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## Illusion, Hallucination and the Problem of Truth

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The problem of truth has been closely related to that of knowledge and has generally been discussed in term of its sources, validity and limits, if any. But the explicit limitation of the discussion to what was called 'human knowledge' by the British empiricists has hardly been paid sufficient attention as otherwise the question would have been raised as to what exactly is the distinction that human knowledge has from knowledge that cannot be regarded as 'human'. This distinction is important as unless we are aware of knowledge which is non-human, we shall not be able to understand the specific characteristics of that knowledge which we generally call 'human'.

The problem has assumed crucial importance with the development of 'machines' which claim to replicate human knowledge in all its forms and contend that there is no difference whatsoever between man and machines at least in the context of knowledge. There is also the problem of how to differentiate human knowledge from that which other animals may be supposed to have in the world. In case someone still likes to differentiate man from all the other species one will have to find the differentiating characteristic in something other than knowledge. But whatever characteristic one may choose one will face the same problem as so many of the other animal species share the same characteristics as evidenced in their behaviour. As for machines, one will have to think of them in terms other than that of 'knowledge', if they are to aspire to becoming 'human' as it is man who has made or manufactured the machine after which he feels and lives with some of them all the time. Ultimately, then, whether man manufactures the machine or other species of animals, he will have to be defined in terms of that which distinguishes him from them. Man is, or does, or feels what neither machines nor any other living being can do or does



or feel. But why has man not been able to specify this distinction clearly or completely to his own satisfaction? Whatever he may propose as a distinctive feature may be replicated or duplicated, at least in behavioural forms, by something that man himself has built. But it would still not stop him from asking the question what is it that which differentiates me from what has been built by me to 'imitate' what I am. This situation has been present since man attained self-consciousness and it obtains even today. He is supposed to have asked 'what am I or who am I'. The answers given were different and they went on changing as man's self-consciousness changed over time. But the problem is perennial and it would remain with him till he continues to be what he is as, perhaps, it defines him in a certain sense because it follows from the fact that he is self-conscious.

The attempt at answering the question in the context of 'knowledge' and its correlate distinction between 'truth' and 'falsity' has been there in the philosophical thinking on this issue since its earliest time. But if the question has to be posed in the context of 'human' knowledge we have first to know what it means to be 'human'. This, however, as everybody knows, is an impossible enterprise or at least an unending one. It is 'impossible' and 'unending' because it is undertaken by a being who is 'self-conscious', and for whom everything that 'appears' as an 'object' is essentially dubitable in principle.

But if this is so, then no question regarding any knowledge being 'true' can ever be settled? Perhaps the question of 'truth' has to be posed differently and the idea of 'knowledge' revised radically from the way it has been formulated by philosophers since the beginning of philosophy. Neither 'correspondence' nor 'coherence' nor 'pragmatic sense' can help us in determining even theoretically what it means for knowledge to be knowledge in the human context.

Whatever a man may be, he has a body, and he is conscious and he is also conscious of the fact that he is conscious. Not only this, he also inevitably makes the distinction between truth and falsity, good and bad, right or wrong, and what appears to him as pleasant and unpleasant, or beautiful and ugly. These distinctions define and constitute his being as much as anything else. What has not been seen is the fact that what is 'false' or bad or wrong or unpleasant or ugly is as much 'real'

as those which are characterized as their opposites. This normally is not supposed to create any problem except in the case of that which is regarded as 'false' or that which cannot 'be' because it is false. Yet the removal of falsity is as much a task of human effort as the overcoming or removal of that which is bad or wrong or unpleasant or ugly. The distinctions are embedded in consciousness and when one becomes aware of them, one feels the obligation and the challenge to remove them through one's own effort which has been called *purusārtha* in the Indian tradition.

But if man is to be defined or understood in terms of what we call human effort to realize something that is not there including what is 'truth', then he himself will have to be seen in a different way and the question asked where does 'falsity' exist. The only answer that can be given to this question is that it is in the very 'being' of consciousness that makes the distinction. To be conscious is to bring into being something that is ontologically impossible, for it simultaneously has the character of being both 'is' and 'is not'. If it were just not there, one could not be even aware of it, and if it were there then the question of bringing about any change would not arise. But to be conscious at the human level is just to be 'this' and the history of man cannot be understood without this radical transformation in the notions of 'reality' and 'truth' which are closely related to each other.

