement that was involved in the whole concept by expressing the relationship in terms of potentiality (Gr. *dunamis*) or the passive matter and actuality (Gr.

Plato and Aristotle

energia) or the active form or subjectivity. Thus Aristotle developed in essence what Hegel calls the Concept or the dynamic unity (relation) of subjectivity and objectivity.

This unity is not to be considered an a posteriori synthesis. It is an original unity that appears in dyadic form only to the abstract understanding. Everything has its negation within itself, i.e. its contradiction, as its limit. The understanding abstracts the actual dynamic unity and freezes and compartmentalizes it as subject and object, just like the dynamic unity of a magnet, is for understanding, considered as comprised of North and South poles. In fact, there are no North and South poles, as is proven when we try to divide the poles from one another. Each successive division produces only smaller magnets with N and S poles. Thus we describe the magnet as a unity or union of two things, but the parts are not ontological realities separate from each other, i.e. it is only abstractly that they may be considered as individual entities isolated from one another.

We may also understand the Idea (Gre. *eidos*) as species. Species is intrinsic and extrinsic to whatever particular comes under it. It cannot be separated from any particular instance in which it is manifest, e.g. a particular animal. Yet species is apprehended not by sense but by thought. For Aristotle the 'subjective apprehension' and 'what is apprehended' come into being simultaneously. If we consider hearing, for instance, we must realize that we do not 'hear' the compression and rarefaction of air or other matter, or of any particles impinging on us – neither do we hear the electrical impulses that are generated by a membrane vibrating within our ear. We hear sound, but sound itself cannot be described simply in mechanical terms. Sound is the object that necessarily accompanies subjective hearing itself. This is a topic that is dealt with in finer detail in Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature*.

Hegel mentions about half a dozen (mis-)interpretations of Aristotelian philosophy that have come down through the centuries. The Scholastics who had one of the most severe misinterpretations assumed Aristotle's universal to be something that was separately existing (logical realism) in conformity with the concept of God that they held. Therefore they used their misconception of Aristotelian philosophy to corroborate their particular interpretation of scripture and thereby confirmed to themselves that reason was in accord with what they considered revealed truth. The main point is that the Scholastics, who appeared at the time Reason was just beginning to claim an important place in the world, considered the Idea or the Universal as having a separate existence from the particular. This abstraction from the original Platonic conception has maintained a persistence even to the present time despite being wholly erroneous.

The defects of Aristotelian philosophy only contribute to this abstract understanding since Aristotle, although understanding things conceptually by thoroughly thinking through the concepts involved, nonetheless seemed to arbitrarily pick out different concepts for consideration as if they were unrelated – as is the mode by which abstract understanding works – and did not show how to combine them in a rationally developed scientific system according to the relational necessity of logic or Reason. Thus what remains of his writings seems at times to be more of a collection of brilliant insights than a system of philosophy. Aristotle's philosophy of nature, however, does show an ordering of the various stages such as mineral, plant, animal, etc. and Hegel acknowledges that his own idea of nature follows that of Aristotle's.

Truth

The laws of physical science have their limitations as truths. But everything that is – whether it be thought or being – is a piece of Truth when Truth is considered to be the totality of all that is. The idea of philosophical science is to systematize such a prospect. That is Hegel's project – a project that philosophers try to reproduce in their own minds. Philosophers generally exclude philosophical systems other than their own; thus history records one philosophy after another. Unlike physical science,



Hegel

philosophy does not have a standard of progress or collective improvement because there is no fixed idea of truth. The reason for this is that a scientific basis of Philosophy has not been accepted, thus anyone may present their own opinion as to what Truth is. There is only one philosophical system that claims to encompass all the others and can deduce them from itself.

That is just what Hegel's system seeks to accomplish and this is what we would expect of a genuine concept of Truth – that it would be all accommodating, pervasive and uniting. If our attitude toward such Truth is one of fear then we condemn ourselves perpetually to live outside of Truth – but only apparently because there can be no genuine 'outside' of the Absolute or all accommodating Truth. The first principle of Absolute Truth is that it is supremely accessible because there is nothing that does not belong to it.

