

WHO AM I?

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Homo sapiens belong to the race of fairly intelligent biped animals, which have travelled through time and space at the speed of light. To see design in the random facts of nature has been the historic work of scientists. It is the marvel of our age that the dreamer has suddenly become instrumental in transforming his vision into facts and hardwares. Within the last few decades, man with the assistance of science and technology has progressed from his first mechanical faltering to the astonishing achievements of the present day. The scientific technology has conferred material benefits in the form of gadgets- like radio, television, automobile, clothing, medicine, etc., - on mankind. Aircrafts break the sound barrier and fly across the seas unpiloted by human hands; satellites explore interstellar space; radio, television, radar and telecommunications weave a network of information, measurement and organization; and by remote control man can command and establish his sovereignty on earth. Man has his first leap beyond the biosphere into those regions where no form of life exists and have returned safe and sound. He can establish extra terrestrial bases. A fabulous record!! A wonderful achievement!! Man of science has transformed himself into man of action. He is one of the crafts-men of the future. The scales which measure the significance of science must be weighted on the side of the future. Mankind may well ask whether it is still capable of producing great men and whether those of today can bear comparison with the great men of history. Ninety percent of the all scientists of all ages are alive today and none of their prestige has been lost.

Modern man has spread his scientific knowledge and technology through the world. Though only a small and short-lived particle of this planet, over the last five hundred years he has started on a herculean task of mastering the environments by artificial changes and transform nature's forces into agencies for the service of man, although he foresees neither the consequences nor the limits of this activity. This plant, which was fertilized and which germinated, grew and bloomed in a completely synthetic environment is surely the most beautiful symbol of the progress of civilization. The progress is by a process in which imagination takes the place of experience that the world has become the creation of the scientists. Now he is a prisoner of his own methods. Convinced that he cannot make something out of nothing, he refuses to deduce anything without verification, he never extrapolates without taking precautions, his conclusions are only provisional and based on proved facts. But mankind has taken up the scientist's dream and still asks him the external questions that spring up from the restless conscious-mind within us which ceaselessly asks: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? And which compares past with present, future with past, possibilities with facts, fantasy with realities!! This attitude of mind can be praised or can be criticized and condemned. Is he right? Is he wrong?

The discoveries of the science from Copernicus (1473-1543) through Darwin (1809-1882) into modern times; the impact of neurophysiology that man's consciousness is merely the sum of the

electrochemical events in his brain; threat posed by computers that man is an inferior computer on legs, treating man as an automata; experiments on the transfer of memory molecules and replacement of genes; materialistic approach to life and universe promises (or threatens) far-reaching effects; and this has displaced first man's world, then man himself, from the special importance which he seemed to hold in the universe. Man is reduced to a mere acolyte attending on a world of machines that has no further need of him. He now regards himself as the accidental by-product of an impersonal universe in which his joy and sorrow, success and failure have no more meaning than do the patterns of clouds or the ripples on a lake. He is now regarded as a complicated physical machinery- puppet that struts, talk, laugh and die as the hand of time turns the handle beneath.

Man has realized that he cannot make something out of nothing. Will he ever be able to create an atom of hydrogen? Amoeba, a unicellular animal one of the simplest of all in its organization, nevertheless has a chemical structure which is unsurpassed in mystery and complexity that the biologist cannot hope to construct a copy of it. Will he ever be able to create a single cell endowed with the qualities of life? Will he learn how to preserve the boldly processes so that an individual may choose to live as long as he wants? Will he ever be able to vanquish death? Will he ever be able to copy creatures such as paramecia, which have evolved very little and are endowed with potential immortality which is the eternal dream of man? When and how will it be made possible for multicellular organism to become adapted to this faculty of potential immortality? Curious enough, his knowledge about his body is scanty about his mind he has not touched the fringes about his self-awareness or consciousness he is totally ignorant. This has profound implications for the future of man.