The radical changes in the understanding of these foundational concepts will, if properly seen, affect the whole philosophical edifice. Man's consciousness itself will be seen as infected with a logical ambiguity rendering it ontologically unintelligible, if 'reality' and 'truth' are conceived in traditional terms. In other words, to self-consciousness man appears as 'something' which he can become but which he is not. The knowledge that such a being will have of the 'world' will thus be infected with an intrinsic defect which in principle, it cannot get rid of. There will be no problem if man were not aware of this, but as he knows that this is so, he is haunted by the suspicion that the knowledge enterprise can never give him the truth he wants as he is not what he ought to be. This is what is not realized by thinkers who have addressed themselves to this problem. First, as human beings change their idea of what is 'knowledge', and correspondingly of what is true,



also changes. Secondly, the realization that the situation is intrinsically unchangeable opens the doors to radical scepticism on the one hand or to a restriction of all knowledge to the specificity of the situation in which one happens to be situated. One is saved to a certain extent by the fact that 'to be human' is to have a certain kind of body which has a structure of its own and whose life history from birth to death provides a firm foundational base to all that man wants to be or to achieve, including that which we call 'knowledge'. This normally, is spelt out in terms of the senses which man has and the 'knowledge' that these are supposed to provide. Perception as the foundational basis of all knowledge is accepted by most philosophers in all the philosophical tradition of the world. But no one asks why the so-called senses should be restricted only to five as there seems no necessity about it. Nor have they asked the question arising from the fact that the senses that man has have structural and functional limits of their own which they normally can not transcend. Man cannot see in the dark but many animals can. The colours and sounds that one can see or hear are apprehensible only within a certain range that is the limit of that which is perceived and sensed as colour or sound at the human level. The same must be true of the other senses also. Animals can discriminate between smells which human beings cannot, and many of them can only survive on the basis of these discriminations which are considered by most persons as irrelevant to the human enterprise called 'knowledge'. But this is not the only limitation which human senses have and which can, at least to some extent, be known and discounted and lived with. The real problem arises when one realises that the senses on which one relies for knowledge create illusions which are structurally determined and make man see what he sees or hears or smells or tastes or touches and, in addition makes him feel that what is seen or heard or smelled or tasted or touched is vertical even when it is not so. A simple example of this is the movement of the sun across the sky which is literally seen as such by everybody, even though the 'truth' is supposed to be that it is the earth that moves, and not the sun. There are many other such examples such as the earth and the sky meeting at the horizon or the stick which seems to be bent in water.

In each of these examples the 'illusory' appearance is determined by the structure of the condition of 'seeing' itself and it is because of this that appearance, though, illusory do not disappear even if it is known to be such. The knowledge that what 'appears is not really' so remains purely theoretical and does not affect, at least visually, the 'appearance' as it appeared earlier. What is, however, stranger still is the fact that as far as 'lived life' is concerned, it is the illusory appearance that determines how we live as we 'live' within it. The theoretical correction does affect our action in certain contexts, but as far as 'lived life' is concerned, it is the illusory appearance that determines how we live, as we 'live' within it. The theoretical correction does affect our action in certain contexts, but as far as our 'lived life' is concerned it plays *only* an indirect role as what is directly experienced alone determines the world we live in. The 'world' that the artist creates depends upon this basic reality of human life and the reason why we choose to live in those 'worlds' and want to go to them repeatedly depends on this. The world of 'appearances' is the 'real' world for us and what we want is that they should be meaningful, significant and pleasant and not whether they are true or false.

The structural illusions that we have pointed out belong primarily to the sense of sight but it is not that one cannot reasonably talk of such illusions in the context of the other senses also. Can't there be structural illusions in the realm of sounds or smells or touch? Painters are supposed to create tactile illusions through a subtle modulation of the surface on their paintings. There is the well-known example of artificial objects so realistically created that even when one touches them, one feels the 'feeling' that the 'real' object is supposed to make one feel. One sometimes tries to pluck the grapes in the dish before one realizes that one is really being cheated.