Hegel's basic approach toward a philosophical science of Truth is based upon the Concept and the process of conceptual thinking. These must be understood before one can say that

Hegel's system does or does not meet the requirements for expressing or comprehending Truth as well as what such a Truth might mean. It appears to be very difficult to introduce the scientific method of philosophy, not because the method is so difficult in itself, but because of the unwillingness to let go of one's individual opinions about Truth. If all the arguments in the world about what you know and what you think are exercises of the Understanding – the prominent mode of thinking that infects the modern mind – then how is Reason to be accessed? The focus of our attention therefore has to be placed on comprehending the difference between thinking, understanding, and the grade or level of reasoning thought. The process for doing this requires familiarity with the Concept along with the process of conceptual thinking. These cannot be understood separately since the movement of thinking is part of the constitution of the Concept.

Review

Progress in philosophy means to understand and accept one point and from there go on to develop the next. The whole is made up of many parts just as a building is composed of many floors – we cannot take out one or more of the beginning floors and expect that the building can thereby be erected. The overall system of Hegel's philosophy requires an understanding of each of the parts within it, especially the beginning steps. In the earlier articles on this subject the essential point has been made that the subjective and objective aspects of reality cannot be understood separately from each other. There is no meaning to concept without that of which it is the concept, as much as there is no meaning to an object without a subject. With that basic and simple principle of the "distinct but inseparable" notion of the two, further progress was made to the details of the relationship between subject and object. The subject-predicate proposition was introduced to show how thinking takes on a dialectical nature and described this dialectical unity as being the first basic form in understanding the Concept as a dynamic unity of subject and object. Further determinations lay hidden in this structure which have not yet been made explicit for understanding. Only some general ideas or an outline for a basic understanding of what the basic principles are has been presented thus far. A more detailed comprehension is required to go further.

Introduction to the *Phenomenology*

Before claiming to know anything, it first seems appropriate [in line with the predominant tradition established at that time by Kant] to know what knowing is, in order to determine what, if any, contribution it makes to knowledge. So Hegel introduces his *Phenomenology* with the procedure of following how the movement of thought develops by inquiring into what knowledge is and how it relates to consciousness. There are three factors to

consider here: consciousness, its object, and knowledge of the object. Knowledge of the object is what the object is for consciousness, or the being-for-consciousness of the object. The congruence of knowledge with the object in-itself is what is called truth. It should be noted that the in-itself is the implicit truth, but the congruence of knowledge with the in-itself refers to truth which is explicit. The logical result is that truth is achieved when there is no longer any difference between knowledge and its object. The problem is that this simple point is generally forgotten just as quickly as it is known. Truth means that there is no difference between knowledge and its object, but nonetheless the idea persists that knowledge is something different from its object. It is this disparity that is the essence of untruth and therefore marks the necessity to overcome that difference in order to arrive at truth.

Why are these two considered as being different and how is that difference to be overcome in order to arrive at genuine truth? This has to be answered by carefully considering what is meant by each of the terms: consciousness, knowledge and the object, how they related to each other, as well as the movement of thinking that is involved in all of this. It is not that thinking activity should remain unaccounted for or considered an unimportant or inessential aspect of the truth. Rather, to consider only what is before thinking without taking into account the thinking activity as well, is to eliminate what is genuinely essential to the whole truth in its completeness. Thinking is as much a part of Truth as what is being thought about. They are distinct but inseparable from one another. This principle has to be recognized and maintained assiduously!

The in-itself as the criterion of knowledge.

Consciousness implies that the object before it is both in-itself or on its own, as well as an object for consciousness. The object in itself, however, is only determined as being on its own by consciousness. Thus both the object in itself and the object for consciousness are within or determined by consciousness. The being for consciousness of the object is called knowledge. Thus there are both the object in itself and knowledge of the object. If we call this knowledge the Concept but the object that exists the True thing, then the examination consists in determining if the Concept corresponds to the object. If, however, the true Concept is rather the implicit or in-itself of the object, and the explicit object, i.e. what is for consciousness is the outer object then it becomes necessary to determine if the object corresponds to the Concept. These are essentially equivalent ways of looking at the situation. The important point then is that the two moments of Concept and object, the moments of being for another and being in

itself, respectively, both come within the knowledge that is being investigated. In other words, although knowledge is the being for consciousness of the object, the object in itself is not excluded. This is actually a simple point but it seems complicated when explicitly put into words.

