BEYOND CONCEPTION: ONTIC REALITY, PURE CONSCIOUSNESS AND MATTER

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ABSTRACT: Our current scientific exploration of reality oftentimes appears focused on epistemic states and empiric results at the expense of ontological concerns. Any scientific approach without explicit ontological arguments cannot be deemed rational however, as our very Being can never be excluded from the equation. Furthermore, if, as many nondual philosophies contend, subject/object learning is to no avail in the attainment of knowledge of ontic reality, empiric science will forever bear out that limitation. Putting Jung's depth psychology in dialogue with Patañjali's yoga philosophy is one way to attempt an alliance between dualistic and nondualistic models. Jung's assertion of an unconscious is what notably sets him apart from Patañjali. Furthermore, whereas Patañjali distinguishes between pure consciousness and the contents of consciousness, Jung does not. Although both Jung and Patañjali attempt to ground their work in the direct experience of life, and guide us towards wholeness, looking at Jung through the lens of nonduality, wholeness appears beyond reach. It is through Jung's synchronicity hypothesis where we may be able to forge a bridge between the models. This bridge allows a contemporary argument for an understanding of the ontic reality of pure consciousness, and subsequently the discrimination between things as they are and things as they appear.

KEYWORDS: Pure consciousness; Ontic reality; Ego; Epistemic states; Embodied wisdom; Synchronicity

Our current scientific exploration of reality oftentimes appears focused on epistemic states and empiric results at the expense of ontological concerns. Any scientific approach without explicit ontological arguments cannot be deemed rational however, as our very Being can never be excluded from the equation. Furthermore, if, as many nondual philosophies contend, subject/object learning is to no avail in the attainment of knowledge of ontic reality, empiric science will forever bear out that limitation.

I have put Jung's depth psychology in dialogue with Patañjali's yoga philosophy in an attempt to form a bridge between dualistic and nondualistic models, which may lead us to integrate contemporary science within a holistic picture of our Being in this world.

Patañjali appears to rely upon a well thought out metaphysical schematic, which can be abstracted from his text, the *Yoga Sūtras* (YS). Two key terms to understand in Patañjali yoga are *purusa*, pure consciousness, and *prakriti*, nature or psycho-physical being and its source. Mind for Patañjali is a part *of prakriti*, as is anything phenomenal, whether subtle or gross. When read through a nondual lens *purusa* and *prakriti* are seen as distinguishable, separable but not separate. Dualism in Classical Yoga is falsifiable: the dualities are expository and used for the process of, and means to, realignment or yogic union. [1]

In Patañjali's world pure consciousness, is the fundamental ontological reality, which is self-illuminating (YS 4.19, 4.22), singular (YS 2.25, 4.34), eternal (YS 2.5), and absolute (YS 4.18). [2] Patañjali uses the terms perceiver (*drastr*) and seeing (*drś*) interchangeably with pure consciousness throughout his work, implying an equation between these terms. The methodology in Patañjali's text revolves around, and resolves to, a crucial discernment between two orientations of consciousness. For Patañjali there is a discernable difference between pure consciousness abiding in its true essential nature (YS 1.3), and consciousness when it is not resting there but rather assuming the modifications of the mind and its contents (YS 1.4). Another way to say this would be that for Patañjali there is a distinct difference between our experience of ontic reality and our experience of epistemic states.

Consciousness in its true nature I refer to as orientation A, and consciousness assuming the modifications of mind I refer to as orientation B. Patañjali makes it clear that both orientations are necessary (YS 2.23). Orientation A offers a clear lens of perception while our perception in orientation B is most often distorted. The distortion in orientation B clears when the mind perceives stillness and purity, at which point perception through orientation A becomes unveiled. At this juncture, orientation B has the opportunity to shift into orientation A temporarily or permanently.

I like to use an exercise to elucidate this point further. Think for a moment about standing in front of a window. When you are standing in place A, you are at a certain angle and the light is just so, whereupon no reflection of yourself comes back to distort that which you are perceiving. If you move just a hair, and stand in place B, the angle changes and your reflection comes into the frame obstructing the clear view. When pure consciousness is known or embodied in experience, it looks directly through a lens of perception without reflection, akin to standing in place A at the window. All distortions are removed from the lens and clarity of perception ensues.