The problem of structural illusion in respect of senses other than that of sight can only be resolved if theoretical considerations are offered to show that what we hear or touch or smell or taste is necessarily real as in their case what 'appears' is itself real as there are no theoretical reasons to doubt this. In fact, the issue does not seem to have arisen and hence there does not seem to be any awareness of problem amongst those who have thought about it. The same seems to be the case with



the problem relating to the unitary and unified character of appearances emanating from the different senses, even though 'perception' is generally defined as that wherein the *same* object is apprehended by *different* senses. But once the unification and the unitary character of the diverse sensory appearances in perception is accepted along with what we have called the structural illusion, the problem whether there are different illusions of unification determining our perception of the world which is generally regarded as 'external' will have to be faced.

Kant raised the question, though in a tangential manner. He, as is well-known, suggested that space may be regarded as that which 'unifies' the 'appearances' given by the *outer senses*. But he seems to forget that space divides and separates as much as it unifies. The same may be said of time which, according to him, is supposed to unify 'appearances' of the 'inner' sense. But though the distinction between the 'outer' and the 'inner' sense is generally accepted in philosophical thinking, the distinction is not as clear as is assumed to be. There are, of course, different terms used in philosophical literature for pointing to the distinction. 'Mind' and 'body' for example, have been such 'terms' for designating what is known through them and which is also called 'outer' and 'inner'. But the moment one brings in the notion of 'mind' or 'inner sense' which apprehends same thing that is distinct and different from what is apprehended through the body and outer sense, the problem of knowledge at the human level undergoes a radical transformation which has generally not been noticed.

The distinction, even in Kant, between the transcendental aesthetic and the transcendental analytic does not notice that the so-called sensory 'appearances' have disappeared and that what he calls 'judgements' in his table of judgements is not, and cannot be, concerned with or have appearance or inner sense as content in any sense of the term whatever.

'Knowledge in judgemental form' is not, and cannot be, of that which 'appears' even though it may give rise to the illusory appearance of such a relation. The relation between the concept and the percept and of the percept to that which is given by the senses on the one hand, and the relation between the concepts and those between the percepts and the relation between these two different sets of relations is not clear.

Kant assumes that the relation can be made transparent by the notion of 'schema' or application, but the promised transparency is 'illusory'. To a certain extent he seems to realize this himself as otherwise the discussion on the schematism in the context of the categories would have been totally irrelevant.

The problem of the relationship between the concept and the percept is different from the problem of the relationship of the judgement to the 'facts' which it is generally supposed to represent. Wittgenstein specifically drew attention to that to which the judgement refers to, or that about which the judgement tries to say something at the linguistic or sentential level. But if human knowledge necessarily takes the form of judgement, and if judgements alone can be 'true' or 'false', as Aristotle pointed out long ago, then both 'truth' and 'knowledge' are a superimposition on 'reality' which is not linguistic or judgemental in character. And if it is not so then it can not be regarded as consisting of 'facts', a view which Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* made so fashionable amongst thinkers after him.

Wittgenstein, however, only talked of the world as consisting of 'facts' which probably were the co-relates of a 'judgement'. But he forgets the whole doctrine of the categories which Kant has explored and elaborated in the context of his discussion of the doctrine of categories.

The relation between judgement and its forms, and the categories, though specifically explicated by Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason* is not clear. It is the judgement that is central to knowledge or the categories of the understanding which are supposed to be founded on it. But if judgement is essentially linguistic in character, then the categories are so also. There is the additional problem of the relationship to what has been called 'grammar' and in case they are essentially linguistic in character, they suggest a 'universal grammar' which is also a grammar of thought. Scepticism has been voiced in this context by pointing that the distinction between subject and predicate is only an accidental characteristic of European languages as it is not found in many other languages. The distinction between substance and attributes, it has been urged, is only a reflection of the distinction between subject and predicate and hence was considered as the necessary form of thinking itself. This, though plausible, goes against the fact that the whole



Buddhistic tradition in Indian thought does not seem to sustain this interpretation of the nature of 'thinking', as it persistently maintained and argued for millennia that the idea of substance was a linguistic illusion, which thinking could dispel and dispense with.