The criterion of Truth (the in itself) is already within consciousness, therefore Hegel concludes, "Consequently we do not need to import criteria, or to make use of our own bright ideas and thoughts during the course of the inquiry; it is precisely when we leave these aside that we succeed in contemplating the matter in hand as it is **in and for itself.**"

A change in knowledge effects a change in the object.

If everything is self-contained within the consciousness under investigation, all that is left to the investigators is to observe what goes on in consciousness when it knows an object. Because an object is only what it is known to be; when we change our knowledge of the object the object also changes. For example, when walking into a dark room and stepping on something that is thought to be a snake; but when the light is turned on it is seen to be a rope. The knowledge derived from feeling the object with the foot is modified by the knowledge obtained from visual inspection. The associated object is also modified according to that knowledge. In this example consciousness at first considers the object in itself to be a snake, but later finds that it was only that aspect of the object that is for-consciousness, or its knowledge did not correspond to the object in itself.

Experience as change in consciousness.

Therefore, consciousness is both consciousness of the object C (O) and consciousness of its knowledge of the object C[K(O)]. It therefore appears that there are two objects of consciousness. But K (O), although it is *for* consciousness is not an object in the usual sense because it is subjective or within consciousness instead of being outside it where we would generally consider the object to be. This may therefore be considered consciousness of a new object compared to the object in-itself that was identified as C(O). The in-itself upon becoming known loses its pure quality of being in itself and becomes transformed into being for consciousness of this in-itself. The object thus in fact changes as a result of our knowledge of it. Knowing is the negation of the object in itself and that negated object is being for consciousness or knowledge. This new object thus contains the negation of the first object. A change in consciousness is required in going from consciousness of the object to consciousness of our knowledge of the object just as much as there is change in the object itself. Consciousness of the object as being in-itself, ignoring the aspect of being for consciousness,

is ordinary consciousness, or naive realism. Attention to the being for consciousness of the object, i.e. of our knowledge only, ignoring consciousness of the object in itself is Kantian abstract idealism, and is represented in the Bohr interpretation of quantum mechanics. Although such abstract idealism is not ordinary consciousness it is still not proper philosophical consciousness which accounts for both the being in itself and the being for consciousness of the object as well as the active relationship between the two.

The change or difference that occurs in consciousness is called experience [Ger. *Erfahrung*]. To learn something from experience means that the objective circumstances before there was any knowledge are understood differently after having that knowledge. This difference is called experience. Before such experiences occur consciousness at each stage will be absorbed in its object and unaware of such differences. This means that there will be a difference between the consciousness in itself and the being-for-us or knowledge of that consciousness, the latter not being present to the consciousness under investigation. What the consciousness that is being observed takes as immediate content, therefore, will be seen by us as undergoing change or development, i.e. experience.

Science as the path of experience.

This development will be governed by the rational or logical necessity that relates the different aspects of consciousness that have been referred to above. This development or change is what is called the experience of consciousness. The path of that experience that develops according to the inherent logical necessity of the changing content is called Science or the *Science of the experience of consciousness*. [This was Hegel's original title for the *Phenomenology*.]

The end is the beginning.

The experiences that consciousness goes through in its development in learning about itself display the entire system of the truth of consciousness or the realm of spirit. These are not mere abstract thoughts but appear in relation to consciousness as actual shapes or stages of itself. The development of these determinate moments constitutes consciousness as a whole in its true existence. At that point in the development of consciousness when it is no longer burdened with itself as that which appears to exist merely for it and as an other, its alien nature is overcome and appearance becomes identical to its own essence. This marks the entrance to the platform of the genuine science of spirit in which consciousness grasps its own essence or is absolute knowing.