According to Patañjali, understanding the world through any orientation other than A, the ontic reality of pure consciousness, means consciousness is enmeshed with contents, and erroneously perceived by the dualizing mind (YS 2.6, 2.24). At the level of our human awareness, this enmeshment leads to the psychological confusion between things as they are and things as they appear.

Epistemic states are psychological in nature, they occur in the reflection of the mind. Reflected consciousness is not pure consciousness though, just as moonlight is not sunlight. If you can imagine living in a cave and only exiting at night you would have no idea it was the light of the sun illuminating the moon. When we are entrenched in orientation B our perception of the world is similar. We have no understanding about the relationship between pure consciousness and reflected consciousness. Patañjali's methodology aims at getting our minds to exit the cave for good.

In leading his students out of the cave and into alignment, Patañjali lays emphasis on prajñā, a feminine term defined as "wisdom, knowledge, insight" [3], which is gained neither through objectivity nor intellectual knowledge. In fact, prajñā is much more than objective or intellectual knowledge: Prajñā connotes a clear experience of the nondual instrument of perception (YS 1.49, 3.5). That is, for Patañjali, subject/object knowledge must be completely eliminated for reality to be known. Mind can analyze and synthesize spectacularly, but it is not an instrument of essential knowledge. The pure principle of existence, our very Beingness, cannot be, and will never be, grasped by the mind. Once objectification is seen as psychological experience, or as an epistemic means of knowing and limited understanding of Being, Patañjali's world is then realized and known, through direct experience, as the embodiment of pure consciousness (YS 4.25, 4.31). With no ontological subject/object distinction, phenomenal consciousness comes to rest as pure consciousness, and the power of pure consciousness resides in its true nature (YS 4.34). As far as yogic alignment is concerned, in Classical Yoga ontic reality outweighs epistemic states (YS 4.24, 4.25).

Although both Jung and Patañjali attempt to ground their work in the direct experience of life, and guide us towards wholeness, looking at Jung through the lens of nonduality, wholeness appears beyond reach. Jung believes that God, the collective unconscious, or the Self can never be known directly. Comprehension comes about through objects of experience. Furthermore, for Jung, "Complete redemption from the sufferings of this world is and must remain an illusion." [4] On the other hand, Patañjali's yoga soteriology aims to lead one to *kaivalya*. Patañjali's *kaivalya* is unveiled when the mind is stilled and all objects are removed from the horizon of our

awareness. While *kaivalya* is most often understood as liberation, Indian philosophical scholar Sthaneshwar Timalsina clarified that, "This term does not convey the same semantic resonance as *moksa*, which literally means liberation. The term *kevala*, having the suffic *valac* in the meaning *svārtha* (itself or oneself) from the base *ka*, is basically 'to rest upon oneself'." [5] Resting upon oneself, or one's-own-ness, allows us to directly experience nondualism and the totality of our true nature. Any kind of splitting or binding influences cease and the tormenting effects of the opposites comes to rest.

Jung recognized yoga's ability to "create a psychological disposition" which allows for *prajñā*, while acknowledging how the West, "finds itself in a real dilemma" because of its "highly developed scientific and philosophical critique." [6] Jung stated, with regard to the mind body problem, "The split in the Western mind therefore makes it impossible at the outset for the intentions of yoga to be realized in any adequate way." [6]

Jung works toward a nondual vision throughout his career. For example, through the lens of alchemy, which was highly influential to his work, Jung entertained the "inner unity, or experience of unity" expressed by mystics "in the idea of the *unio mystica*." [7] In his collaborative work with theoretical physicist Wolfgang Pauli, they "conjectured a picture in which the mental and the material arise as two complementary aspects of one underlying psychophysically neutral reality to which they cannot be reduced to and to which direct empirical access is impossible." [8] Although Jung never proved empiric consciousness to be a unity, his legacy aims in that direction.