The deeper problem however relates to the fact which does not seem to have been noticed either by Kant or his successors, that in case these are forms of judgement, there will be 'forms' of knowledge, and if one accepts the idea of intrinsic variety in the forms of knowledge what shall happen to the idea and ideal of knowledge which demands a unitary character as it integrally relates to the unity of 'reality' itself.

The problem at this level however belongs to the very structure of human consciousness and any attempt at reflective self-awareness is bound to be intrinsically indeterminate and ambiguous in character. Still, at another level, it presents itself in a different way which is relatively more capable of being articulated and dealt with in a more satisfactory manner. This is the level which Kant had designated as the 'inner sense' and which has generally been indicated by the term 'mind' and its analogues in various philosophical traditions of the world. What exactly is the role played by the contents of the inner sense in relation to the seeking for knowledge, is the question that does not seem to have been raised in epistemological literature, which has dealt with the problem of knowledge. The contents of the inner sense comprise such items as desires, feelings, emotions, imaginings, hopes, fears and all the other paraphernalia which constitute the human situations and are described in their variety and complexity in the literary creations of all languages. These, strangely, are not supposed to be of any relevance or significance to what is called 'knowledge' at the human level and its claim to be 'true'. Yet sincerity, honesty, and objectivity are accepted by everybody to be the necessary prerequisites for any one engaging in the 'knowledge enterprise' or staking the claim that what he 'claims' to know is 'true'. The Indians called this *Śabda Pramāṇa* which has generally been dismissed by all 'serious' philosophers as being totally unphilosophical in nature. Yet all knowledge at the human level has to be necessarily 'human' by definition and this involves someone's claim that he knows about 'something'. And such a claim is accepted if one has no reason to disbelieve or doubt what is said. In fact, knowledge

is transmitted from man to man, generation to generation and from civilization to civilization. Knowledge, it is forgotten, has been accumulating over thousands of years and hence does not belong exclusively to any one individual, or group, or nation, or civilization. Not only this, even the whole of humanity as it has lived up to now cannot claim to have or possess the whole of knowledge as the succeeding generations are bound not only to add to it, but also show its inadequacies, imperfections, errors and falsity.

Knowledge, thus, is essentially a 'human' achievement and depends, in a strange sense, on a 'belief' in the veracity and the trustworthiness of those who claim to know. Such a belief is a necessary prerequisite for knowledge and unless we try to understand what this belief is and what it presupposes or implies, we cannot understand what knowledge consists of. In other words, unless we understand what is meant to be 'sincere', 'objective', 'truthful' and 'trustworthy' we cannot understand what it means to know at the human level. Besides these, there has to be assumed a desire to impart the knowledge that one has, not to be secretive, to help others through knowledge for the good of mankind. But at the human level knowledge is also Power, the power to do good or evil, to benefit or harm others.

Many of these characteristics have been pointed out in the discussion on the *śabda pramāṇa* or 'authority' as the source of knowledge in the Indian tradition. The *Nyāya Sūtra*, one of the basic text of India's philosophical enterprise, defines this *pramāṇa* as the *upadeśa* of an *āptapurūṣa*. The key terms here are *āpta* and *upadeśa*, the former defined in terms of those essential characteristics which are presupposed in any claim to knowledge, and the latter meaning some sort of helpful advice which, if followed, would make the person not only understand what is said but use it not only for the good of oneself and others, but also to help one to become an *āptapurūṣa* oneself.

The definitions given in the *Nyāya Sūtra* point out explicitly to a dimension of knowledge and truth which has not been noticed and paid attention to even by Indian commentators on the text. The term *upadeśa* points to someone else, someone other than the person who knows and has been designated as *āpta* because of the fact that he knows. The 'other' in the definition is one who is desirous of knowing, one who



wants to know or rather one who is a seeker of knowledge and truth. This is usually conveyed in the Indian texts by the terms *Jijñāsā* and *Jijñāsu* which are generally translated in terms that have been mentioned earlier. But, there is a dimension of the term 'seeker' of knowledge and truth which has not been understood, for if it had been understood, the concept of *āptapurusa* would not have been understood the way it has been in the tradition. To put the point in another way, one may ask the question 'Is one who "knows" not desirous of knowledge and truth?' In other words, is the *āptapurusa* not a *Jijñāsu* and if he is not, how can he be an *āptapurusa* at all.