Behind the brain of human embryo, even at its early stages- say three months old, are already concealed the determinate faculty called intellect, the faculty of memory on which all thoughts depend, the faculty of psychological mechanisms and psychic personality; which are the strangest mysteries to the modern neurophysiologists, neurochemists, neuropathologists, neurosurgeons, microbiologists, psychologists. The contemporary scientists have failed to perceive even the fringes of problems such as self-awareness or consciousness, thought structure or at least that of logic and some have relegated to disdainfully to the subjective scientists. It is high time that the objective scientists start appreciating the discoveries of the subjective scientists.

"Strange is our situation here upon earth. Each of us comes for a short visit not knowing why yet sometimes seeming to divine a purpose" says Albert Einstein (1879-1955), who has a secure place among the immortals of science. He further says: "The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all art and science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who cans no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead: his eyes are closed.... To know that what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and the most radiant beauty which our dull faculties can comprehend only in their most primitive forms- this knowledge, this feeling is at the centre of true religiousness.

The insight into the mystery of life is most mysterious and we stand rapt in awe at the magnitude of the problem- Who am I? Why am I? What is the life's aim? Is life a joyless pilgrimage from the womb to the tomb? Is life a mere tenancy in a tragic world where we sow seeds of desires and hopes and harvest misery and sorrow? Is melancholy and dissatisfaction the only rewards Nature has to give man, the roof and crown of things created by her? Is life a mere impotent duration of

barren struggles between two finite points a birth and a death? Is there not in it a perfection to be achieved? Science is totally silent on the above questionnaires as the answer to these is beyond the scope of objective science.

The constitution of a human being and how he originated are buried in profound mystery. The crucial question is whether man is made up of three entities- 'consciousness', 'mind' and 'body'; or two entities—'mind' and 'body'; their existence and relationship o each other. This is a problem which has intrigued and divided philosophers from Plato and Aristotle to Ryle and Russell. Eminent neurophysiologists—Sherrington o Eccles, for example- physicist like Schrodinger and biologist like Waddington accept the existence of consciousness. Philosophers like Price accept the existence of consciousness and also draw upon old tradition and divides human nature into three parts: 'consciousness', 'mind' and 'body':

“This tripartite division of human nature appears under various names in Neo-Platonism, in some of the religious philosophies of the Far East and in some Christian thinkers also. There are philosophical arguments in favour of it which have some weight; moreover certain forms of mystical experience seem to support it.”

The Indian thinkers have been drawing on the tradition of the Upanishads and suggest that in fact the individual really has a tripartite (triune) structure.

Man endowed with conscious mind wants happiness, security and a desire to cling firmly to life; but the inevitable fact of death mocks at this clinging. His ego centered, desire-prompted, lust seeking world based upon his sense of possession and vanities lead him to pain and suffering and he becomes a shattered desperado stinking in his own utter failures in life. The sorrow of the inward psychological wreckage is the dirge of misery that characterizes our age. Where should we look for a break-through---- in the realm of present science pertaining to external world or in the internal world?

External World: All scientific knowledge is nothing but aimed at finding perfect unity, or a single reality in the midst of diversity. Science aims at seeing design in the random facts of nature. As soon as science would reach perfect unity, it would stop from further progress because it would reach the goal. Chemistry would not progress further when it would discover one element out of which all others could be made. Physics would stop when it would be able to fulfill its service in discovering one energy of which all the others are but manifestations. Biology would stop when man would be able to create an organism with the qualities of life in the laboratory. Medicine would stop when he would learn to preserve the bodily processes so that he would be endowed with potential immortality which is the eternal dream of man. The evolution of mind would stop when the conscious-mind would become super conscious mind, or attains super-manhood. A physicist, when he would push his knowledge to its limits, would find it melting away into meta-physics, so a metaphysician would find that what he would call mind and matter are but apparent distinctions, the reality being one. The end and aim of all science is to find the unity, the permanence, the reality behind all phenomena, the One out of which the manifold is being manufactured, that one existing as many. Science has failed to find reality or permanence in the outer physical cosmos. The cosmic immensities, whether of space and time or of outlook and concept should, however not dismay us. We retreat from the galaxies to the earth, through unwilling to come out of the cosmic depth and durations, and probe our “within”.