In Patañjali's world, the heart is a way to gain access to the nature of the mind. In sūtra 3.34 he stated, "hrdaye citta-samvit: From Discipline converged on the heart, follows perception of the Mind." [9] In the Upanishads the heart is the abode of purusa/ātman. In Hindu thought, throughout the bodymind there are seven subtle psychophysical energy centers called *chakras*. The heart *chakra*, known as *anahata* in Sanskrit, translates as "unstruck." Using our vocal chords as reference, it is understood that no sound is made until the two chords meet. The same is true for any other sound in our world: sounds are made by striking two things together. So anahata stands for the sound that is made when two things are not struck. This is also referred to as the primordial sound of the universe. Yoga scholar Edwin Bryant has noted that the heart chakra is "considered to be the seat of intelligence. Thus both the ātman and citta are centered in the heart." [11] This sūtra perhaps exemplifies the importance of developing prajñā, in contradistinction to ordinary means of cognition, or subject/object knowledge. In Patañjali yoga, as mentioned previously, knowledge arising from a mental state, or mental activity, is not the final goal. Although yoga's

approach is psychological and epistemological, for Patañjali, in the end, ontic reality supersedes epistemology.

Although Jung doesn't make any concise statements, or theories, about the mind heart connection as Patañjali does in YS 3.34, Jung does speak throughout his texts on feeling and affect and researches love alongside religious factors and symbols of transformation. In reference to how love appears in Christianity Jung stated,

Accordingly, love would seem to be no trifling thing: it is God himself. But, on the other hand, "love" is an extreme example of anthropomorphism and, together with hunger, the immemorial psychic driving-force of humanity. It is, psychologically considered, a function of relationship on the one hand and a feeling-toned psychic condition on the other, which as we have seen, practically coincides with the God-image. [12]

Coming to terms with the feeling-value of psychic contents, in addition to their intellectual value, "is an indispensable prerequisite for wholeness," according to Jung. [13] The value of our emotional and affective life is woven throughout his work. In reference to alchemy Jung noted, "The alchemists thought that the *opus* demanded not only laboratory work, the reading of books, meditation, and patience, but also love." [14] Furthermore Jung emphasized that "the purely intellectual attitude must be abandoned." [15] Revisioning and understanding our intellectual life and heart center are two strong bonds between depth psychology and Classical Yoga. However, there are significant differences between the models.

Whereas Jung defined depth psychology as the "branch of psychological science which is concerned with the phenomenon of the unconscious," [16] there is no unconscious in Patañjali's model. In C.T. Kenghe's research five references to the unconscious were found in the first known Indo-European text, the Rgveda Samhitā (ca. 1200 BCE), however, this word "became obsolete in subsequent periods." [17] Although there is no unconscious, what does surface throughout Vedic literature, and throughout Patañjali's text, is the notion of $avidy\bar{a}$, most often translated as ignorance, misunderstanding, or absence of vision. It is possible that Patañjali, and other Vedic philosophers, use the term avidyā, instead of unconscious, in order to be clear and consistent. In Upanishadic thought consciousness is all there is. It is the contents of consciousness that can be invisible, or unknown, to us in our human awareness. Because pure consciousness can never go unconscious, but can only be obscured at the level of our human awareness, the term unconscious is not consistent with the ontological reality of purusa. This use of terminology may be very highly significant, in that the discrimination between orientations A and B can never take place, until one fully understands, that pure consciousness can never go unconscious.

Although he repeatedly denied any metaphysical or ontological claims, Jung's depth psychology hypothesized an unconscious agent, which we can never know directly. Jung's assumption, that we can think and act without a metaphysical premise, indicates his alliance, or attempt to be compliant, with the materialist science worldview. Empirical science rests on the foundation that we can formulate our worldview by means of researching phenomena, without any metaphysical implications. As British-born philosopher Alan Watts noted in direct reference to Jung, "Unconscious metaphysics tend to be bad metaphysics." [8] Although not explicitly stated in his theory, for Jung the unconscious is ontically real. [19]

In addition to the disagreement on the ontological nature of the unconscious, there are other notable differences between Jung and Patañjali's models. For instance, in Jung's world ego-consciousness has evolved out of the unconscious, which, once again, for Jung is ontically real. For Jung, it is the ego, a center in the psyche of each individual, which is the seat of consciousness. "Consciousness is inconceivable without an ego," Jung says, because in his view, "if there is no ego there is nobody to be conscious of anything." [20]

In Patañjali's world the ego is an afflicted identity, a concept we form by appropriating consciousness or, ontologically speaking, taking ownership of the "I AM" presence, which distorts our view of reality and blocks our knowledge of pure consciousness (YS 2.6). By appropriation, and by subsequent identification of ourselves as egoicly bound entities, the subject/object dichotomy arises, leading to the experience of separation, which results in suffering (YS 2.3, 2.6). However, although the "I-sense" is binding, and a cause of suffering, it serves a purpose. It is not an aberration per se. In Patañjali's model objectification is possible, if not necessary, as psychological experience (YS 2.18, 2.23, 4.24). In some sense, it may be that we have to know what we are not in order to know what we are.