The distinction between one who knows or claims to know and one who is desirous to know is after all only a relative one. One who has ceased or stopped seeking truth or knowledge has already given up the *puruṣārtha* in which he was engaged as a human being, which, in a sense, defined him at least in respect of this dimension. The seeking for truth and knowledge is one of the *puruṣārthas* or ends of human life which defines what being human means, and if one has ceased to pursue this end, then, to that extent, one has ceased to be human.

But what does it mean to be a *Jijñāsu* or seeker of knowledge or truth? The tradition has interestingly brought in the notion of *adhikāra* in this connection. The term is so ambiguous and varied that it is not easy to pinpoint its exact meaning. There are examples of those who have interpreted it in the context of the *Śruti* in the Indian tradition and viewed the 'right' for the pursuit of the 'knowledge' contained in it, that is of the Vedas in particular and the Vedic Corpus in general. The women and the *sūdras* were explicitly excluded from the right to pursue this knowledge. They just could not be the *adhikārīs* for it, even if they had the talent for it and the *Śrutis* permitted it as in the case of Maitreyi and Satyakāma Jābāla whose cases are well-known. The term has been extended to other fields which normally one would have expected to be immune from it. How can one explain otherwise the fact that even in such a secular field as the knowledge regarding the wielding of certain weapons, from which persons belonging to certain varnas were excluded from acquiring it. The story of Eklavya and Karṇa is well-known, but there are so many others that one need not recount them. In fact, the idea of *adhikāra-bheda* has been carried to extremes

and whenever one does not wish to impart one's knowledge to someone, one can always legitimise it by bringing in this notion into the picture, forgetting that ultimately it is the desire to know and learn which is the only thing one can demand of one who has come to learn from someone. Human knowledge thus has to be understood in terms of the relationship between one who knows and one who is desirous to know, without forgetting that one who knows not only once belonged to the latter class, but still belongs to it as seeking for truth and knowledge is as 'unending' as any other 'seeking' of man.

Viewed in this perspective, human knowledge will have to be seen in a way totally different from the one in which it has been seen upto now. It is not something out there, finished and final, to be taken hold of by man as a possession and kept intact with him for ever. Rather, it is something which is in a continuous process of modification because it is uncompleted and unfinished, acquired and passed on from generation to generation. It is a process in which those who learn become teachers and those who are teachers were once students who learnt from someone, even if they forget that this was so. In this unending process knowledge can get lost or forgotten because of many reasons. These reasons can be of all sorts, but once one reflects on them, one would become aware of the strange fact that this unending process of acquiring what is called 'knowledge' is sustained and maintained by factors in which one of the most crucial one is not only the motivation to learn and to teach, but the desire to seek the truth and be as 'true' to it as possible. This is the strangest desire that man has as it is tangential to all other desires and its deepest impulses run counter to them. It makes one deny what one has received from those who have taught one and stand against the accepted orthodoxy and wisdom of the times. Even beyond this, it makes one continuously 'open' to the possibility that one may be mistaken and in case the argument or the evidence points in that direction one is prepared to give up what one considered true and revise it in the light of counter-argument or the counter-evidence that has been brought against what one had held to be true.

All this, though obvious and common place, is almost totally absent from the awareness and 'self-consciousness' of those who claim to



'know'. This is the greatest paradox that one encounters when one reflects on the phenomenon called 'human knowledge'. There seems to be some invisible structure in the cognitive consciousness that seems to project the delusion that knowledge is of a character that is totally different from what it would appear if it 'objectively' is seen to be what it actually is. This delusion is not a structural delusion projected and determined by the senses that one has, but by that to which knowledge or 'knowing activity' has generally been ascribed and which is called 'reason'.