Internal world- We now focus our attention to one organic form called man, on the crust of one small planet, near a commonplace star, at the edge of one of the galaxies. We retreat to one isolated spot in our search for the Ultimate. It is most fascinating to contemplate the mystery of conscious life manifesting itself through all eternity; to reflect upon the marvelous structure of the universe and atom, the living cell, the neuron, the man, which we can dimly perceive; and to try humbly to comprehend even an infinitesimal part of the intelligence manifested in nature. Having failed to find the reality in our external body, we now look inwards, or turning back the mind to its own source. For thousands of years, the ancient Rishis, or Seers of Truth made frantic search if there was any permanence behind this evanescent body and mind; and established a new subjective science of religion or spirituality. Permanence is not dead; it is only obscured by the smog of change and transience. The Rishis started experiments with the inward march of the mind, which resulted in shedding this miserable little prison-individuality and tumbled against super-sensuous or super-conscious state. They discovered that man is made of three entities-“consciousness”, “mind” and “body”. They concluded that man is potentially divine and there is oneness of existence in the universe. The individual consciousness, the Self is an atom or spark of the Universal Consciousness, the Creator. He is responsible for creation, maintenance and dissolution of everything that exists in the universe. The science of spirituality will become perfect when it discovers Him, who is the one life in a universe of death, Him who is the constant basis of an ever-changing world. Then alone can death cease when we are one with life or existence; then alone can misery cease when we are one with eternal happiness or bliss then alone can all errors cease when we are one with knowledge itself. It is through multiplicity and duality, that the ultimate unity is reached.

Problem: “Where there is a hill, I must climb it. It is not so much to get to the top, but to see what is on the other side”, says Hans Kronberger”, Britain’s reactor boss. The ancient sages climbed the highest ladder of spirituality at least five thousand years ago, and gave us the Vedas, which are the lighthouse of central wisdom, supreme reality and ultimate truth. The modern man stands at the foot-hill and shouts that neither he believes the sages about what it is on the other side of the hill (the nature of ‘the Self’) nor he is prepared to climb up the hill as the road has been fraught with uphill gradients of all kinds, not to mention the old precipice. This is a strange paradox and his limited vision ends in a mirror maze of blind alleys and contradictions. Man has an insatiable desire to know by virtue of his intellect. He has deep rooted faith in the scientific truth by virtue of his training, but he doubts and as such challenges the discoveries of the ancient seers. Swami Vivekananda says:

“In modern times, if a man quotes a Moses or a Buddha or a Christ, he is laughed at; but let him give the name of a Huxley, a Tyndall or a Darwin and it is swallowed without salt”.

“(Vedanta) is going to be taught in more forcible language and within further light from the latest conclusions of Science”.

The new demand of human civilization on man is the conquest of inner and outer nature; in other words, to being spiritual and scientific in one. The challenge of the time requires us to become truly scientific and truly spiritual at the same time in the widest possible areas of human thought and action and for building life in a new way. The scientist and the spiritualist and trusted and respected comrades.

Deep reflection on ancient insights and modern discoveries promises to have a significant look at epistemology and not just idle intellectual exercise. The old arrogance of the seeker of knowledge has been replaced by a healthy humility. Now we realize that the more we know the less we are sure and the more remains to be known. The sages and seers of ancient India have made so many scientific discoveries in the Science of Life that we still wonder how they got such perspicacious, perspicuous and amazing insights. Was it serendipity or some mysterious higher force, an intuition, a revelation or a “flash of light”. The wisdom of ancient texts continues to be an unfailing source of inspiration and consolation even after the passage of millennia.

This article presents a synthesis of the vedantic philosophy and modern scientific thought on the relationship of consciousness and mind; mind and body; characteristics of pure and impure mind; characteristics of ‘subconscious mind’, ‘conscious mind’ and ‘super conscious mind’. The spectrum of mind is subconscious mind, conscious mind and super conscious mind. A logical and scientific reason suggests that the characteristics of conscious mind and super conscious mind are as an indirect evidence of the existence of God, the Almighty Creator, Universal Consciousness. The aim of the article is that the scientific community and the spiritualists work closer together to establish better channels of communication, for the betterment of mankind. Basically, this article is rediscovering the knowledge and is expressed in scientific language of the time. The scientific thought and ancient Indian philosophy are nearer each other today than at any time in the history of man.

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