Because the ego is ontically false in Patañjali's world, the ego concept can be completely deconstructed (YS 3.47). For Patañjali, ego, like mind, is a content of consciousness. Realization of the ontic reality of pure consciousness comes through discriminating consciousness from the contents of consciousness. This is not to say that we do not need instruments of perception to be in the world. The mind itself is not the issue. It is how we understand those instruments, and identify with them, that is all-important.

Jung's work relativizes the ego and aims to put it into accord with the stronger forces of the unconscious through a process he terms individuation. Through individuation, or the transformation of human consciousness, ego-consciousness develops and maintains a relationship to the unconscious. In turn, human beings then

make the Creator conscious of His creation. [19, 21] It must be strongly emphasized that in Jung's model there is no self-illuminating pure consciousness.

Patañjali understands pure consciousness to be self-illuminating, eternal, and absolute, with the human mind and body as instruments of perception, or vehicles for consciousness. Pure consciousness isn't transforming in Patañjali's work: Movement is acknowledged as the evolution of the fundamental attributes (gunas) of nature (prakrit), in particular their smallest expression, anu. The slight movement of anu appears to take on a transformation of consciousness. This is the crucial discernment that Patañjali is asking practitioners of yoga to make. Again, with no unconscious, acitti, Patañjali points to avidyā, absence of vision, or lack of knowledge, to explain dualistic and constrained worldly life. If one does not experience nonduality, it is not because one is unconscious: our vision is blocked by phenomena, thereby inhibiting and/or distorting the view. Remove the inhibition and the view clears. Phenomenal consciousness comes to rest as pure consciousness. To state this in a different way entirely, instead of focusing on the way things appear, we are able to be at rest with the way things are, whereupon we have clarity of perception and act in total alignment with our true nature. Once again it is evident that Patañjali is crystal clear in regards to a crucial discernment between psychological experience and ontological reality.

Patañjali explained, explicitly, what one experiences through the subject object worldview, and he never resorted to modeling this processing of contents in terms of conscious and unconscious. It is Jung's assertion of an unconscious that notably sets him apart from Patañjali. By comparing Jung and Patañjali, it appears that a model devoid of pure consciousness, coupled with an ego that can never completely dissolve, alongside a Judeo-Christian God that does not consult with his own omniscience essentially resolves to a human species that is superior to pure consciousness and nature herself. If Patañjali's model is correct, the unconscious may be the Achilles heel of Jung's overall vision.

In order to elucidate the foundational differences between Jung and Patañjali further, I'd like to suggest an exercise. Imagine yourself standing in front of a mirror. You will see only a partial reflection of yourself. Depending upon the angle with which you stand in front of the mirror, different aspects of you, different phenomena, will be illuminated, reflected, able to be perceived. Now imagine you and a friend standing in front of the same mirror, and both of you changing your angles and looking at your own reflections, and the reflection of the other. Again, depending on the angle that each of you takes, some phenomena will be able to be perceived by one or both, and some phenomena will not be able to be perceived by either. The mutual process of shared experience from the perspective of the mundane human mind is like this: an

eternal dance of phenomena that are reflected and observed, or stripped from view. Stripped from view does not mean they are not there, or from the perspective of Patañjali yoga, that they are unconscious. It means they are not perceived, or reflected through a particular angle or lens of perception. Accepting this metaphorical view, it becomes clear that what Jung calls the unconscious is not actually unconscious at all but a form of veiled phenomenal consciousness. Comparing this to Patañjali's model where obscured phenomenal consciousness is already fully aligned with the light of never-collapsing pure consciousness resolves to seeing Jung's whole model as resting on a very shaky foundation, or false view. In other words, Jung's model rests on the presupposition that the ego and the unconscious are real.