This delusion, however, is not the same that Kant attempted to expose in his *Transcendental Critique of Reason*. He only tried to uncover the presuppositions involved in judgemental knowledge and saw space and time as only the forms in which the sensibly 'given' has to be apprehended or perceived at the human level. But for some reason he did not see time as determining the 'form' of the 'knowing' process itself and taking the strange form of what we have called the 'inter-generational' becoming where something is passed on from one generation to another generation. Once this way of looking at knowledge is accepted there will be a revolutionary transformation in the way the problem of knowledge and truth has been posed in the philosophical traditions of the world up till now. It will be clearly seen that there is no such thing as 'knowledge' or 'truth' which is the possession of any individual or group or civilization. Instead, it will be seen as a 'seeking' which like all other 'seekings', is not only impossible of completion in principle but also internally differentiated in such a manner that what is achieved in one field may have no relation to that which is attained in other domains and may even at times, be opposed or incompatible with it. The terms 'knowledge' and 'truth' will, then, be seen to be systematically misleading as they generate the illusion that there 'is' or 'can be' such a thing as knowledge which unifies all 'knowledges' within itself and thus is that which alone may be regarded as pre-eminently 'true'.

The realization that there is no such thing as knowledge but only 'knowledges' and that what is thought of as 'knowledge' or described as such in any domain whatever, is only a short-hand term describing the tentative results of a collective seeking on the part of a large number

of individuals which is continuously being challenged, questioned and modified in the light of the inadequacies and imperfections which people see in it will change the situation in a fundamental way. It will thus see 'human knowledge' as subject to all the weaknesses and strengths which and which define the human situation in its basic structural aspect has or suffers from. The seeking for knowledge, however, is different as it makes everything, including all other seekings, its subject and hence has a supervening character which no other seeking of man has. That is one reason why 'truth' seems to have such a supreme value that when that is questioned, no one knows what to do in the face of that questioning'. The raising of the question about the 'truth' of anything, it should be remembered, is not a question of verisimilitude or even of veridicality but of something else which is perhaps more adequately conveyed by that which relates to the 'seeking' itself and as the seeking cannot be separated or divorced from the one who seeks, ultimately therefore it is the 'seeker' who becomes the central concern of all those who want seriously to think about either knowledge or truth.

To talk of the 'seeker' is to talk of a being who is self-conscious and conscious of his inadequacy and imperfections as, that is why he seeks or wants to know and through that knowledge 'become' something that he is not. This involves imagination as an intrinsic constituent of the seeking for knowledge and truth whose far-ranging ramifications have not been appreciated, particularly in terms of the obstruction they create for the enterprise of knowledge itself. It is only in the context of the formation of hypotheses that the philosophy of science has taken note of this dimension of the knowledge enterprise of man. But imagination does not function only in the framing of hypotheses; it has other aspects which are far more disturbing and which are revealed in the psychiatric clinic, the mental hospital and the workshop of the artist. All of these are as 'real' as anything else even though they are regarded as 'hallucinations' by everybody. They are closely related to one another and once one begins to look at them closely and take them seriously, one begins to wonder whether what we call 'knowledge' or 'truth' is possible at all.



The history of superstition is far older than the history of what is known as science these days. But the belief that there is no 'superstition' in science would be difficult for anyone to believe who knows anything about the history of science as it has changed over time. The very fact that there is a 'history' of 'science' reveals that what one had considered as 'knowledge' and accepted as 'true' was not really so. And, if one relates the history of science to the sociology of science one would begin to wonder if what one ideally considers to be 'science' can ever be possible at all. Those who have written on the sociology of knowledge have generally left 'science' untouched and even those who have talked of 'scientific revolutions' have only talked of paradigm shifts. Neither of them have discussed the psychological roots in which all human enterprises are founded, including that of the search for knowledge itself. It is of course true that man's psychic formations may themselves be seen as historical and socio-cultural formations, but the same is true of the human body and yet we talk of bodily structures and the illusions they generate and if it is so there seems no reason why we cannot, or should not, talk of the structure of the psyche on the one hand and the functional disorders analogous to the disorders that the body is so obviously subject to, on the other.

To talk of psychic disorders and psychic illusions emanating from the structure of the psyche itself and see it in the historical and socio-cultural perspective, relativises not only the notion of psyche but also of 'knowledge' and 'truth'. The idea that man's psychic formation has structurally changed over historical time or that its specific formation has been determined by socio-cultural factors would imply that what man 'is' has itself changed and hence there can be no meaningful truth that transcends temporality.

This, however, is not acceptable to human consciousness as it sees 'something' that is not relative to time and space, or to the specific socio-cultural formations that he himself has brought into being. Yet the 'awareness' that man has been involved in a process that spans millennia and what he is psychically and physically today, is continuous with what he was in the past and is in some sense, a result of it is bound to affect his conception of both knowledge and truth in such a way that his perception and the changes that occur in it in accordance

with the type of consciousness and self-consciousness that he possesses will become evident. The point is that the search for objectivity and its determination by consciousness in the seeking of knowledge itself undergoes significant transformation as man's consciousness develops without jeopardising the continuity which he has with the past. The point perhaps may be better appreciated if it is realized that as man changed and developed the dangers and obstructions to the achievement of the objectivity which is the precondition for the attainment of all knowledge also changed and human consciousness had to invent new strategies to overcome them. The history of knowledge enterprises in different fields during the last three hundred years or so is evidence of this. Perhaps the clearest example of the dilemma stared man in the face when he encountered the phenomena in quantum physics. How could 'objectivity' be ensured if the phenomenon concerned was itself affected by observation. The question whether the observation should be construed purely in terms of the measuring instruments or include the psycho-physical observer also, opened one of the most fascinating chapters in the history of modern science. The phenomenon of course has been known in other fields of knowledge dealing with human beings at any level whatsoever. One need only mention the phenomenon known as 'self-fulfilling prophecy' and the place it occupies is known to everybody who has any acquaintance with socio-cultural or medical phenomena.

What is important however is not that there are these phenomena but that they have not stood in the way of man's search for knowledge and trying his best to achieve objectivity and determining what is 'true' in spite of them. The strategies adopted are unbelievable and yet they attest to the fact that whenever man encounters difficulty in being 'objective' in relation to the knowledge of a realm which refuses to be seen as 'independent' of him, he tries to see and ensure that this somehow does not affect the enterprise itself.

Philosophers who have dealt with the problem of knowledge and truth have generally kept away from realms where the achievement of objectivity becomes difficult, if not impossible. The realm of art is one of the clearest example of this. Is any objective judgement possible regarding that which constitutes this realm? Can one really talk about



a work of art in terms which are inter-subjectively decidable in principle? And, what about the realms of law and politics? The fact that the highest court of the land can give a decision or that voters can decide by a 'majority' which in so many cases is spurious is generally not even noticed or, if noticed, is brushed aside as irrelevant.

There are other realms where the most stringent conditions of experimentation have been applied and yet where the whole realm is dismissed as being incapable in principle of being 'true' or *real*. This is the realm dealing with what are called paranormal phenomena which are accepted if they happen in the realm of physics but which are treated as superstition if they happen in the realm of the mind. The same is true, though again in a different sense, of the world of human relations where it is just impossible to determine what 'really' happened. The Roshman story is well-known but so is the Alexandria Quartet of Durrell along with many others of the genre to which it belongs.

But what is even more tantalizing is the realm of the spirit where consciousness itself tries to transform itself through what has been called concentration or the 'intending act' which tries to change consciousness itself.

Both knowledge and truth, thus, become not only relative to the state of consciousness that one has but also the activity that this consciousness engages in as relevant distinctions have necessarily to be made within the context of the consciousness and the activity concerned. The point is that the distinctions between what is to be counted as 'knowledge' and what is to be considered as 'true' has always to be made and yet what is to be counted or considered to be such changes significantly every time the activity changes within the same level of consciousness and even more radically when the level of self-consciousness changes.

All this has been vaguely known to those who have reflected on the subject. But two important points have generally been missed in the thinking even when it has taken note of the points mentioned above. The change of level does not mean as is generally thought, that consciousness does not or cannot revert to the earlier levels and be a *subject* to all the old determinations under which it necessarily has to

live on those levels. Most of the Advaitic thinking along with that which has been done in the context of what has been known as 'Yoga' in Indian tradition suffers from this obvious shortcoming.