As Sthaneshwar Timalsina has explained, "The moment when nothing is cognized, 'nothing' *is cognized*. In essence, the existence of the absence of awareness cannot be confirmed." [22] While consciousness can be confirmed by itself, how is one to confirm unconsciousness? Absence of consciousness is absence of consciousness. This is sometimes referred to in Hindu philosophy by stating what exists exists, eternally and absolutely, what does not exist will never exist. In other words, as Patañjali has indicated, contents of psychophysical reality may be obscured, but they can never be confirmed as unconscious.

While Jung acknowledges and emphasizes the teleological function of the psyche and synchronicity, both of which are in alignment with Patañjali's yoga psychology, Jung's focus is on discovering the unity of psyche and matter, not the unveiling of the nondual nature of pure consciousness and nature. The focus of Patañjali's methodology focuses on the latter. Pure consciousness through Patañjali's lens can be seen as both pervasive, and continuously in harmony with reflective consciousness from orientation A (YS 2.21, 4.24); Even without our understanding or reflected knowledge of the process when we are in orientation B. Just as the sun is continuously in harmony with the light of its reflection off the earth and the moon regardless if we are existing only in the cave. We do not understand the nature of light when our perception is off, but that doesn't change the nature of light. Hence why from the perspective of yogic alignment ontic reality outweighs epistemic states. In contradistinction to Jung, synchronicity and the union of psyche and soma are not researched but known to Patañjali. Patañjali informs us that we will understand synchronicity and nonduality too, once we have obtained the knowledge born of discrimination (YS 3.54, 4.23). That is to say, looking through a yogic lens, when we are within orientation B, focused on the plane of intellectuality (vijñānamaya), engrossed in the modifications of the mind (citta vritti), we search for the true reflection in various

ways. Hence Jung's search for the unity of psyche and matter, can be seen to reside in Patañjali's orientation B.

Although Jung seeks a unifying model throughout his career, for Jung egoconsciousness and the resultant subject/object distinction remain steadfast. For Jung pure consciousness was impossible to know or experience: he thought pure consciousness was an idea which signified that Eastern intuition had overreached itself. [23] He believed that any practices aimed at fully releasing egoic attachments would lead one to unconsciousness.

By comparing Jung's and Patañjali's paths of transformation back-to-back through a nondual lens, it becomes apparent that Jung's path has us swapping phenomena while Patañjali's is a path which invites us to see through phenomena, or to see the silent background which supports the images and forms. To say this another way, in Jung's model there is never any distinction made between consciousness and the contents of consciousness, or seeing and appearance.

In order to form a synthesis the division between the models needs to be bridged. Once again Jung's model represents an unconscious that is a psychological and ontological reality and Patañjali's model represents pure consciousness as the ontological reality.

I believe Jung's synchronicity hypothesis allows a contemporary argument for an understanding of the ontic reality of pure consciousness and subsequently the discrimination between things as they are and things as they appear.

Jung began to formulate the theory of synchronicity after many decades of engagement with the paranormal. In Jung's world, synchronicity is a formal factor in nature, which is "the meaningful coincidence of an absolutely natural product with a human idea apparently independent of it." [24] In addition to "meaningful coincidence" Jung also described synchronicity as "an acausal connecting principle." Synchronistic phenomena appear meaningfully related, but not causally so. Jung explained,

Synchronistic phenomena prove the simultaneous occurrence of meaningful equivalences in heterogeneous, causally unrelated processes; in other words, they prove that a content perceived by an observer can, at the same time, be represented by an outside event, without any causal connection. From this it follows either that the psyche cannot be localized in space, or that space is relative to the psyche. The same applies to the temporal determination of the psyche and the psychic relativity of time. I do not need to emphasize that the verification of these findings must have far-reaching consequences. [25]

Jung's work with the complicated phenomena of synchronicity was never completed. Contemporary Jungian analyst David Tresan has noted that Jung's synchronicity "signaled an incomplete picture of reality and serves as the goad to discovering a fuller one." [26]

While Jung coined the term synchronicity to approach acausal connectedness, Patañjali's sūtras also address this idea. For instance Patañjali noted that once discrimination between orientation A and orientation B takes place the knowing that arises is intuitional, liberative, and includes all conditions and all times simultaneously (YS 3.54). From orientation A perception is nondual. The present moment is all there is. Patañjali's vision is in alignment with traditional Hindu physics where "the entirety of reality is compressed and encapsulated in each moment." [27] The past and the future are inherent in the present. In other words, just because a discreet observation is made, which reduces our worldview to the classical Newtonian model, and the appearance of differences between a subject and an object in what our consensus reality has constructed as time, that does not mean all other information isn't there. It is merely blocked from view.