The second point that seems to have been missed relates to the fact that at each level, and in each activity at any level, consciousness suffers from inherent defects which affect both 'knowledge' and 'truth' in a sense, which have not been paid much attention or realized in detail. These are generally known as 'intrusions' of 'subjectivity' into that which by definition is supposed to be completely 'objective' in character. There are many aspects of this, the most important of which derives from the fact that without imagination no human knowledge is possible. But imagination is also the 'enemy' of what we call 'knowledge' and 'truth'. It is imagination that creates 'interests' and interest in the context of 'knowledge' and 'truth' mean prejudices to which one is wedded and which define, or are supposed to define one's identity. These occur mostly at the deepest level. At other levels, it takes the form of what has been called in the Indian tradition *rāga* and *dveśa*. The moment feelings, emotions and sentiments arise, the ideas of 'good' and 'bad', 'right' and 'wrong' change at once and so do those of 'truth' and 'falsity', as the two 'sets' are interrelated in a way that epistemologists have not noticed. Reason is all of a piece, a unity that cannot be divided in terms of theoretical and practical or 'instrumental' and 'intrinsic'. Those who do so deceive themselves, but the real problem is: can one conceive of consciousness without the capacity for imagining and can imagining be conceived of without the idea of deception or deceiving.

But then, is not there a distinction between deceiving the other and deceiving oneself. The 'other', it should be remembered, has to be a consciousness in order that it may be deceived. A stone cannot be deceived by definition. But shall we then say that consciousness has to be defined as that which can either deceive or be deceived. If it is so, where shall there be knowledge or truth as without consciousness and self-consciousness there can be no meaningful talk of either knowledge or truth. But if these are infected at their very roots by this possibility, it seems impossible to have either knowledge or truth. One may still hope for knowledge about that which is not consciousness, that is, the



inanimate nature as one cannot 'deceive' it by definition; one may still hope for knowledge about those dimensions in man or the living world in general which are close to what we call matter. But the farther one moves away from these aspects of knowledge in the sense we understand, it becomes increasingly difficult. And as for the self and its relation with other selves, the whole thing is just 'impossible'.

## Iqbal's Concept of Khudi

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The concept of *khudi* in Iqbal's thought and poetry is the most attractive notion, and it deserves proper attention and understanding. Commonly, in the English translation of *khudi*, its synonyms are taken to be 'self' or 'ego'. But in our view it is the principle of individuality which is primarily meant by Iqbal in his writings. However, when attributed to man, it may rightly be called self or ego. Sometimes it also means personality. But the term '*khudi*' is not exhausted by man though man remains the most important designatum. Iqbal, of course, seeks to use it as a universal idea applicable to every being or object in the cosmos. Iqbal has passionately written on it in his Persian poems—especially *Asrar-e-khudi* (*AK*)<sup>1</sup> (1915) (*Secrets of Self*, tr. R.A. Nicholson, 1920), *Payam-e-Mashriq* (*PM*) (*The Message of the East*) 1923 or *Javed Nama* (*The Eternal Song*) 1932. In his collections of Urdu poems, he has dealt with it in *Bal-e-Jibreil* (*The Wings of Gabriel*) 1935, *Bang-e-Dera* (*The Call of the Bell*) and *Zarb-e-Kalim* (*The Blow of Moses*) 1937.<sup>2</sup>

The only work of prose which extensively dwells upon this idea and its correlata is his well-known six lectures entitled *Reconstruction of Religious Thoughts in Islam*.<sup>3</sup> On account of wider familiarity with the Urdu works, we will mainly refer to his Urdu verses along with a number of Persian verses (in my own inadequate translation) from *AK* and some other works.

Iqbal's concept of *khudi* has to be understood in relation to a set of other concepts like love, God, freedom, creativity, dynamism, the perfect man (*insan-e-kamil* or *mard-e-momin*) and time and eternity. When Iqbal versifies them or writes about them his views sometimes come close to those of a number of Western thinkers like Nietzsche, Goethe, Bergson, Whitehead, Samuel Alexander, Sartre or Heidegger. Some



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