Because all information resides undivided and whole, there is no subject standing in relation to an object ontically. Duality only appears psychologically through the psychological splitting of opposites. Using the analogy of the sun and moon, we can talk about day and night, but ultimately they are not distinct. Borderless, one flows effortlessly into the next.

Furthering the notion of nonduality Patañjali explained, "From the unity of modification, follows the unity of the thing." [28] This is to say that there is a coordinated mutation of the fundamental attributes (gunas) at the deepest level of manifestation. Purusa, pure consciousness, is absolute and singular. We are talking about a whole that ultimately cannot be diminished. For Patañjali the immutable purusa is not altered by the fluctuating forms of prakriti (YS 4.18). Metaphorically speaking DNA flows effortlessly out to manifest the body. The acorn flows effortlessly into the oak. Because the totality of existence is encapsulated in the present, enfolded nature is not affected by the unfoldment. For this reason Patañjali's text emphasized seeing, and the removal of the failure to see at the level of our human awareness. Tapping into pure perception is why psychics can apprehend that which is beyond the five physical senses and see beyond and behind material reality. Patañjali spends a good portion of his text, in fact most of chapter three, discussing paranormal phenomena. Patañjali and Jung's exploration of the paranormal is another area of strong intersection between depth psychology and Classical Yoga.

Coupled with the mechanism of manifestation, or unity of modification, in Classical Yoga the modifications of the mind are always known due to the eternal and absolute nature of their master, *purusa*. Seeing can be veiled but it cannot be blinded.

No matter how we attempt to dissect the physical world through discrete observation at the level of our human awareness, it is still one indivisible All Knowing. Fully. Conscious. Whole. Once this is experientially understood, in Patañjali's world any form of objectifying phenomena becomes unsatisfactory, as it is known to be inhibitory. Epistemic states dissolve into ontic reality. Dualistic psychological experience comes to rest and Being is understood through embodiment.

As stated earlier, for Patañjali, subject/object knowledge must be completely eliminated for the ontic reality of pure consciousness to be known. In Indian philosophy the example often given to elucidate the limitations of subject/object knowledge is the parable of several men and an elephant. Each man is blindfolded and asked to touch a part of the elephant. The man at the tip of the tail thinks he is touching a brush, the man at the foot a pillar, the man at the trunk a plow, and so on. Each has no idea of how to conceive of the part or the whole because they are only experiencing a part without relation to the whole.

With Jung and Patañjali's ideas of synchronicity in mind, theoretical physicist Juan Maldacena's holographic vision becomes interesting to explore. If the Upanishadic tradition is correct, and pure consciousness is the ontological reality, then from this perspective, reality can be envisioned more like a holograph than the 3D world we are used to imagining it as. Using a holographic model as a heuristic devise can aid our understanding not only of synchronicity but also allows us to envision how "pure consciousness can be everywhere, and everywhere the same, yet ignorance can be somewhere and somehow." [29]

In our current global and contemporary scientific search for reality, it is perhaps imperative that psychologists the world over come to agree on psychic structure and the relationship of contents with consciousness. Jung himself advised, "Some day psychologists will have to agree upon certain basic principles secure from arbitrary interpretation if psychology is not to remain an unscientific and fortuitous conglomeration of individual opinions." [30] Our psychological models are interpenetrated with and reverberating throughout our sciences and philosophies. Patañjali is encouraging us to participate fully: to Be the embodiment of Knowing. Only acquiring conceptual knowledge is a limitation, and a distorted way of perceiving the world.

The reflection we see of ourselves is vital to the vision we have of ourselves and our world. In order to transform into the next level of our potentiality, I believe we must see ourselves in new ways. Looking closely at the work of Jung and Patañjali helps us understand the differences between dualistic and nondualistic notions of our world and has the potential to stimulate us to contemplate our orientation. If we are able to

perceive the world both dualistically and nondualistically, through which lens does it feel most comfortable in our lived experience of Being? Where can we find rest, harmony, joy and peace? Through re-visioning the relationship between our dualistic and nondualistic models, reorienting to, and aligning with pure consciousness, it is possible we may uncover deeper insights into how we might better live our lives.

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